THE EMERGING PARADIGM OF READER-TEXT TRANSACTION: CONTRIBUTIONS OF JOHN DEWEY AND LOUISE M. ROSENBLATT, WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

by

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(ABSTRACT)

This dissertation will trace the emerging paradigm of transaction as a model for the dynamics of the reading process.

The paradigm of transaction, implicit in John Dewey's writings as early as 1896 in "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," was originally described in terms of "interaction" between organism and environment. Only in 1949, in the twilight of his career, did Dewey definitively distinguish between "transaction" and "interaction," ascribing a mutually transformative character to the former process. In Knowing and the Known, Dewey and co-author Arthur F. Bentley (1949) proposed adoption of a wholly new "transactional vocabulary" as a precision tool for a new mode of scientific inquiry, whereby inquiry itself was recognized as a species of transaction between inquirer and observed phenomena.

Even before the publication of Knowing and the Known, literary theorist Louise M. Rosenblatt had applied an implicitly transactional model of the relationship between organism and environment to the relationship between reader and text. She described this dynamic model of the reading process in Literature as Exploration (first published in 1938), a work that has inspired an ongoing revolution in the teaching of reading and literature at all instructional levels. In the first edition of this work, Rosenblatt employed Dewey's original term--"interaction"--to describe the dynamic relationship between reader and text. Following the publication of Knowing and the Known in 1949, Rosenblatt began systematically to appropriate Dewey and Bentley's transactional terminology in her analysis of the reader-text relationship.

Educators who share the transactional vision of Dewey and Rosenblatt tend to see the role of the teacher as that of a facilitator of reader-text transaction and of reader-reader transaction as arbitrated by the text, rather than as an imparter of authoritative interpretations of texts. Envisioning potentialities for students' growth through such transactions gives rise neither to sanguine optimism nor to despair, but rather to a hopeful meliorism.
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Abbreviations

As indicated in the footnotes, works frequently cited have been identified by the following abbreviations:

A  Ross, Aristotle
AE  Dewey, Art as Experience
ATA  Bechler, Aristotle's Theory of Actuality
BWA  Aristotle, Basic Works of Aristotle
BSR  Dewey, "Brief Studies in Realism"
CCC  Rosenblatt, "Continuing the Conversation: A Clarification"
CCE  Dewey, "Contributions to A Cyclopedia of Education"
CE  Dewey, "Conduct and Experience"
CF  Dewey, A Common Faith
DE  Dewey, Democracy and Education
DMLPP  Garrison, "Dewey's Metaphysics: A Living Postmodern Perspective"
E  Dewey and Tufts, Ethics
EN  Dewey, Experience and Nature
FSTB  Bentley, The Factual Space and Time of Behavior
FSTS  Dewey, "Foreword to Seventy Times Seven"
HNC  Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct
IDP  Dewey, "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy"
IE  Dewey, "Individuality and Experience"
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Preface

The term "emerging" in the title of this dissertation ("The Emerging Paradigm of Reader-Text Transaction . . .") was selected deliberately to suggest a still ongoing process. Though the Dewey corpus has been extant for nearly half a century, the implications Dewey's transactional vision holds for the reader-text relationship--as for every experiential domain--have yet fully to be explored. Louise M. Rosenblatt continues to enlighten readers and listening audiences with insights illumining the reading process as reader-text transaction. And recent portrayals of the self as continuously emerging text (for example, in the work of Mark Johnson) beckon toward still further extension of the transactional reader-text paradigm.

I find the term "emerging" to be aptly descriptive of the trajectory of my own understanding of the paradigm of reader-text transaction, as well. During each phase of my research, my understanding of the term "transaction" has progressively emerged and still continues to emerge. Originally, as it seems to me in retrospect, I was eager to find a ready-made definition of the term as the key to its usage throughout the work of Dewey and of Rosenblatt. Attending by turns to various earmarks of transaction, I tried unsuccessfully to narrow my interpretation of Dewey's and Rosenblatt's texts to fit first one, then another of these necessary but insufficient definitional elements. Combing each text to find evidence supportive of this or that formulaic definition, I ultimately found all such definitions frustratingly inadequate. In fact, I now see that I had adopted what Rosenblatt terms an "efferent" reading stance--an attitude ironically inimical to the very subject I was researching.

Rosenblatt uses the adjective "efferent" (derived from the Latin efferre, to carry away) to describe an approach to reading framed by a pre-determined agenda--culling a text for information to be used for a specific practical purpose, for example. Predictably, the cost of such a delimited agenda will be suppressed awareness of the reader-text
transaction as a qualitative whole. According to Dewey, intuitive awareness of the pervasive quality of an experience indispensably precedes cognition. As he notes in his (1930) essay "Qualitative Thought": "Reflection and rational elaboration spring from and make explicit a prior intuition." In my determined efforts to pigeonhole Dewey’s and Rosenblatt’s depictions of transaction, I was effectively forfeiting opportunities for such an indispensable intuition. Only when I at last abandoned such efforts and adopted what Rosenblatt terms an "aesthetic" reading stance—a cultivated awareness of the reader-text transaction as a qualitative whole—could an intuitive sense of the meaning of “transaction” in the texts of Dewey and of Rosenblatt begin to dawn. This intuition, fed by confluent streams of funded memory and ongoing experience, still continues to emerge.

But in proportion as each successive transaction with the texts of Dewey and of Rosenblatt has broadened and deepened my intuitive sense of what the term "transaction" embraces, I have found the goal of defining this term according to the conventions of Aristotelian logic becoming correspondingly more elusive. Therefore, I have abandoned efforts to define "transaction" by means of categorization and differentiation, to demarcate genus and species. Instead, I will simply invite readers of this dissertation to join me in adopting an aesthetic stance in transaction with selected texts of Dewey and Rosenblatt. And as each reader transacts with the text of this dissertation, I invite openness to possibilities for individual meaning making. Each reader is encouraged individually to attend to whatever memories of transaction in daily life may be evoked in the course of transaction with this text.

Perhaps readers of this dissertation will find themselves reflecting on experiences from the realm of parenting or teaching or mentoring as prototypes of transaction. At the heart of my own experience-based intuition of what transaction embraces is the nursing-

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mother/nursing-child relationship. Each reader will doubtless find an individual
touchstone experience.

In his autobiographical "Game, Set, Epiphany," Barney Cohen portrays playing
tennis with his growing son as such a touchstone experience. Cohen's epiphanic account
confirms for me what nursing my daughter early primed me to learn: that parent-child
transaction is insusceptible of definition within the paradigm of unilateral influence or
even of interaction between pre-existent, fixed identities. Instead, parent-child transaction
involves perpetual birthing of identity for both parent and child. Cohen reflects that in
his relationship with his son, Ivan:

As I taught and urged and challenged, Ivan was
giving me something back. He was forcing me to push
the envelope of my own abilities. . . . And he was doing it in
increments so small, I never realized that I was growing.

I saw it in sport. But it must be happening, unseen, in
every phase of your life. . . .

My hope is that readers of this dissertation may likewise intuitively grasp transaction to
be "happening, unseen, in every phase of . . . life"--including that phase we term
"reading."

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Introduction

In *Knowing and the Known*, John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley (1949/1989) traced the history of three successive paradigms for scientific inquiry: "self-action," "interaction," and "transaction." 3 Though scientific inquiry was here broadly defined to include the physiological and behavioral as well as the physical sciences (KK, 64), the authors soon narrowed their focus to physics, which they lauded as "the most potent of all existing sciences" (KK, 67). Dewey and Bentley attributed physics' pre-eminent position to its paradigmatic advance beyond all other disciplines--most notably, beyond "the epistemologies, logics, psychologies, and sociologies," which they described as "still largely on a self-actional basis" (KK, 67). Certainly, physics' historical evolution through Aristotelian "self-action," Newtonian "interaction," and post-Einsteinian "transaction" phases effectively illustrates the paradigm shifts Dewey and Bentley described. Their paramount focus on physics is fortuitous in that the terms "substance," "particle," and "field"--associated respectively with each historical stage--provide the reader with intuitively accessible metaphors for the paradigms of self-action, interaction, and transaction.

Self-action, the paradigm Dewey and Bentley termed "the primitive stage" of inquiry (KK, 102), is identified with Aristotelian physics. At this earliest stage in the history of physics, substances were believed to "possess Being" to varying degrees (KK, 104) and were, to a corresponding degree, "viewed as acting under their own powers" (KK, 101). Only the "fixed stars"--embedded in the outermost, perpetually revolving celestial sphere--were considered "completely, inherently, and hence necessarily, [to] possess Being," since they alone were said to "continue eternally in action (movement) under their own power" (KK, 104). Terrestrial

substances, composed primarily of the four sublunary elements (earth, air, water, and fire), would necessarily manifest self-action to varying lesser degrees than would celestial bodies composed exclusively of an ethereal fifth element—i.e., quintessence. Terrestrial substances were therefore considered to be proportionately deficient in Being. The degree to which self-action was exhibited, then, provided the basis for a metaphysical hierarchy: "What[ever] did not, under the older [Aristotelian] pattern, thus act through its inherent power [as did the "fixed stars"] was looked upon as defective Being, and the gradations ran down to 'matter' on its lowest level, passive and inert" (KK, 105). This metaphysical hierarchy would be supplanted in modern science by the vision of "a homogenous natural world" where "contrast of perfect and defective Being is meaningless."4 Aristotle's notion of substances would be replaced by Newton's theory of particles.

Interaction, the paradigm of inquiry supervening upon Aristotelian self-action, is identified with Newtonian mechanics. Newton discarded the notion of substances acting under their own power in proportion to their possession of Being. He envisioned instead a universal process of forces acting among particles. Far from explaining motion as a function of rank within a Great Chain of Being, Newton described "laws" uniformly governing all particulate matter alike, from the atomic level to the planetary. As Dewey and Bentley noted, "The Newtonian construction . . . viewed the world as a process of [in the words of Einstein and Infeld] 'simple forces between unalterable particles'" (KK, 106). But just as Newton's theory of particles had displaced Aristotle's notion of substances, so too would the Newtonian model of particulate matter be supplanted by a model of forces distributed as fields.

Transaction, the most recently evolved stage of inquiry, is identified by Dewey and Bentley with twentieth-century field physics. Quantum mechanics and relativity theory, though more complementary than congruent overall, coincide in at least one way. In both, distribution of forces as a field has proved to be a construct useful for interpreting experimental results. In

4John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, in Boydston, ed., *The Later Works*, 1: 111. This volume will be referred to as EN with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
quantum mechanics, for example, all observed action is said to be structured by the entire
electromagnetic energy field. In relativity theory, even space and time are said to be structured
by gravitational fields.5

Clearly, Dewey and Bentley viewed "transaction" as the evolutionary cutting edge of
inquiry, supervening upon more primitive observational/interpretational modes. As T. Z. Lavine
notes in her introduction to Knowing and the Known, according to Dewey and Bentley:
"Physics is the model science, having moved from Newtonian interactionalism to the
transactionalism of Einsteinian relativity theory and to quantum mechanics."6 Hoping to
facilitate paradigmatic advances in the social sciences comparable to those observable in physics,
Dewey and Bentley in Knowing and the Known proposed a whole new vocabulary for
presenting human action in transactional terms.7

Literary theorist Louise M. Rosenblatt recognized in Dewey and Bentley's formulation a
"transactional terminology" precisely adapted for conveying her own cutting-edge inquiry into
the dynamics of the reading process.8 Rosenblatt's familiarity with Dewey and Bentley's
transactional approach is traceable to at least two sources: her study of their jointly-authored
Knowing and the Known and her acquaintance with the Dewey-Bentley correspondence that
glosses their collaborative effort. Rosenblatt's husband, Sidney Ratner, and Jules Altman co-
edited and published that massive correspondence in 1964 as John Dewey and Arthur F.

5Although Einstein devoted most of his life to securing a general field theory uniting relativity theory with quantum
mechanics, this task still remains incomplete.

6T. Z. Lavine, introduction to Knowing and the Known by John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley, in Boydston, ed.,
The Later Works, 16: xxxiv.

7In The Quest for Certainty (1929/1984), Dewey had invoked the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle to explain why
it is impossible to separate the system of the observer (knower) from the system to be known. The salutary effect of
Bentley's insistence upon precise delineation between "interaction" and "transaction" becomes appreciable here when
we observe Dewey's lapse into interactional phrasing precisely where he should have appropriated the language of
transaction. See: John Dewey, The Quest for Certainty, in Boydston, ed., The Later Works, 4: 161-164. This
volume will be referred to as QC with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.

8Louise M. Rosenblatt, The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work
(Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), xiv. This book will be referred to as
RTP with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
Bentley: A Philosophical Correspondence, 1932-1951. The editors' appreciative acknowledgment of Rosenblatt's supportive role hints at the extent of her involvement in their project: "Professor Louise M. Rosenblatt of New York University offered much constructive criticism and sound advice." Reading through the voluminous body of letters that passed between Dewey and Bentley (even in excerpted form comprising a text of over 600 pages), must surely have confirmed for Rosenblatt central points of agreement between Dewey's transactional vision and her own transactional vision of the reading process. No less than for Dewey, the paradigm of transaction would seem to hold for Rosenblatt "the key to everything" (PC, 545).

Although she had not yet adopted the term "transaction" to convey it, the paradigm of transaction tacitly informed the first edition of Literature as Exploration (1938), published nine years prior to Knowing and the Known (1949). Rosenblatt notes that her substitution of the term "transaction" for "interaction" in publications to follow--including subsequent editions of Literature as Exploration--simply rendered explicit her originally implicit transactional paradigm:

> In 1949, John Dewey had suggested that, instead of interaction, which implies separate entities acting on one another, the term transaction should be used to designate relationships between reciprocally conditioned elements. I adopted the term because it underlines what was already present in my 1938 declaration that there are no generic readers or generic interpretations but only innumerable relationships between readers and texts.10

Besides tracing her distinctive usage of the term "transaction" to Dewey and Bentley's Knowing and the Known, Rosenblatt acknowledges, as well, a more general "obvious debt" to the work of Dewey (LE, 307).

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9Sidney Ratner and Jules Altman, eds., John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley: A Philosophical Correspondence, 1932-1951 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1964), v. This book will be referred to as PC with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.

Rosenblatt refers to acquaintance with Dewey's work as one of the prominent "academic strands and experiences" which "fostered the tendency to transcend the conventional borders of the discipline of literary study" (RTP, 178). She describes the principle of selection operative in her winnowing of contemporary philosophical trends as "a Deweyan anti-dualism, a sense of the human being in a reciprocal relationship with the natural and social environment" (RTP, xiv). More specifically, she notes that Dewey's *Art as Experience* "especially left its mark" (RTP, xi) on her vision of the role of aesthetics in human experience. Other specific Dewey titles referred to in her writings include "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," *Experience and Education*, *Human Nature and Conduct*, *Philosophy and Civilization*, and *The Public and Its Problems*. A still wider scope of familiarity with the voluminous Dewey corpus is suggested by her observation that from "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology" (1896) onward, "Dewey used various phrasings throughout his long career" to convey his "transactional view" (RTP, 17; 194, n. 9). Overall, Rosenblatt has identified her study of Dewey's work as a prominent thread among the many "experiences and academic strands" forming the whole cloth from which her own work has been cut.

In the paragraph that prefaces the "Works Cited" list appended to her most recent edition of *Literature as Exploration*, Rosenblatt describes that book as a "distillation" redolent of blended vintage:

> It would be impossible to give a complete list of bibliographical sources for this book, since it represents a distillation of many years of reading and teaching. As indicated in part 4 [in her chapter titled "Retrospect and Prospect"], my most obvious debt is to the works of John Dewey, George Santayana, and Charles Sanders Peirce. (307)

Rosenblatt's depiction of *Literature as Exploration* as distilling the essence of her rich experience as reader and teacher resonates sympathetically with John Dewey's retrospective reflections on the process of writing *Art as Experience*. In a letter to Albert C. Barnes, to whom that book is dedicated, Dewey wrote:
There are no chapters and not many, if any, pages [of *Art as Experience*] that don't owe something to you. Where I have quoted directly as I have a few times I can of course make the reference specific. But mostly the indebtedness is in helping form my entire mode of approach. And so I feel as you do that the material as a whole is mine— in other words that I have taken in what you have given me and made it a part of my own 'mind.'

Literary critic Richard Poirier, observing in Dewey's work as a whole an indebtedness to Ralph Waldo Emerson similar to that credited to Barnes in the passage above, includes Dewey in the company of William James and Gertrude Stein as obvious "inheritors" of Emerson. Poirier's depiction of the paradoxically derivative yet at the same time strikingly original work of Emerson's intellectual beneficiaries recalls Dewey's account of having "taken in" what Barnes had "given" him, yet having "made it a part of . . . [his] own 'mind'" (AE, 353, n. 7.28-8.5). Similarly, Poirier insists that when passages in the work of Dewey, James, and Stein echo Emerson's writing, these three "inheritors" of the Emersonian legacy . . . are not merely repeating Emerson, who is as surely repeating someone else. Rather, they are participating in an idea shared by all of them, though expressed in each case in terms specifically appropriate to the exigencies of the writer's own conditions and cultural locality. Each is repeating; each is also original.

Like the sound of one hand clapping, the nature of repetitious originality would seem to defy definition. Poirier demystifies this apparent oxymoron by noting that foremost among the ideas

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appropriated by Emerson's inheritors was his injunction to readers "that they should make any idea . . . into their own" (PP, 19). The technology of a distillery supplies an apt metaphor for such a transmutation, in that in both cases harvested products (the fruits of physical or intellectual labor) are "taken in" (to borrow a phrase from Dewey's letter to Barnes) in order that they may be transformed into a wholly new substance. Rosenblatt's description of Literature as Experience as "represent[ing] a distillation of many years of reading and teaching" similarly connotes fruitage--harvested through years of academic study and praxis--transmuted by passage through the alembic of creative inquiry to form a wholly original product.

Rosenblatt's "many years of reading" are of course only synopsized by the specific titles and authors she cites and recommends to her readers. An especial sense of indebtedness to Dewey and to Peirce (to which she briefly alludes in Literature as Exploration) is instructively elaborated in The Reader, the Text, the Poem (1978/1994). In her preface to the original edition of The Reader, Rosenblatt traces the origins of the pragmatic "philosophic approach"-- to which she and Dewey alike subscribed--to "its roots in William James and Charles Sanders Peirce" (RTP, 17). Note that, in turn, Cornel West traces the pragmatism of James and Peirce to its taproot in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson.13 And note further that not only did both Dewey and Rosenblatt imbibe the Emersonian tradition indirectly through the work of James and Peirce, but also that each drank directly from the fount of Emerson's writings, as well.14

Another confluence of "academic strands and experiences" can be seen in Rosenblatt's and Dewey's respective associations with anthropologist Franz Boas. As Boas' former student, Rosenblatt acknowledges that the transactional approach she brought to the teaching of literature in part "reflected work with Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict in the graduate department of


14The depth of Dewey's appreciation for Emerson is suggested by his essay "Emerson--the Philosopher of Democracy" (1903) in MW 3:184-192; see Richard Poirier's Poetry and Pragmatism for an exploration of interrelationships between Emerson's and Dewey's writings. Rosenblatt notes that as a result of her "family upbringing," she was early exposed to "ideas drawn from antiauthoritarian European sources and such American writers as Emerson and Thoreau . . . " (LE, 281-282).
anthropology at Columbia University" (RTP, xi). Note, too, that Rosenblatt includes an article contributed by Boas to the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (1937) among references marshaled to document the assertion that "all human activity, and especially linguistic activity" is "transactional" in character (RTP, 20; 194, n. 15). In fact, Boas' work contributed significantly to the intellectual milieu environing both Dewey's and Rosenblatt's overlapping careers. Dewey's biographer Stephen C. Rockefeller notes that "Dewey's outlook was reinforced" by exposure to the thinking of Boas and other progressive colleagues at Columbia University, and implies that this sense of reinforcement was mutual.15 Dewey's allusions to the writing of Boas—for example, his unqualified praise for Boas' *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911)—certainly evidence profound respect for Boas' work (EN, 164). Rosenblatt's study of the works of both Boas and Dewey must thus have provided dual opportunities for exposure to their mutually reinforced outlooks.

Overall, the more fully I have come to recognize the recursive and often redundant character of exposure to ideas, the more apparent it has become to me that seeking to frame my research in terms of query into "influence" would be ironically incompatible with the very subject of my investigation. To presume an exclusive influence of one thinker upon another would betray an underlying paradigm of self-action (cf. the notion of self-acting substances in Aristotelian physics). To presume that thinkers possessed of predefined, atomistic identities can reciprocally influence one upon another within a cultural vacuum would represent at least a comparative advance to the paradigm of interaction (cf. the closed system of interacting Newtonian particles). But only by recognizing that all thinking involves participation in an ineffably complex milieu—so various as to elude definition, so variable as to defy the fixity of

generalization--can a researcher progress to the paradigm of transaction (cf. contemporary physics' construct of the dynamic energy field).\textsuperscript{16}

Thus, although I had initially framed my research in terms of inquiry into the influence of Dewey on the work of Rosenblatt, I now view such a query as a sounding line inadequate to fathom the depths of an ineluctably holistic milieu within and from which their writings emerged. Accordingly, my revised goal has become not to engage in a parallel study--which might invite oversimplification of richly complex interrelationships within the work of Dewey and Rosenblatt--but rather to present the distinctive contributions of each as complementary.

Study of the writings of each can in fact enhance understanding of the work of both. For example, Rosenblatt's description of the continuum of efferent-aesthetic observational stances framing readers' transactions with a text explicates a point only obliquely touched on by Dewey. Acquaintance with Dewey's thinking can illumine Rosenblatt's theories, as well. For example, Dewey/Bentley's identification of "self-action" with extinct modes of observation and report consonant with magic and pre-Galilean physics (PC, 301, 305) illumines the basis for Rosenblatt's rejection of literary theories which ascribe self-action either to text or to reader.

Besides shedding light one on another, Dewey's and Rosenblatt's respective contributions to the emergent paradigm of reader-text transaction seem jointly to invite construction of an even more comprehensive paradigm.\textsuperscript{17} This present investigation of the paradigm of reader-text transaction in the work of Dewey and of Rosenblatt may thus suggest possibilities for exploration of territory lying beyond the trail blazed in turn by each of these pioneers.

\textsuperscript{16} If "participation in an ineffably complex milieu" seems hyperbolic, consider Dewey's awed realization "that the fruit of communication should be participation, sharing, is a wonder by the side of which transubstantiation pales." See John Dewey, \textit{Experience and Nature}, in Boydston, ed., \textit{The Later Works}, 1:132.

\textsuperscript{17} For example, see Mark Johnson, \textit{The Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993). Johnson's portrayal of the self as a continually emerging text invites exploration of the "poem" evoked in transaction between the self-as-text and its "reader."
Chapter 1: The Evolving Paradigm of Transaction

"[The transactional approach]* . . . demands a pretty thoroughgoing reconstruction of deep-seated current attitudes and habits."\(^{18}\)

-Dewey to Bentley, 11/30/45 (PC, 498)

The epigraph chosen to introduce this chapter serves as fair warning to readers: the paradigm of transaction cannot be grafted onto conventional Western patterns of thought. Like the inscription above the portal in Dante's Inferno, Dewey's words announce an entrance cost: not hope, but deeply-entrenched cultural attitudes and habitual thought patterns must be abandoned at the threshold of transactionalism. To readers steeped in the assumptions of Western philosophy, the transactional approach may indeed seem frustratingly elusive, even counter-intuitive. Dewey himself achieved the requisite "thoroughgoing reconstruction of deep-seated current attitudes and habits" (PC, 498) only gradually in the course of an evolving process spanning more than five decades of thinking and writing.

When Dewey remarked in a (5/26/44) letter to Bentley that his thinking on a given subject tended to evolve during the process of writing about it, he aptly characterized a longitudinal trend of his writing career as a whole: "In writing I've often had the experience, when I get toward the close, of finding that what I said there involves considerable change in what I said in the early part of my discussion . . . . " (PC, 252). The paradigm of transaction, especially, underwent "considerable change" in the long-term process of Dewey's efforts to articulate it. First introduced in his seminal essay "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology" (1896), Dewey's

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\(^{18}\)Within excerpts drawn from Dewey and Bradley's correspondence within this dissertation, bracketed insertions followed by an asterisk will distinguish my own interpolations from those of editors Ratner and Altman.
transactional approach continued to emerge throughout the remainder of his career. Far from considering *Knowing and the Known* (completed in his ninety-first year) as a capstone treatment of this subject, Dewey evidently viewed that treatise as a foundation for further building. Shortly before Dewey’s death, in fact, he wrote in a (4/9/51) letter to Bentley that he hoped to "write on knowing as the way of behaving in which linguistic artifacts transact business with physical artifacts, tools, implements, apparatus, both kinds being planned for the purpose and rendering inquiry of necessity an experimental transaction . . ." (PC, 646). From Dewey’s perspective, then, exploration of the paradigm of transaction remained a lifelong and ultimately unfinished project.

Although mortality thwarted Dewey’s intention to advance beyond *Knowing and the Known*, he was apparently well pleased with that work as a benchmark treatment of the transactional paradigm. In a (12/25/49) letter, Dewey confided to Bentley his retrospective dissatisfaction with his own earlier formulations of the paradigm. Depicting those earlier formulations as a process of groping toward expression of the paradigm that crystallized only in the course of his collaboration with Bentley, Dewey chafed at the eleventh-hour timing of that crystallization: "I tend to get impatient when I realize that it is practically only within the last three or four years that I can see with reasonable clearness what I've been working at for many many years. . ." (PC, 613). Dewey noted that this belated clarification of his vision demystified for him "the [earlier]* difficulties I've met in getting my position understood" (PC, 614). He speculated that it was particularly his tendency to blur the distinction between "interaction" and "transaction" that had muddied the waters for his reading audience: "I had used the word 'transaction' occasionally, but I never got its full theoretical force and scope till you [Bentley]* pointed out how free it was from the ambiguity of 'interaction'' (PC, 614). Learning to distinguish more precisely between "interaction" and "transaction," then, apparently marked a pivotal juncture in the evolution of Dewey’s thinking.

Dewey readily acknowledged Bentley’s role as midwife in bringing this distinction to birth in his thinking, terming its gradual emergence as "what. . . I owe to you [Bentley]*" (PC, 614).
his earlier writings, Dewey had used the terms "interaction" and "transaction" more or less interchangeably. It was Bentley's tendency to challenge this equation that led Dewey to re-examine the assumptions underlying his previous usage of these terms.

In hindsight, Dewey became convinced that prior to Knowing and the Known he had committed two interlaced errors: he had failed adequately to distinguish between "transaction" and "interaction," and he had vacillated inconsistently in his usage of the term "interaction" between two differing senses of the word. Prodded by Bentley's persistent questioning, Dewey began to recognize as equivocal his previously dual usage of the term "interaction": "sometimes . . . ha[ving]* the force of 'between' in a spatial-temporal sense . . . ; sometimes . . . mean[ing]* 'with,' reciprocally (or mutually)--close to transact" (PC, 280). Having recognized the ambiguity inherent in this two-fold usage, Dewey enthusiastically embraced the project of disentangling his formerly intertwined usages of "interaction" and "transaction," demarcating them as distinct phases within the process of inquiry. The following excerpt from Dewey's (4/8/44) letter to Bentley summarizes the basis for that demarcation:

> It is interesting and encouraging to note how often we tend mutually to anticipate each other--as in the case of "trans--inter."

> . . . . When you definitely raised the question on . . . [this terminological]* point, after thinking it over, I came to the following conclusion: "Trans" is [the]* proper word for the actual fact-event as primary and total--that is, in its own occurrence, without respect to analysis. "Inter" is, in comparison, a name for a secondary fact-event--analysis of a transfact into constituent conditions . . . . (PC, 236)

To illustrate this distinction, Dewey added: "... E.g., any case of human behavior is a transaction, which, however, in respect to some particular problem may be resolved into interaction of specified organic-environing conditions, neither of which has any factual-event status, save with respect to transactional behavior" (PC, 236). Dewey later emphasized his
conviction that such a resolution of transaction into interacting constituents must always be recognized as a secondary, temporary procedure, whereby "'broken events' (incidents) are arbitrarily isolated from the extensive event to which they belong, an isolation justifiable only as it serves to indicate the nature of that event and, when the latter is made out, has to be dropped, having served its purpose" (PC, 249). Emphasizing the instrumental character of "interaction" as a phase of inquiry contingent upon "transaction," Dewey wrote:

... When we wish to know a transaction with respect to a certain type of problem, we proceed by analysis into an interaction of distinguished factors. ... In other words, in further knowings a transaction is placed in a new and inclusive time-space setting in which, ex post facto, it is viewed (treated) as an interaction. (PC, 244)

Since "interaction" necessarily presupposes a prior cognitive abstraction, Dewey dismissed as fallacious the notion that "interaction" could precede "transaction": "Re 'transaction.' It is absurd to treat it as interaction of distinct factors" (PC, 244). This absurdity resides in circular reasoning, since as Dewey reminded Bentley, "Interaction depends . . . upon prior knowledge of the engaged factors [retrospectively]* taken apart from transaction, while in every transaction such separation is impossible" (PC, 244). Adopting a phrase used by Bentley, Dewey elsewhere referred to this "tak[ing]* apart" (PC, 244)--i. e., selective abstraction--as a process of "cutting out" (PC, 147). Much as one might with scissors cut out certain portions of a photograph for scrutiny in isolation from the photographic image as a whole, so too can an inquirer--on the basis of selective attention and interest--cognitively "cut out" from a transactional situation certain "engaged factors" (PC, 147). Citing "the transaction borrowing-loaning" as an example, Dewey noted that although "it would be absurd to treat it as interaction of distinct factors," still for certain practical purposes "when we wish to know a transaction with respect to a certain type of problem, we proceed by analysis into an interaction of distinguished factors" (PC, 244). For example, "there may (and does) arise a type of problem in which it is needful to inquire into the
causes which led A to borrow and B to loan, and also into the respective consequences of the
transaction upon the subsequent careers of A and B respectively" (PC, 244). Note that only in
and through the transactional situation in which A and B are engaged do they emerge as borrower
and lender; and only secondarily by means of analysis do they become "cut-out" or abstracted
from the transactional situation as interacting factors.

Identifying the transactional situation as primary, the cutting-out process as secondary,
Dewey recommended a corresponding basis for differentiation of terms designative of these
phases of experience:

Re secondary terms as distinct from primary: Transaction would
be primary; "secondary" applies to what you have sometimes
called "cut-out" matters; they are words that apply to
transactions when the latter are viewed analytically, from an
angle or in a perspective due to a special problem. . . . (PC, 146)

Failure to recognize and preserve this distinction would tend to breed what Dewey had elsewhere
termed "the philosophic fallacy" of mistaking products of the cutting-out process for antecedents
of that process:

There are, I think, a good many philosophical words which
leave a wrong result or point in the wrong direction as they
actually figure in philosophical writing, that have a sound
meaning when they [are] described in the actual transactional
situation with respect to their functioning in that situation.
They are results of cutting out which are not recognized as such
products [emphasis added]. (PC, 147)

For example, Dewey noted that a term such as "agent" or "subject" (PC, 146) must always be
recognized as denoting a consequent of a cutting-out process, rather than an element pre-existing
a transactional situation.
How does this distinction between the transactional situation as primary and the cutting-out process as secondary relate to Dewey's earlier delineated distinction between "having" and "knowing"? When Bentley initially raised this question, Dewey's immediate response (in a letter dated 8/1/43) suggests a definition of "knowing" as a tertiary event, subsequent to the primary transactional situation and a secondary cutting-out process:

. . . "Knowing" is placing what is had in a wider and longer contextual event.

1. A man may be mad [i.e., angry]* without knowing it; certain qualities than present themselves directly as intensely obnoxious--they are immediate qualities of the transactional situation.

2. He becomes aware that he is (or was) angry--a cutting-out within the total event.

3. He studies, investigates, to find out what "anger" is--involves among other things [Walter Bradford] Cannon's physiological researches, etc. "Scientific" knowledge--emphasis on extensive--gets away with symbolic relations from the qualities of [the] immediate, intense---from "experiencing."

"Relations" take the place occupied by "qualities." (PC, 147)

Here Dewey seems to have defined "knowing" so narrowly as to include propositional knowledge only. Later, in response to Bentley's questions on this point, Dewey conceded his willingness to widen the extension of the term "knowledge" to include a discriminative mode of knowing as well as propositional knowledge.

As Dewey reminded Bentley (in a 5/21/44 letter), he had earlier delineated only a two-fold process, in contradistinction to the more thoroughly differentiated three-fold process outlined above: ". . . In my earlier writings I've made the distinction between what I called ‘being/having’ and ‘knowing’--between, e.g., being angry and knowing what anger is, and having
blue before our eyes and knowing what blue is" (PC, 248). A more inclusive definition of knowing would take into account two meanings of the phrase "knowing what blue is":

(1) discriminative knowledge: knowing how to abstract the quality of blue from all the blue things experientially distributed within the visual field (i.e., the experience of "having blue before our eyes")

(2) propositional knowledge: knowing that "blue" is a member of a category; for example, knowing that blue is a quality.

In contradistinction to propositional knowledge (knowing that), the preceding discriminative capacity (knowing how) constitutes a kind of practical knowledge. In other words, discriminative knowledge consists in knowing how to abstract a quality such as "blue" from the visual field as a whole. Propositional knowledge--an evolutionarily, developmentally, and experientially subsequent mode of knowing--additionally entails predication. That is, propositional knowledge places a discriminated quality such as "blue" within a superordinate category--for example, knowing that blue is a color.

Just as Dewey posited a "genetic and functional continuity" (PC, 248) between "pre-linguistic events" (e.g., "having blue before our eyes") and knowing (e.g., "knowing what blue is"), so too he considered practical knowledge and propositional knowledge to be genetically and functionally continuous. Dewey noted in a 6/12/44 memo to Bentley that the locus of knowledge must be defined to include not only propositional but also practical modes of knowing:

Libraries may be said to contain . . . knowledge, and so may finger-musculature in connection with tools. . . .

[Knowledge includes]* . . . what is known by, say, mechanics at work in shops, . . . [and]* [by] farmers in the field . . . . (PC, 270)

In fact, Dewey conceived of scientific inquiry--whereby propositional knowledge ("knowing that") comes to be considered warrantably assertible--as an evolutionarily advanced form of "know-how."
In a (10/1/43) letter to Bentley, Dewey noted that "'knowing how' . . . connects . . . directly with [the]* physiological, and leads up to scientific inquiry as a highly developed case of knowing, how to know" (PC, 179). That Dewey conceived of propositional knowledge and know-how not as dual categories but rather as relative positions on a continuum of knowing behaviors is suggested by the following observation in a (9/13-14-15/43) letter to Bentley: "'Knowledging' is [a]* case of technology, running the gamut, like smelting crude ores, and other technologies, from relatively primitive, undeveloped technologies to relatively highly developed ones—[the]* latter are 'sciences'" (PC, 177). In the same letter, Dewey deliberately realigned his earlier position on this issue as delineated in his Logic: The Theory of Inquiry (1938/1986):

. . . Because of its subject-matter as Logic, I gave the word [knowledge]* a narrowed use. I used it for warranted or tested results. But I don't think there is anything in that fact which stands in the way of a wider (psychological) use. (PC, 175)

He even expressed willingness to retract his earlier, narrower definition of knowledge lest it thwart a broader vision of knowing as evolutionarily continuous behavior: "If there is anything in . . . [my] Logic . . . that prevents or militates against the treatment of it [knowing]* as an event in connection with other events, I hereby take it back" (PC, 176). A thorny question, for Dewey, was just how far "down" in the evolutionary continuum knowing behaviors might be said to extend. As Dewey posed this question in his lengthy (9/13-15/43) letter to Bentley: "How far down . . . do you carry "knowing how"? Downwards, everything physiological above tropism?" (PC, 177). As if testing the limits of Dewey's willingness to extend the definition of knowing "downwards," Bentley introduced the case of discriminative behaviors as on the part of animals. Could such behaviors--even on the part of one-celled animals--be seen as a kind of "know-how" or practical knowledge?

Yes, even the discriminative behavior of an amoeba is to be regarded as continuous with human knowledge as Dewey and Bentley eventually negotiated that term's extension. A pivotal turn in Dewey's thinking on this issue is recorded in a 5/18/45 communication to Bentley:
Re animal discrimination. When you first [spoke] about the knowledge of the amoeba, I think I was momentarily shocked, but thinking it over, saw you had to be right. I think, too, it is a kind of knowing . . . [that]* some humans know—the evidence in savages, if not in babes. You and I have a kind of smell on "intellectual" subjects which is of this general order—"in reading an argument, I "feel" a contradiction before I spot it—a kind of physical jar.

Having embraced this evolutionarily more inclusive definition of knowing, Dewey toyed with the idea of revising his earlier work to align it terminologically with Knowing and the Known.

That Dewey tended to view the transactional vocabulary that he and Bentley were hammering out for Knowing and the Known as a potential leveling instrument for realigning earlier statements of his positions is suggested by remarks such as this one in a (6/30/45) letter to Bentley: "I ran across a reprint of my speech ["Nature in Experience"]* the other day. Some of the things I would say differently now . . . " (PC, 434). More substantively, Dewey noted (in a 2/13/49 letter to Bentley) that when writing his Logic, he "didn't see the core of . . . [his] own position as clearly" as he had come to see it “in . . . [his] ninetieth year” (PC, 596).

Even more substantively, Dewey seems to have become aware of a tendency in his earlier work prematurely to analyze specific events in terms of interaction before arriving at "full transactional statement" (PC, 245) embracing "full transactional consideration" of their context (PC, 378). To put this recognition in metaphorical terms, it was as if, having methodically through the years noted instance after instance of "interaction" between trees, he had belatedly climbed a hill, from the crest of which he commanded a more comprehensive "transactional" view of the forest as an organic whole. With apparent chagrin, Dewey noted the aptness of Lyle Eddy's commentary on this cart-before-the-horse development of his intellectual career. In a letter to Bentley (dated December 25, 1949), Dewey noted:

I had a piece from Lyle Eddy, the graduate student I've referred
to . . ., in which he writes as follows: "For the first time I am beginning to see (i) the transactional approach and (ii) the distinction between content--subjectmatter--[and] method (with full awareness of philosophizing as itself method) as not quite the same thing. In the development of your [Dewey's]* philosophy, the second of these came first; and . . . there is something strange about . . . [this sequence]*. For in appealing to others to give recognition to the role of method and to its recognition in and by your philosophy, an appeal to the transaction approach must be made first to warrant it and to combat the traditional 'subject-object' approach distinction that stands in the way." (PC, 613)

Although Dewey's recognition of the validity of Eddy's appraisal apparently prompted him to entertain the possibility of revising his earlier work to square it with his new insights, the impulse to move forward in his writing rather than to backtrack ultimately prevailed. Dewey's sense of a forward thrust impelling his intellectual career is vividly conveyed in the following excerpt from an earlier letter to Bentley (6/22/44):

I remember that once you said something about [how] difficult it was for you . . . to go back to what you had previously written. It awoke an answering echo in me. What lies ahead seems so much [more] interesting--it's the other side of a field for the berrypicker. Going back seems back, not going. . . . The things that beckon are somewhere else. (PC, 277)

New frontiers beckoned Dewey. Had he had "world enough and time," he might indeed have forged onward to frame his earlier interactional analyses within his newly-clarified transactional vision.
As Brian Caraher (1991) has observed, the primary paradigm underlying Dewey's work prior to Knowing and the Known—prominently including Art as Experience, his treatise on aesthetics—is "interaction of organism and environment."\(^{19}\) Judging the interactional model embodied in Dewey's earlier work to be "far more cognitively adequate and defensible" than his later transactional model, Caraher argues that Dewey's life work should be viewed exclusively through the lens of his interactional model (WSPR, 203). Characterizing Dewey's adoption of transactionalism as a spurious near-deathbed conversion, Caraher implies that Bentley, fired with a missionary zeal for intellectual proselytizing, coaxed the elder Dewey into compromising his earlier positions.

Caraher seems to discredit Dewey's frequently-expressed view of transactionalism as a foregrounding of what had always been implicit in the background of his interactionism. Many passages in his letters to Bentley suggest that Dewey came to view the transactional model as a primary frame of reference, within which analytical discriminations between interacting conditions can, for practical purposes, be legitimately drawn.

Metaphorically to grasp Dewey's distinction between a primary "full transactional consideration" (PC, 378) and secondary interactional analysis, imagine that you have been commissioned cinematically to record a panoramic scene. Your camera first sweeps the panorama from above, then swoops down to zero in on a particular interaction as one of many intertwined "aspectual phase[s]" (PC, 250) of that scene. The trajectory of your camera would demonstrate that you had selected one arbitrarily-bounded portion of a larger network of action upon which to focus. If, instead, you were to focus initially on only one particular interaction, this originally narrow focus would mask the fact of your prior selection. Even subsequently drawing the camera back to encompass a more panoramic view would not reverse the sense of primacy arbitrarily attached to this isolated sub-event. This latter-described sequence of camera

\(^{19}\)Brian G. Caraher, Wordsworth's "Slumber" and the Problematics of Reading (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 203. This book will be referred to as WSPR with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
movements seems to correspond in Dewey's thinking with the kind of interactional analysis prominent in his writing prior to *Knowing and the Known*.

Although Dewey had in his earlier works frequently alluded to broader contexts within which interactions transpire, he had (according to his own retrospective appraisal) failed fully to highlight the primacy of broader spatial-durational events. Reflecting on what he now viewed as a clumsily-expressed, back-burner version of transactionalism in his earlier work, Dewey observed in a letter to Bentley (4/26/44):

> In one of my earlier writings I made a point about what I called "gross" and "refined," and the necessity of carrying the latter back to the former. . . . . If I had associated earlier in the game what you name "transactions" with what I was trying to get at with my "gross," I guess I wouldn't have gotten off the track so easily. . . . I hate to admit I was so stupid but I am afraid I'm only just now getting the "whole hog" fact in its wholeness and hogginess. . . . (PC, 243)

Anticipating a comparable obtuseness on the part of prospective readers of *Knowing and the Known*, Dewey urged an unequivocally "whole-hog" phrasing of the transactional paradigm.

Perhaps to counter what he now perceived as his inverted earlier argument for "carrying [interaction] back to [transaction]," Dewey emphatically insisted to Bentley that "the transactional is primary and inclusive," whereas "any 'interactional' treatments . . . [i.e..]* developmental analyses of a transaction" (PC, 407) can emerge only secondarily. Even such unequivocally phrased passages as the foregoing, however, evidently fail to persuade Caraher that Dewey's self-proclaimed reconstruction of his earlier interactionism was authentic. Similarly, Caraher doubts the validity of Louise M. Rosenblatt's self-characterization of her own paradigm of the reading process as transactional. Much as Caraher has chosen to view Dewey's work solely through the lens of interactionism, so too he chooses to focus only on the interactional dimensions of Rosenblatt's analysis. In effect, Caraher seems to dismiss Rosenblatt's professed
transactionalism as more nominal than real: "... When she [Rosenblatt] turns to characterize the activity of reading as transactional, the very terms of her analysis echo the interactive paradigm" (WSPR, 202, n. 16). In his determination to focus only on interactive analysis within the works of both Rosenblatt and Dewey, Caraher seems to miss the point that embracing a primarily transactional vision by no means rules out subsequently employing an interactive model for secondary analysis. In this dissertation I will aim to demonstrate how transactionalism—though more implicit than explicitly expressed in their early work—consistently frames interactional analysis within the work of both Dewey and Rosenblatt.

Dewey's Transactionally-Framed Interactional Analysis

Dewey's identification of his earlier-employed terms "gross" and "refined" with paradigms of pre-cognitive and cognitive transaction in Knowing and the Known offers a clue for tracing more fully the links he saw between his earlier and later work. To this end, I will first examine two closely related works: Dewey's Studies in Logical Theory (1903/1976) and his "Introduction to Essays in Experimental Logic" (1916/1980).

In her textual commentary on Volume 2 of Dewey's Middle Works, Jo Ann Boydston notes that in 1939, "Dewey identified the Studies as the first published writing to present the essentials of the philosophical view that he developed through the succeeding thirty-five years."20 In fact, the ongoing development of this "philosophical view" continued well over thirty-five years, as is suggested by instructive parallels between Studies in Logical Theory (1903) and Knowing and the Known (1949).

In *Studies in Logical Theory*, Dewey delineated a three-fold distinction that seems to parallel the triune distinction he and Bentley later drew between "pre-linguistic/pre-cognitive transaction," "linguistic/cognitive transaction," and "interaction" (interactive analysis). In "The Antecedents and Stimuli of Thinking," the second essay in *Studies in Logical Theory*, Dewey had similarly differentiated between "first, . . . the antecedents or conditions that evoke thought; secondly, . . . the datum or immediate material presented to thought; and thirdly, . . . the proper objective of thought."21 Though expressed in different terms, these two tri-fold distinctions seem to be parallel in substance.

Paralleling Dewey and Bentley's description of pre-linguistic/pre-cognitive transaction is Dewey's description of "the antecedents that evoke thought"; i.e., "the situation that is immediately prior to the thought-function as such" (SLT, 317). Dewey emphasized that "it is the situation as a whole, and not any one isolated part of it, or distinction within it, that calls forth and directs thinking" (SLT, 328). When from that antecedent situation certain elements are (to use Dewey/Bentley's terminology) "cut out"--i.e., cognitively abstracted--on the basis of selective interest and attention, these linguistically-discriminated elements become (in Dewey's terms) "the datum or immediate material presented to thought" (SLT, 317). Dewey described this cutting-out procedure as cognitively instrumental: "a distinction which is made within the thought process as a part of and for the sake of its own modus operandi" (SLT, 317). Dewey warned that to forget the purely instrumental function of this discriminatory process is to invite an ontological self-delusion: "To read back into the preliminary situation those distinctions . . . which get existence . . . only within the process of inquiry is a fallacy" (SLT, 328). Likewise, "we must beware the fallacy of assuming that some one element in the prior situation in isolation or detachment induces . . . reflection which in reality comes forth only from the whole . . . situation," since "it is the whole dynamic experience with its qualitative and pervasive continuity,

According to Dewey, recognition that a "thought-situation" has been selectively carved out of an experiential situation as a whole is a necessary pre-requisite for legitimate interactional analysis. The phases necessarily comprising any process of inquiry--from pre-cognitive transaction, to cognitive transaction, to analysis of interaction--are reviewed in verbal flow-chart style below:

. . . The internal dissension of an experience leads to detaching certain factors previously integrated in the concrete experience as aspects of its own qualitative coloring, and to relegating them, for the time being (pending integration into further immediate qualities of a reconstituted experience), into a world of bare meaning, a sphere qualified as ideal throughout. These meanings then become the tools of thought in interpreting the data, just as the sense-qualities which define the presented situation are the immediate matter for thought.

(SLT, 355)

This designation of instrumental discriminations as "tools" anticipates Dewey's later metaphorical depiction of successively refined phases of experience in terms drawn from the technological domains of mining, refining, and fabricating materials derived from ores.

In his "Introduction to Essays in Experimental Logic," for example, Dewey (1916/1980) employed metallurgical imagery to depict the three phases of experience that he would later term pre-linguistic, existential transaction; linguistic transaction (meaning making); and interactive analysis (by means of which meanings become refined as essences):

Let us take the sequence of mineral rock in place, pig iron[,] and the manufactured article [e.g., a watch spring], comparing the raw material in its undisturbed place in nature [crude ore] to the
original res of experience, compare the manufactured article [watch spring] to the objective object of knowledge, and the brute datum to the metal undergoing extraction from raw ore [to become, in extracted form, pig iron] for the sake of being wrought into a useful thing.22

By means of this complex analogy, Dewey compares successive stages of refinement in the process of meaning-making with those of a more tangible form of technology. Dewey appropriately likened pre-linguistic transaction--the pre-cognitive phase of experience--to crude ore in its unmined natural state, since this phase of experience "holds within it in suspense a vast complex of other qualities and things that in the experience itself are objects of esteem or aversion, of decision, of use, of suffering, of endeavor and revolt, [but] not of knowledge" (IEEL, 322). This "primary non-reflectional" phase of experience (IEEL, 323) provides a "context" that, though itself "non-cognitive" (IEEL, 322), serves to frame cognition. Although certain "select portions" can be cognitively abstracted from this indeterminate "vast and vague continuum" and "designated by words as terms," the contextual "taken-for-granted whole" of immediate experience itself eludes conscious reflection:

. . . The words "experience," "situation," etc., are used to remind the thinker of the need of reversion to precisely something which never can be one of the terms of his reflection but which nevertheless furnishes the existential meaning and status of them all. (IEEL, 324).

Dewey noted that, like the very air we breathe, this ineffable experiential whole vitally sustains our functioning, yet evades definition precisely because of its ubiquity: "The word 'experience' is . . . a notation of an inexpressible as that which decides the ultimate status of all which is expressed; inexpressible not because it is so remote and transcendent, but because it is so

22John Dewey, "Introduction to Essays in Experimental Logic," in Boydston, ed., The Middle Works, 10: 341. This introduction will be referred to as IEEL with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
immediately engrossing and matter of course" (IEEL, 325). In a 1940 lecture entitled "Nature in Experience," Dewey termed this ubiquitous contextual whole "gross macroscopic experience."\(^{23}\) He noted that, like crude ore containing metals capable of being extracted only by means of smelting processes, "experience itself, even gross macroscopic experience, contains the materials and the processes and operation which, when they are rightly laid hold of and used, lead to the methods and conclusions of the natural sciences" (NE, 143). Dewey designated such "intellectual instrumentalities" as simultaneously both the products and tools of "development out of gross experience into the highly refined conclusions of science" (NE, 143). He described this development as a recursive process: "circular" in an "existential and historical" (NE, 143), rather than a question-begging, logically fallacious sense. He seemed to envision this circular movement not as the repetitive round of a tethered animal, but rather as the widening gyre of a bird's upward flight. Dewey metaphorically represented this expansive movement from gross into ever more refined experience as a sequential series of metallurgical industrial processes.

Having likened the "primary non-reflectional" phase of experience to crude ore in its unmined state, Dewey next likened subsequent reflective (linguistic/cognitive) transactions to the industrial processes of mining and smelting. Much as iron ore locked within the earth can be mined and smelted to yield pig iron, so too can reflective transactions effect a "resolution" of holistic immediate experience "into [distinct] elements" (IEEL, 327). Dewey insisted, however, that these linguistically discriminated elements pre-exist linguistic transaction only in the limited sense in which the products of mining and smelting processes can be said to pre-exist such industrial processes: "... There is no more reason for supposing that... [the results of cognitive abstraction pre-exist acts of abstraction than for] supposing that pigs of iron pre-existed as pigs in the mine" (IEEL, 343). The mode of existence conveyed by this metaphor seems less an actuality than an actualizable potentiality: "... Any inquiry as to how the data antecedently

\(^{23}\)John Dewey, "Nature in Experience," in Boydston, ed., The Later Works, 14: 143. This essay will be referred to as NE with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations. Cf. Ratner and Altman, eds., John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley: A Philosophical Correspondence, 434.
exist will . . . show that they do not exist in the same purity, the same external exclusiveness and internal homogeneity, which they present within the situation of inference, any more than the iron which pre-existed in the rocks in the mountains was the same as the [subsequently] fluxed and extracted ore" (IEEL, 344). And just as industrial mining and smelting processes are impelled by desire to exploit the extracted iron for practical purposes, so too according to Dewey are linguistic/cognitive transactions always practically motivated:

Knowing always has a particular purpose . . . . Every reflective knowledge, in other words, has a specific task which is set by a concrete and empirical situation . . . (IEEL, 327)

According to differing practical purposes, the discriminated data will differ in focus and in degree of refinement. As a telling example of variation in such refinement, consider the rich resources of Eskimo languages for describing various kinds of snow, in striking contrast with the relatively impoverished vocabulary of other languages for that purpose.

Brute data, once extracted from "macroscopic gross experience," can be further refined through the recursive processes of inquiry. For example, reflection upon experience of such events as bathing, swimming, wading, drinking water, etc., yields a brute datum: "water." As a common denominator of such events, this datum is "abstracted and fixed for intellectual use by some physically convenient means, such as a sound or a muscular contraction of the vocal organs [or, as Dewey elsewhere noted, a gesture or visual symbol]" (IEEL, 351).

By means of inquiry--i.e., interactive analysis--such relatively crude data can be refined to varying degrees; through scientific inquiry, for example, "water" has been rarefied to a symbolic and systematic abstraction: H2O. Data abstracted from the same immediate experience can thus range from relatively crude to highly refined discriminations. Such data in turn provide both the material and the tools for further inquiry. To return to Dewey's metallurgical metaphor, inquiry into relationships between linguistically-distinguished elements corresponds with industrial processes of a kind in which pig iron plays an instrumental role.
Just as pig iron can be alloyed with other metals (for example, to form steel) and fabricated into artifacts (for example, watch springs and scalpels), so too can data extracted from immediate experience via cognitive/linguistic transaction provide both combinative material and tools for further inquiry. Such "logical fixations"--themselves the product of reflection--recursively serve as "the working means" of "subsequent inquiries" (IEEL, 331). Much as pig iron--itself a refined version of crude iron ore--becomes raw material for the manufacture of watch springs, so likewise do "terms that were originally by-products of reflection become [themselves] primary objects" of subsequent inquiry (IEEL, 357).

In "Nature, Communication and Meaning," a crucial chapter of Nature and Experience (1925), Dewey similarly depicted meaning making as a recursive process progressing in an historically and existentially circular fashion from crude to increasingly refined levels of meaning. Here again Dewey depicted linguistic transaction as a secondary, mediate phase of experience whereby certain aspects of primary, immediate experience are selectively abstracted. The products of such abstraction--the data of thought--are here again described in terms distinctly reminiscent of the metallurgical metaphor pattern in "Introduction to Essays in Experimental Logic." Just as iron, locked in dispersion within the bowels of earth, can be released through mining and smelting processes, so too "brute efficiencies and inarticulate consummations as soon as they can be spoken of are liberated from local and accidental contexts . . . ." (EN, 132). Dewey described these contexts as a "flux" of events, indeterminately bounded and "transient to the point of evanescence" (EN, 146). Just as pig iron is more internally homogeneous and malleable than the crude iron of its origin, linguistically demarcated data are relatively both more stable and more cognitively manipulable than are the events of primary experience:

Where communication exists, things in acquiring meaning, thereby acquire representatives, surrogates, signs and implicates, which are infinitely more amenable to management, more permanent and more accommodating, than events in their first estate. (EN, 132)
But although the phrasing of Dewey's descriptions of the process by which "events in their first estate" become the data of thought resonate with his earlier-employed metallurgical metaphors, Dewey introduced an alternate image pattern in *Experience and Nature*. Turning from the realm of the mine, foundry, and refinery, Dewey here drew his illustrative analogy instead from the province of the vineyard, winepress, and distillery.

Less fully elaborated than his metallurgical metaphor, Dewey's analogy between wine making and meaning making is only elliptically and tangentially conveyed. As an apparently incidental aside, Dewey suggested that linguistic transactions abstract meanings from immediate experience much as "a wine-press 'expresses' the juice of grapes" (EN, 134). Later, without explicit reference to his earlier allusion to the wine making process, he defined "essence"--characterized as a rarefied form of meaning--as "the distilled import . . . of existence" (EN, 144). Thus, with broadbrush strokes he paralleled the stages of meaning making with those of the wine making process, but left to his readers the twin projects of teasing out the implications of his wine making trope and comparing them with those of his earlier metallurgical metaphor.

Several parallels between wine making and iron production make these two technologies equally apt metaphors for the meaning-making process. In both cases, raw material (grapes / iron ore) must initially be wrested from nature by the sweat of the laborer's brow. From that raw material, a more concentrated intermediary product (grape juice / pig iron) is laboriously extracted. That product becomes the raw material, in turn, for an alchemic transmutation of a less valued substance (grape juice / pig iron) to a more highly valued product (e.g., wine / steel artifact). Within these two yoked metaphorical patterns, of course, the three paired stages can be seen to correspond with (1) the impressions of context-setting immediate experience, (2) the data of reflective thought, and (3) the objects of inquiry. As we have seen, Dewey and Bentley would later demarcate three corresponding experiential phases: pre-linguistic transaction, linguistic transaction, and interactive analysis.

In *Nature and Experience*, Dewey depicted the recursive character of these experiential phases by means of still another metaphor, that of a river and its tributaries. Dewey noted that
the data of thought bear a double relation to experience. Selectively abstracted from the flow of immediate experience, these data themselves become a tributary of that flow, transforming its character: "Meanings having been deflected from the rapid and roaring stream of events into a calm and traversable canal, rejoin the main stream, and color, temper and compose its course" (EN, 132). And if meanings abstracted from human experience can transform the very character of that experience, how much more powerfully transformative must be essences--described by Dewey as "pronounced instance[s] of meaning" (EN, 144). Recall that Dewey defined "essence"--in terms evocative of vinification--as the "distilled import . . . of existence" (EN, 144). Taken in conjunction with his description of the power of abstracted meanings to "color" and "temper" subsequent immediate experience, Dewey's description of essences as a "distilled" version of meanings implies an instructive analogy between "essences" and wine.

The technology of distillation has historically effected not only the chemical transformation of grape juice, but also a qualitative transformation of human experience. In contexts as disparate as Bacchic rites, Judaic ceremonial rituals, the Christian sacrament of Eucharist, and bottle passing on Skid row, imbibing wine has historically effected changes (variously interpreted as physical, psychic, or spiritual) in human consciousness and behavior--changes at least as dramatic as the chemical transmutation resulting from the fermentation process. Similarly, the recursive processes of inquiry rarefy meanings to create "essences"--which, in turn, transform the experience of human meaning makers. To exemplify this phenomenon, Dewey cited human behaviors affected by rarefaction of the relatively crude meaning of "water" (as thirst-slaker, etc.) to the more refined essence "H2O."

Dewey attributed the origin of all meanings to communal activity. He noted that in the course of establishing "a concerted or combined method of using or enjoying things" (EN, 148), human beings come to rely upon means for signaling to each other via "sound, gesture or written mark," (EN, 145) in order to coordinate their shared activities. According to Dewey, any such signal "becomes a word by gaining meaning; and it gains meaning when its use establishes a genuine community of action" (EN, 145). For example, as members of a community develop
strategies for cooperatively sharing information about the location of water sources, collecting and transporting water to quench thirst, douse flames, etc., they develop linguistic means for signaling these intentions. No longer a bare existence only immediately experienced, water becomes for its communal partakers "an existence having meaning and potential essence" (EN, 146). Much as a wine press wrings juice from grapes, language thus wrings meaning from existence. When strained through the alembic of inquiry, such relatively crude meanings--the consequences of shared human behavior--are refined to become logical "essences": i.e., "meanings without direct reference to human behavior" (EN, 150-151).

Recall that Dewey described abstraction of meanings from immediately experienced existence as a process of liberation whereby "brute efficiencies and inarticulate consummations as soon as they can be spoken of are liberated from local and accidental contexts [of immediate experience]" (EN, 132). This extractive process, dawning simultaneously with human language, reaches its apex in scientific inquiry:

In physical science, the abstraction or liberation is complete.

Things are defined by means of symbols that convey only their consequences with respect to each other. (EN, 151)

The scientific denotation "H20," for example, to some degree eclipses the ordinary, "ulterior meanings" of water--i.e., those meanings derived from "the experience of social intercourse" (EN, 150):

"Water" in ordinary experience designates an essence of something which has familiar bearings and uses in human life, drink and cleansing and the extinguishing of fire. But H20 gets away from these connections, and embodies in its essence only instrumental efficiency in respect to things independent of human affairs. (EN, 151).

But just as the moon passing between earth and sun during a solar eclipse may conceal but can never extinguish the light of the sun, so too the denotation "H20" may screen but can never
actually obliterate the connotations of "water": "Water still has the meanings of water of everyday experience when it becomes the essence H20, or else H20 would be totally meaningless, a mere sound, not an intelligible name" (EN, 152). The more highly-refined essence "H20"--derived from and superimposed upon cruder meanings of "water"--does, however, offer the expediency of greater mobility and manipulability.

Recall that Dewey had earlier noted that terms like "water" are more cognitively manipulable than unwieldy durational/extensional situations such as bathing, drinking from streams, etc. Liberated from such experiential contexts, the common denominator "water" becomes a relatively streamlined datum of thought. Reduction of "water" to an even more streamlined essence--"H20"--facilitates recognition of ever more subtle common denominators:

Our everyday use of water is limited by our commonsense knowledge that solid, liquid and gaseous conditions constitute its range of possible transformations.

Extensive as are the uses-enjoyments thereby ensured[,] they are very limited as compared with the fact that H20 and every other compound have common denominators and, accordingly, are in theory indefinitely transformable into one another . . . . [Recent scientific progress has] shown that what holds of compounds holds also of "elements." They were for such a long time held to be ultimate and hence immutable, but now in theoretical-experimental promise they also are reciprocally inter-convertible. (EN, 343-344)

Dewey's heady excitement over the prospect of reciprocal inter-conversion of elements recalls his implied analogy between the recursive effects of wine making upon the creative energies of humankind and the no less potent effects on human creativity of distilling essence from existence. These latter effects redound, as Dewey pointed out, not only upon inquirers who distill and
manipulate such essences, but also upon their fellow human beings--transforming alike "the lives of artists as well as artisans, of the wisest statesmen as well as of ditch diggers" (EN, 345).

As we will see, Dewey elsewhere depicted the analogous process by which art is distilled from and transforms human experience as no less potent and pervasive in its effects. It seems no coincidence that Dewey likens not only the processes of making meaning but also the processes of artistic creation to the technology of the vintner. Parallels between these processes include the extractive labor demanded, their similarly effected reduction of existence to essence, and their analogous effects upon human communion and imagination. I will explore these and other similarities between the processes of wine making, meaning making, and art in succeeding chapters. I will especially emphasize the crucial role played by language as the "winepress" in the meaning making and art making processes.

Broadly defined to include all modes of communication (auditory, visual, or kinesthetic) promotive of shared activity, language actually serves as both means and material for meaning making as an ongoing process. Dewey's analogy between meaning making and wine making can be extended to include all the recursive functions of language:

1. Language (in its most inclusive sense) abstracts meanings from metaphysical existences--much as a winepress extracts juice from grapes;

2. "Everyday" language embodies "crude" meanings wrung from immediate experience--much like juice squeezed from grapes;

3. Specialized language embodies "refined" meanings (i.e., essences, the products of inquiry in various domains) distilled from cruder meanings--much as wine is distilled from grape juice;

4. Specialized language, in turn, serves as a tool for logic (inquiry into inquiry itself), distilling quintessential logical essences--much as an alembic distills brandy from wine. These essences
Thus, language at each stage both serves as an indispensable tool for and constitutes the product of the meaning making process. Note that language is not just a vat or bottle for containing pre-existent meanings or essences. There is, for Dewey, no transcendental or transcendent realm in which disembodied meanings can exist apart from language.

Dewey’s metaphysics—unlike metaphysical systems that accord primeval essence and existence to beings extant in the natural world—is a metaphysics of existences originally devoid of essence. Shared human activity alone creates meanings; human inquiry into these contingent meanings creates equally contingent essences. Language, both tool and product of the recursive inquiry process, functions as "a natural bridge that joins the gap between existence and essence" (EN, 133). Essence so defined, far from the fixed eidos of Aristotelian metaphysics, is neither eternal nor immutable. The locus of essence, for Dewey, is not in some metaphysical realm apart from space and time, but in temporal/durational transactions, within which human meaning makers and "environing conditions" (PC, 236) function as an indivisible whole. Each essence, like every other product of human technology, is crafted for a specific practical purpose and is subject to expedient replacement. Like the tentative conclusions of inquirers striving toward ever more fully "warrantable assertibility" rather than definitive "truth" (see Dewey’s Logic: The Theory of Inquiry), Deweyan essences are characterized merely as benchmarks of a continually evolving ontology.

The analogy between Dewey's metaphysics and his aesthetics becomes apparent when we compare his vision of existences, originally devoid of essence, with his depiction of art products such as musical scores and literary texts as merely sets of marks on paper. For Dewey, just as meanings must be wrung from existences, and essences distilled from cruder meanings, so individually-evoked literary works must be wrung from texts, and interpretations recursively

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distilled from individual evocations. The implications of this analogy for the dynamics of the reading process--both literally in the reading of texts, and figuratively in the "reading" of selves--will be traced in the following chapters.
Chapter 2: The Poem: Reader and Text in Transaction

Rosenblatt's transactional model of the reading process identifies the reader-text relationship as a specific instance of organismic-environmental transaction. She notes that "the concept of . . . transaction with the environment provides the model for the process in which reader and text are involved" (RTP 43). According to this paradigm, rather than pre-existing as independent entities, "reader" and "text" emerge as retrospectively-identifiable phases of transaction between a human being and a distinctive kind of environmental artifact. Much as the designations "eater" and "food" have meaning only in connection with the transactional process we term "eating," Rosenblatt demonstrates that the designations "reader" and "text" have meaning only as connected aspects of the transactional process we term "reading." She thus deftly skirts the controversy between text-centered and reader-centered literary theorists by discrediting the false dualism at the heart of their debate.

Rosenblatt points out that certain configurations of ink marks on paper or of sound waves striking the tympanum become recognizable as a "text" only in so far as a human being through the process of evoking meaning from them assumes the role of "reader," and vice versa:

A person becomes a reader by virtue of his activity in relationship to a text, which he organizes as a set of verbal symbols. A physical text, a set of marks on a page, becomes the text of a poem or of a scientific formula by virtue of its relationship with a reader who can thus interpret it . . . . (RTP 18-19)

Rosenblatt demonstrates that much as an apple found elsewhere than in the mouth or digestive tract of an organism can be termed food only in a potential rather than in an actual sense, "the text actually remains simply marks on paper, an object in the environment, until some reader
transacts with it." She thus demonstrates that the terms "reader" and "text" represent two ends of the same stick--i.e., indissolubly wedded phases of a single transaction. Accordingly, as Rosenblatt points out, the concept of "reader" necessarily implies the concept of "text," and vice versa: "The term 'reader' implies a transaction with a text; the term "text" implies transaction with a reader" (TTRW, 1063). Reader and text do not pre-exist a particular reading event as "separate, self-contained, and already defined entities" (RTP, 17). Rather, reader and text emerge anew in the course of each reading event. Throughout the course of their correlative emergence, "each element conditions the other" (RTP, 16). Only by means of reflection on a reading event can these mutually-conditioned and -conditioning elements be teased apart--i.e., selectively abstracted and separably defined. By recognizing "reader" and "text" as retrospectively conceptualized aspects of a distinctive organismic-environmental transaction, Rosenblatt's paradigm of the reading process avoids the error--termed by Dewey "the philosophical fallacy"--of ascribing pre-existent status to the conceptual products of inquiry (EN 34).

Dewey's term "the philosophical fallacy" will figure prominently in the discussion to follow. Dewey introduced this term in Experience and Nature (1925/1981) in the course of his argument favoring empirical over deductive methods of inquiry. Though the inquirer's attentive selectivity will necessarily frame any inquiry, Dewey noted that unlike deductive methods of ratiocination, which tend to mask the systematic biases underlying data selection, the empirical method renders such biases transparent:

Selective emphasis, choice, is inevitable whenever reflection occurs. This is not an evil. Deception comes only when the presence and operation of choice is concealed, disguised, denied. Empirical method finds and points to the operation of choice as it does to any other event . . . Whatever enters into choice,

26 Louise M. Rosenblatt, "The Transactional Theory of Reading and Writing," in Ruddell, Ruddell, and Singer, eds., Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading, 4th ed. (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1994), 1062. This essay will be referred to as TTRW with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
determining its need and giving it guidance, an empirical
method frankly indicates what it is for; and the fact of choice,
with its workings and consequences, an empirical method points
out with equal openness. (EN, 34)

For these reasons, Dewey maintained that the empirical method effectively guards against
confusing the consequences of inquiry with its antecedents--a logical error so fundamental and so
prolific of further errors as to warrant pre-eminent rank among philosophical fallacies: "Thus it
[the empirical method] protects us from conversion of eventual functions into antecedent
existence: a conversion that may be said to be 'the philosophical fallacy' . . . ." (EN, 34). In his
"Brief Studies in Realism," Dewey pointedly illustrated the fatuity of pseudo-problems spawned
by "the philosophical fallacy" by means of a parable.27

Dewey's parable is set in an imaginary realm where "the sole relation an organism bears
to things is that of eater; the sole relation the environment bears to the organism is that of food,
that is, things to eat" (BSR, 115). As Dewey points out, given the fact that "eater-of-food and
food-being-eaten are two names for one and the same situation," there can be no "greater
absurdity than to set to work to discuss the relation of eater to food, of organism to the
environment, or to argue as to whether one modifies the other or not" (BSR, 115). Nevertheless,
in Dewey's parable, such a debate does in fact arise: " . . . The philosophical world is divided
into two great camps, 'foodists and 'eaterists!'" (BSR, 115). The position of the eaterists is "that
no object exists except in relation to eating" (BSR, 115). Contrariwise, the foodists argue for the
"independent existence of foods" upon which, they maintain, depend "the existence and the
possibility of an eater" (BSR, 116). In his exegesis of this parable, Dewey compares the
positions of eaterists and foodists with those held by adherents of philosophical idealism and
realism, respectively:

The idealist says: " . . . All knowledge implies relation to mind;

27John Dewey, "Brief Studies in Realism," in Boydston, ed., The Middle Works, 6: 115-116. This article will be
referred to as BSR with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
therefore every object with which philosophy deals is object-in
relation-to-mind." The realist says: "... Without the objects to
be known, mind, the knower, is and means nothing." (BSR, 116)

The spurious debate dramatized in Dewey's parable effectively brings home his point that the
"knower" and the "known" can no more be characterized as independent entities than can the
"eater" and the "eaten."

Unless and until a particular apple (for example) is chewed, swallowed, and chemically
broken down by digestive processes so that its nutrients can be absorbed by the bloodstream to
fuel metabolic processes, that apple can be termed "food" only in a potential sense. Similarly,
unless and until an organism is engaged in the process of eating, that organism can be termed
"eater" only in a potential sense. In the course of the process we term "eating," a particular
organism and a specific element of its environment transact in such a way that the potential of
one to become "eater" and of the other to become "food" is actualized. But only during the
temporal interval spanning that transaction can the terms "food" and "eater" be applied to the
transacting partners in an actual vs. potential sense. Before the apple is ingested, a hungry
organism is only potentially its "eater"; the apple, only potentially "food."

In the course of their mutual actualization of potential, apple and organism are
simultaneously transformed. Much as crude ore can undergo transformations resulting in pig
iron, steel, and slag, an ingested apple is reduced first to chyme and then to absorbable nutrients
and excreta; the hungry organism is transformed into a satisfied and energized (or perhaps--if the
apple is unripe--distressed) creature. Less immediately apparent transformations effected
through this eater-food transaction could include growth, tissue repair, and evacuation of bowels
and bladder on the part of the organism; enrichment of the soil by means of the products of
evacuation; and the growth of a seedling tree from the discarded apple core. Each successive
phase of mutual transformation represents an actualization of potential on the part of the
ingesting organism and of the ingested environmental element. Thus, it becomes apparent that
neither "food" nor "eater" can be characterized as a static entity, and that neither can be identified apart from the mutually transformative transaction defining the identity of each.

Likewise, according to Dewey, neither "knower" nor "known" can be characterized apart from the mutually transformative process we term "knowing." To imagine that "knower" and "known" pre-exist the process of knowing would according to Dewey constitute no less an instance of "the philosophic fallacy" than would to imagine that "eater" and "food" pre-exist the transaction of eating.

Louise M. Rosenblatt's characterization of the debate between text-centered and reader-centered literary theorists is strikingly reminiscent of the controversy pitting "eaterists" against "foodists" in Dewey's parable. In fact, Rosenblatt demonstrates that, much like the debate that raged between "eaterists" and "foodists," the controversy between "text-centered" and "reader-centered" literary theorists represents a pseudo-problem rooted in "the philosophical fallacy." The functional distinction between "reader" and "text"--no less than that between "eater" and "food"--is from a transactional perspective identified as a product and subsequent tool of inquiry rather than its antecedent. To hypostatize such a functional distinction--i.e., to accord to its terms the status of pre-existent entities--would straddle the forking path of philosophical dualism.

Anti-dualistic intuitions informing the writings of both Dewey and Rosenblatt are reflected in the radical degree to which each has challenged hypostatization of functional distinctions. Such paired hypostatizations--for example, "organism and environment," "the knower and the known," "reader and text," even "space and time"--underlie what Dewey termed "problems turning on 'and' in modern thought."28 By contesting such correlative hypostatizations, Dewey and Rosenblatt have alike bucked the dominant currents of Western thought. The gravitation both of Dewey and of Rosenblatt from a predominantly interactional

28John Dewey, "Syllabus: Types of Philosophic Thought," in Boydston, ed., The Middle Works, 13: 376. This article will be referred to as STPT with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
toward a thoroughly transactional phrasing signals increasingly precise conceptualization of a consistently intuitive anti-dualism.

**Dewey's Anti-dualistic Transactionalism**

It was only during the period of his collaboration with Arthur F. Bentley, culminating in the publication of Knowing and the Known in 1949, that Dewey came to recognize the underlying vision of much of his earlier work as an imprecisely expressed transactionalism. He noted, for example, in a (3/29/47) letter to Bentley, that in Democracy and Education (1916/1980) he had used the word *experience* "explicitly as name for organism-environment in transaction, though of course, without use of 'transaction'; probably [I] used the word 'interaction'" (PC, 579). But although in his pre-1949 writings Dewey did at times employ the term "interaction" to convey such a holistic vision of "organism-environment in transaction," at other times he depicted "transaction" as synonymous with "interaction" defined as an interchange between discrete entities. In "Conduct and Experience" (1930/1984), for example, Dewey wrote:

> The structure of whatever is had by way of immediate qualitative presences is found in the recurrent modes of interaction taking place between what we term organism, on one side, and environment, on the other [emphasis added]. This interaction is the primary fact, and it constitutes a trans-action. (CE, 220)

Note, however, that in the very next sentence following the passage cited above, Dewey depicted organismic-environmental transaction not only as "the primary fact," but also as a primal, enduring unity unfractured by cognitively-abstracted, dualistic distinctions: "Only by analysis

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29John Dewey, "Conduct and Experience," in Boydston, ed., The Later Works, 5: 220. This article will be referred to as CE with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
and selective abstraction can we differentiate the actual occurrence into two factors, one called organism and the other, environment" (CE, 220). Only in the course of his correspondence with Bentley, however, did Dewey's perception that the terms "organism" and "environment" in effect reify phases of a single "actual occurrence" lead him to recommend discarding these terms from scientific discourse altogether.

Dewey's discontent with the term "environment" dawned first. In a 1/22/45 letter to Bentley, Dewey explained the grounds for his dissatisfaction with the term "environment": "I have become aware of difficulties or dangers in [the] word "environment" as getting us away from transactional into interactional [phrasing] . . . ." (PC, 382). Over three years intervened before Dewey's 11/9/48 memorandum to Bentley announced his decision to discard the term "organism," as well. Dewey prefaced this announcement by explaining the grounds for his growing discomfort with the term:

I got to mulling over the difficulty there seems to be in getting over to readers the organic-environmental activity as one "thing" and as in process. I concluded it was because the word "Organism" (especially in the ism) carries with it a kind of readymade hypostatization. . . . (PC, 592)

In an earlier (9/15/44) note, Dewey had already shared with Bentley his observation that hypostatizations perpetuate not only an interactional, but even a vestigial self-action paradigm:

"Reify," "Hypostatize." Words that name vicious isolations, resulting in giving Self-actuality and Self-action to matters . . . [that] can be observed and described only in connectivities. (PC, 309)

That Dewey did in fact consider "organism" conceived of in isolation from "environment" as an example of such a vicious isolation is confirmed in his 11/9/48 letter to Bentley, in which he concluded that the term should be abandoned altogether:

I am inclined to think we should try to find and use a word that
wouldn't be handicapped, as the word "organism" (like other
Isms) has now been loaded down. (PC, 592)

That Dewey himself seems at times to have been seduced by the "readymade hypostatization" with which the word "organism" has been traditionally freighted is suggested by certain passages found in his earlier writings. In both Syllabus: Types of Philosophic Thought and Art as Experience, for example, the distinction between organism and environment appears to rest upon an objective basis.

In Syllabus: Types of Philosophic Thought (1922-1923/1983), Dewey observed that whereas "in any non-temporal cross-section there is no basis for distinguishing organism and environment," when the situation is longitudinally observed as a temporal process, an objective basis for such a distinction becomes apparent (STPT, 378). For much as existence precedes abstraction of essence, intuition of temporal quality precedes spatial discrimination. Sensing in all life processes a rhythmically dynamic equilibrium, Dewey recognized the "serial or temporal function" of this "moving equilibrium" as "the ground for distinction between organism and environment; that is[,] between those sets of factors that represent the maintenance of function (organism) and those which intervene first as disturbing and then as restoring equilibrium . . . (environment)" (STPT, 378). Thus, Dewey concluded that the categories conventionally termed "organism" and "environment" actually comprise an "integrated interaction" of two "modes of energy" (STPT, 377). He distinguished these modes of energy on the basis of their tendency to maintain, disturb or restore equilibrium:

. . . Those energies that directly and initially tend to maintain health or disease, or to procure food to avert starvation or that prevent the getting of food, [etc.] are classified as organism, and those which, when or after these energies have been set in operation, served to obstruct and to carry them on, are classified as environment. (STPT, 379)
That Dewey would later come altogether to reject the terms "organism" and "environment"--even as so radically reconstructed--demonstrates the force of his suspicion that even functional distinctions tend perforce to harden into dualisms hiding an underlying transactional unity. A similarly functional distinction between organism and environment underlying Dewey's aesthetics seems susceptible to re-vision in the same light.

In Art as Experience, Dewey (1934/1987) observed that when environmental energies "meet with the energies of the organism," there result "checks, resistances, furtherances, [or counterbalancing forces creating] equilibria" (AE, 152). Alternation in dominance between organismic and environmental energies creates "a constant rhythm . . . mark[ing] the interaction of the live creature with his surroundings" (AE, 21). As environmental energies alternately constrain and free the energies of an organism, there results a rhythmic "alternation of compressions and releases" of energies (AE, 184). Dewey here and elsewhere characterized this pattern as "a rhythm of . . . acting and undergoing in consequence of the doing" (STPT, 379). He sensed in this diastolic rhythm the pulse of all experience, including aesthetic experience: "Underneath the rhythm of every art and of every work of art there lies, as a substratum in the depths of the subconsciousness, the basic pattern of the relations of the live creature to his environment" (AE, 155). Looking back upon interactive analyses such as the foregoing, Dewey at a later stage in his intellectual evolution would accuse himself of having indulged in a kind of organismic-centric perception prolific of false dualisms: ". . . If and when I tend to write as if the only living part is on the "agency" side, that is a throwback I don't want to stand for. The 'organism' aspect is no more active, nor more an agency, than is the environmental . . . " (PC, 385). Dewey's subsequently more fully evolved transactionalism aspired to a viewpoint from which "doing" and "undergoing" are observed not as dual, alternately assumed roles, but rather as perpetually simultaneous throughout all phases of organismic-environmental transaction. From this perspective, the rhythm of interaction earlier described seems attributable largely to an alternation between observational perspectives, rather than to an actual alternation of roles.
To illustrate the foregoing distinction, compare the actions of organism and environment with those of tennis players engaged in a match; then compare the vantage point of front-row spectators of the match with the perspective of an interactional analyst. Just as spectators observing a tennis match at ground level tend to turn their heads to observe the actions of each player in turn, so the interactional analyst tends to observe the actions of organism and environment sequentially. The perceived rhythm of alternation between "doing" and "undergoing" observed by means of interactional analysis would thus seem to be largely a factor of the observation process itself--like the rhythm felt by ground-level spectators whose heads turn rhythmically from one side of the tennis court to the other during the course of a match.

Viewing the relationship between organism and environment transactionally, on the other hand, is more like viewing a tennis match from a vantage point high enough to allow spectators to observe the actions of both players simultaneously. From such a vantage point it becomes immediately clear that "doing" and "undergoing" are not alternately exchanged roles, but are in fact inextricably interlaced aspects of the actions of both players throughout the game. Having served the ball, for example, player A does not passively undergo the results of that action before engaging in a subsequent doing. Rather, during the very interval of undergoing (while observing the trajectory of the ball created by the force and angle of the racquet in the serve), player A is simultaneously actively engaged in further "doing"--i.e., moving in anticipation of the ball's return. Likewise, whenever either player subsequently moves toward or swings at the ball, these "doings" are simultaneously "undergoings" in that such actions are experienced as a consequence of each player's own as well as the other's previous doings. To characterize a tennis match as an alternation between active doing and passive undergoing would, then, be a vast oversimplification.

As Dewey pointed out to Bentley (17/19/43), it is the act of analysis itself that creates so-called "simple" elements: "simples and elements as simple, homogeneous throughout, etc., are always products of some analysis . . . " (PC, 143). In the course of his collaboration with Bentley, Dewey eventually came to view the paradigm of interaction itself as a product of
analysis, whereby organismic-environmental transactions are artificially reduced to "simple" elements.

To distinguish an illegitimately reductive model of interaction from that which Dewey and Bentley came to regard as a "thoroughly legitimate" (KK, 115) model of interaction, consider the following analogy. Given the task of studying the functioning of a mammalian brain, we could begin by observing the functioning of the organ as a whole, then dissect it in order to discriminate distinctive contributions of each hemisphere to the functioning of the whole. An alternate procedure would be to begin by dissecting the brain to observe the functions of each hemisphere, and then to infer the functions of the whole by adding together the functions of the severed parts. The first-described sequence of observations would correspond metaphorically with the model of interactional analysis depicted by Dewey and Bentley as a "thoroughly legitimate" secondary phase of inquiry (KK, 115); the second sequence would correspond with their depiction of "a large crop of imitations and debasements [of legitimate interactional analysis], now ripe for the hoe" [KK, 102).

The version of interaction sanctioned by Dewey and Bentley may be heuristically compared with the process of mathematical division. Imagine that a transactionally-observed "full situation" (KK, 107) represents the dividend in a division problem; that the inquirer's selective attention directed toward certain aspects of this situation functions as the divisor; and that the distinct objects thereby discriminated constitute the quotient. Just as, depending upon the divisor selected, a given dividend can yield a variety of quotients, so too can any transactionally-observed situation yield various sets of interacting factors, depending upon the focus of the inquirer's selective attention. Legitimate interactional analysis necessarily entails recognition that--far from existing a priori--these "segments of inquiry" have been only "provisionally separated" from a transactionally-observed whole "for convenience of study" (KK, 103). As an example of such a legitimate "divisional" mode of interactional analysis, Dewey and Bentley cited the "investigation of certain inter-actions of tissues and organs within the skin of an organism," with the proviso that "the 'organism-as-a-whole' [must be]
transactionally viewed (with perhaps also along with it a still wider transactional observation of the 'organism-in-environment-as-a-whole') . . . before final reports are reached" (KK, 103). The paradigm of interaction Dewey and Bentley branded as illegitimate, on the other hand, lends itself to comparison with the process of mathematical addition.

Additively conceived, interaction may be represented as the sum of self-acting, atomistic parts (self-action + self-action + . . . = interaction). Describing this formulation as an abuse of the interaction paradigm, Dewey and Bentley cited among its "grosser abuses" any "inter-actional explanations and interpretations" in which "self-actional 'entities'" such as "selves" and "environmental objects" are presumptively accorded a priori status and then "are said to interact" (KK, 103). To appreciate the reductive character of an additive sense of interaction, contrast the following narrowly-conceived account of the process of hunting with the broader scope of the subsequent transactional account:

If we watch a hunter with his gun go into a field where he sees a small animal already known to him as a rabbit then, within the framework of half an hour and an acre of land, . . . it is easy to report the shooting that follows in an interactional form in which rabbit and hunter and gun enter as separates and come together by way of cause and effect. If, however, we take enough of the earth and enough thousands of years, and watch the identification of rabbit gradually taking place, arising first in the sub-naming processes of gesture, cry, and attentive movement, wherein both rabbit and hunter participate, and continuing on various levels of description and naming, we shall soon see the transactional account as the one that best covers the ground.

(KK, 125)

The first of the preceding accounts of the hunting process seems intended to illustrate the version of interaction labeled by Dewey and Bentley as a gross abuse of the paradigm. This first
narrative, in which rabbit and hunter "enter as separates" (KK, 125), concretizes the authors' abstract warning against interpreting interaction as a synthesis of "self-acting entities" such as atomistic "self" and "environmental object" (KK, 105). The transactional account that follows this overly simplistic narrative culminates in a legitimately interactional analysis whereby rabbit and hunter are viewed as emergent aspects of an ongoing evolutionary process. From this panoramic perspective, all objects, essences, identities, categories, concepts, etc. are viewed as consequences emergent from human-environmental transactions; to assume the antecedent existent of such metaphysical artifacts is to commit "the philosophic fallacy."

In light of the warning embodied in Dewey and Bentley's narrative of hunter and rabbit, Brian G. Caraher's (1991) earlier mentioned claim that the paradigm of interaction--to the exclusion of transaction--underlies Dewey's life work prior to Knowing and the Known becomes increasingly problematic. Recall that Caraher dismisses Dewey's endorsement of the transactional paradigm defined in Knowing and the Known as an aberration from the course steered throughout Dewey's life work to that point. Caraher further claims that "the paradigm of interaction developed in Dewey's earlier and primary work" is consistently "attentive to the reality of purposive agents who can decide to interact with one another or with aspects of their environments," while the "transactional model proposed in Knowing and the Known moves in the direction of a systemic analysis of a complex of agent-free processes" (WSPR, 203). However, close reading of Dewey's work would seem to sustain neither of Caraher's claims.

Support for Caraher's contention that Dewey and Bentley's transactional model assumes "agent-free processes" appears to be absent both from Knowing and the Known and from the authorial correspondence that glosses that text. Rather, evidence from both sources suggests that far from discarding the concept of agency, Dewey and Bentley sought instead to magnify the concept by greatly broadening its scope. Agency as depicted in Knowing and the Known is attributable neither to organism nor to environment as isolable entities, but is instead more broadly attributable to "organic-environmental events" (KK, 80) in which organismic and environmental phases are indissolubly conjoined.
By analogy, the agency observable in a functioning electric clock can be attributed neither to the clock nor to the electrical system generating its current, but rather to their active union. Employing this analogy to illustrate "the indissoluble active union" constituting organismic-environmental transaction (KK, 255), Dewey and Bentley noted: "One might as well study an organism in complete detachment from its environment as try to study an electric clock on the wall in disregard of the wire leading to it" (KK, 119). If the wire were disregarded, agency might indeed be mistakenly attributed to the clock alone--much as, according to Dewey and Bentley, agency has often been erroneously attributed to organisms as "isolates," misapprehended in detachment from their environment.

The locus of agency can in fact be properly identified (as Dewey noted in an early draft of chapter two of Knowing and the Known) only from the vantage point of "observation of the type which sees matters as they exist in connections with one another, not as isolates" (PC, 364).30 In the realm of human behavior, "observation of this general type sees man-in-action, not as something radically set over against an environing world, nor yet as merely acting 'in' a world, but as action of and by the world to which he belongs as an integral constituent" (PC, 364-365).31 Note that Dewey here ascribed agency neither to human beings as distinct from their environment nor to the environment as distinct from human beings, but rather to the natural world encompassing both as integral constituents.

Dewey had long held that human nature is a part of nature, that nature moves through us no less than we move through nature. In Experience and Nature (1925/1981), for example, he argued that even human belief and "the effort of thought and struggle which it inspires are . . . the


31It should be noted here that this passage appears in the following altered form in Knowing and the Known: "Observation of this general type sees man-in-action, not as something radically set over against an environing world, nor yet as something merely acting 'in' a world, but as action of and in the world to which the man belongs as an integral constituent" (p. 51). The substitution of "in the world" for Dewey's earlier phrase "by the world" in the concluding clause of this sentence may perhaps be an error, since the logic of the contrast anticipated by "but" seems to be short-circuited by repetition of the word "in" ("not 'in' . . . but in").
doing of the universe and . . . in some way, however slight, carry the universe forward" (EN, 314). In fact, far from depicting what Caraher terms "agent-free processes," Dewey and Bentley's transactional model implies instead an agency so broad as to elude traditional, limited modes of observation. Spatially and temporally comprehensive "unfractured observation" alone can take into account such an ubiquitous natural agency as Dewey and Bentley proposed: "Our position is simply that since man as an organism has evolved among other organisms in an evolution called 'natural,' we are willing under hypothesis to treat all of his behavings, including his most advanced knowings, as activities not of himself alone, nor even as primarily his, but as processes of the full situation of organism-environment . . . ." (KK, 97). Note the strategic hyphenation of "organism-environment" here to form a singular, compound noun. The sense of organic wholeness evoked by this punctuation tactic seems reminiscent of that conveyed by the term "ensemble," defined as "a group constituting an organic whole." The musicians collectively comprising an ensemble such as an "orchestra," "quartet," "duo," etc., are likewise appropriately identified by a singular noun. As in the case of organism-environment, the agency of music-making in a string quartet cannot be reduced to the sum of interacting agencies. The performance of a musical ensemble emerges only as and through transaction. In such a case, the notion of agency must be stretched to accommodate distribution as a field of action.

Organism and environment, according to Dewey and Bentley, do in fact seem to function jointly much in the manner of a musical ensemble. The duo they comprise is not, however, like that between a soloist (who takes the lead in determining tempo, interpreting phrasing, etc.) and a subordinate accompanist. Nor is their relationship like that of vocalists in a duet, respectively contributing distinct melodic and harmonic lines. A more apt metaphor would be the collaborative improvisation of a jazz duo. Here, melody and harmony polyphonically conjoin, conflate. What is the locus of "agency" in such a case? Jazz musicians might more readily locate agency in the music making process itself (i.e., the transactional context or situation) than in themselves as individual performers. Similarly, Dewey and Bentley locate agency within the transactional process itself, rather than in its individual transacting partners. Locating agency
within a process, however, by no means eliminates the concept of agency, but rather significantly broadens and de-centers its meaning. Caraher's contention that Dewey and Bentley's transactional model implies "agent-free processes" seems ironically symptomatic of an observational mode too narrow to embrace the enlarged scope of Dewey and Bentley's vision of agency.

Caraher's depiction of Dewey's view of human beings as "purposive agents who can decide to interact with one another or with aspects of their environments" (WSPR, 203) likewise contradicts the tendency of Dewey's pre-1949 work on several counts. First, the very notion that human beings can freely "decide" whether or not to engage in interactions with their social and physical environment is inconsistent with Human Nature and Conduct (1922/1988), wherein Dewey emphatically rejected the "metaphysical doctrine of free will" as a pernicious vestige of Aristotelian self-action, manifest as faculty psychology. In fact, in "Individuality and Experience" (1926/1984) Dewey defined human freedom not as a readymade endowment, but rather as a potentiality that must be "wrought out"--i.e., that necessarily depends for its actualization upon certain kinds of human-environmental transactions. Furthermore, Caraher's claim that prior to co-authoring Knowing and the Known Dewey had portrayed human behavior in terms of interactions scripted deliberately by atomistic individuals is hard to reconcile with the radically Darwinian perspective characteristic of Dewey's intellectual career. In Experience and Nature (1925/1981), for example, identifying our species as "parts however weak" of "nature to which we belong" (EN, 314), Dewey classified human endeavor globally as "a continuation of natural processes" (EN, 315) ascribable to "the doing of the universe" (EN, 314). Passages such as the foregoing hardly seem to corroborate Caraher's perception of a radical dichotomy between Dewey's earlier and later work. Indeed, such passages seem to be cut from the same cloth as the

32 John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct, in Boydston, ed., The Middle Works, 14: 209. This volume will be referred to as HNC with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.

33 John Dewey, "Individuality and Experience," in Boydston, ed., The Later Works, 2: 55. This article will be referred to as IE with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
previously-cited draft of *Knowing and the Known* in which Dewey classified human behavior as "action of and by the world to which . . . [the human species]* belongs as an integral constituent" (PC, 364-365).

Moreover, Caraher's contention that prior to *Knowing and the Known* Dewey portrayed human beings as agents free to choose whether or not to engage in interactions with their social and natural environment is contradicted by the trans-dermal organismic-environmental contiguity portrayed in both *Art as Experience* and *Experience and Nature*. In *Art as Experience* (1934/1987), Dewey clearly included human beings under the category of "creatures" when he noted: "No creature lives merely under its skin; its subcutaneous organs are means of connection with what lies beyond its bodily frame . . . " (AE, 19). Again emphasizing the indeterminate boundary between organism and environment, Dewey maintained: "The epidermis is only in the most superficial way an indication of where an organism ends and its environment begins" (AE, 64). In *Experience and Nature* (1925/1981), Dewey had strategically undermined the tendency to harden even the functionally useful distinction between internality and externality into an hypostatized dualism: "... At every point and stage . . . a living organism and its life processes involve a world or nature temporally and spatially 'external' to itself but 'internal' to its functions" (EN, 212). Where would a realm that is simultaneously both temporally and spatially external to an organism and yet internal to its functioning be located? The apparent paradox posed here seems resolvable only by deconstructing the very notion of boundary between organism and environment.

*Dewey's Deconstruction of Boundary Between Organism and Environment*

Throughout his career, Dewey depicted environing conditions and organic processes as deeply intertwined. For example in *Experience and Nature* (1925/1981), Dewey noted: "The thing essential to bear in mind is that living as an empirical affair is not something which goes on
below the skin-surface of an organism: it is always an inclusive affair involving connection, interaction of what is within the organic body and what lies outside in space and time . . . " (215). Applying this axiom to human experience, Dewey (1934/1987) observed in *Art as Experience* that even when certain environmental elements are considered spatially distinct from the human body (as traditionally bounded), these elements nevertheless function in a manner integral to internal bodily processes:

[Just as] there are things inside the body that are foreign to it, . . .
there are things outside of it that belong to it de jure, if not de facto; that must that is be taken possession of if life is to continue. On the lower scale, air and food materials are such things; on the higher, [such things include] tools, whether the pen of the writer or the anvil of the blacksmith . . . (64)

In his "Contributions to A Cyclopedia of Education" (1911/1978), Dewey similarly characterized all "the tools, the utensils, weapons, devices of all kinds, by which man [has] consciously modified the environment in the interest of the exercise of his own life activities" as extensions of the functions of bodily organs.34 Telescopes, microscopes, and x-ray machines, for example, extend the functions of the human eye. Implements used in butchering, milling, and cooking extend the functions of the human stomach by rendering potential foodstuffs more readily digestible. Potter's wheels, knitting needles, and centrifuges extend the manipulative functions of the human hands. Dewey recognized in such technological developments a perpetually evolving spatial distribution of the human body:

Some parts at least of the environment become what have been called "extra-organic" organs; that is to say, all the tools and devices of all the arts, although outside the body, operate in behalf of the functions of life just as do the eye, stomach, hands,

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34 John Dewey, "Contributions to A Cyclopedia of Education," in Boydston, ed., *The Middle Works*, 6: 439. This article will be referred to as CCE with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
Thus Dewey demonstrated that the procedures of human technology, no less than fundamental biological functions such as respiration and ingestion, reveal the boundary between organism and environment to be so permeable as to be indeterminate. The very distinction between "internal" and "external" functions becomes blurred when it is recognized that "the career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way" (AE, 19). But though passages such as the foregoing in his pre-1949 work reflect Dewey's intuitive sense of a profoundly intimate relationship between organism and environment, he seems fully to have conceptualized the depth of that intimacy only in the course of his collaboration with Bentley.

The relationship between organism and environment as depicted in Knowing and the Known is so profoundly intimate that even to conceptualize "organism" as distinct from "environment" is characterized as a species of synecdoche--akin to attempting to conceptualize the function of a violin in isolation from a violin player, or vice versa. Far from hypostatizing organism and environment as distinct entities, Dewey and Bentley incorporated "environment" into the very definition of "organism": "an organization in which a living body and environing conditions cooperate as fiddle and player work together" (KK, 256). Dewey and Bentley employed the term "transaction" to characterize this "indissoluble, active unity" of organism and environment (KK, 255). Citing the relationship between violin and violinist actively united in producing violin music as a "typical reminder of what a transaction is," Dewey and Bentley identified the entire "state and course of life" in all its myriad manifestations as "a body of transactions" (KK, 256). Accordingly, they identified "knowing" as a species of transaction in which human beings and their environment are actively, indissolubly conjoined.

In his "Realism, Deweyan Pragmatism and Educational Research," Garrison traces the development of Dewey's perception that knowing itself constitutes a transaction between human organism (qua "knower") and environment (qua "the known"), a perception basing what R. W.
Sleeper has termed Dewey's "transactional realism." Fundamental to Dewey's transactional realism is his definition of existences as temporal processes: "Every existence is an event" (EN, 63). According to that definition, human beings themselves and all the elements of their environment--from viruses to volcanoes, from crayons to computers--all comprise events which, though ranging widely in complexity and duration, are alike demarcated by beginning, middle, and end. Hence, as Dewey noted in a (7/19/43) letter to Bentley, "... every event as an existence is a history ... " (PC, 143). When "nature is viewed as consisting of events rather than substances" (EN, 5-6), the events we term human beings as well as those we designate collectively as our environment--rather than representing distinct genera--are found to be subsumed under a single category: evolutionary process.

According to Dewey's holistic vision, as Garrison observes, a single evolutionary process--"a [temporally and spatially] dispersed, unified, functional event"--must be recognized as existentially preceding abstraction of essences such as "organism" and "environment." Dewey insisted on the primacy of this existential unity:

Any operative function gets us behind the ordinary distinction of organism and environment. It presents us with their undifferentiated unity, not with their unification. It is primary; distinction is subsequent and derived (STPT, 377).

Though abstract concepts such as "organism" and "environment" have proved useful for practical purposes, the original unity they represent--like that of Siamese twins considered as candidates for surgical separation--must not be lost sight of. To let a fluid, analytical distinction freeze into an intractable dualism is, according to Dewey, to commit "the philosophical fallacy" of confounding the consequences of inquiry with antecedent natural conditions.

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36 I wish to thank Jim Garrison for sharing a draft of the article-in-progress from which I have borrowed here: "Dewey's Metaphysics: A Living Postmodern Perspective" (1996): 22. This article will be referred to as DMLPP with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
As a committed Darwinist, Dewey was convinced that "man is a part of nature" (AE, 341). Classifying human behavior and its consequences as manifestations of "the course of nature," Dewey maintained that by alternately prompting and frustrating humankind's endeavors, "nature induces . . . meanings," and that "when man adds perceptions and ideas to these endeavors, it is not after all he who adds; the addition is again the doing of nature and a further complication of its own domain" (EN, 315). Thus, Dewey attributed meaning making to the agency of nature itself. Since he held that "the same existential events are capable of an infinite number of meanings," Dewey considered the evolution of meaning to be an infinite project (EN, 241). Recall that, as Garrison points out, for Dewey even such meanings as "organism" and "environment" arbitrarily parse existentially whole events: "Where we draw the distinction between organism and environment is arbitrary, [since] we are parsing a functional unity" (DMLPP, 23). If Dewey's holism seems extreme, consider the case of "pregnant mother" and "unborn child." Distinctions drawn between the two clearly represent analytical parsings of a functional unity. The debate currently raging over the issue of abortion hints at the infinite scope of parsed meanings of which a single existential event is susceptible.

Dewey categorized all meanings as products of transaction between human beings and their environment. Recall that, for Dewey, just as wine constitutes the distilled essence of grapes, so meanings constitute the essences distilled from lived experience. Those meanings in turn become part of the human social environment, affording rich and varied opportunities for further transaction and meaning making. According to Dewey, both scientific inquiry and aesthetic experience afford such opportunities, since "science states meanings" and "art expresses them" (AE, 90). Transacting with meanings in either context expands or contracts, deepens or foreshortens the scope of our vision. Likewise, in the process of such transactions, meanings are themselves perpetually transformed--i.e., reconstructed. Just as the practice of distilling wine from grapes transforms not only grapes but also human experience, so the practice of abstracting meanings from immediate experience transforms both the so-called subject and the so-called object of cognition. Dewey's brand of realism--"transactional realism"--thus presumes no static
correspondence between objective and subjective realms, as posited in the tradition of representational realism. Rather, it recognizes the dynamic, mutually transformative character of transaction between human organism qua "knower" and environment qua "the known."

According to Dewey's transactional realism, both the "knower" and "the known" are transformed in and through the very event we call "knowing." Recall the parable of "foodists" and "eaterists" whereby Dewey ridiculed the blindness of both realists and idealists to this fundamental fact. As that parable illustrates, only the transaction we term "knowing" can actualize the potential of a human being to become a "knower" and of environmental elements to become the "known"—much as only the transaction we term violin playing can actualize the potential of fiddle and fiddler to produce music.

As will be shown in Chapter Four of this dissertation, the potential for music-making actualized in transaction between fiddle and fiddle player is much like the potential for "poem"-making which, according to both Dewey and Rosenblatt, can be actualized only in transaction between reader and text. Simultaneously, as will also be shown in Chapter Four, our potential for creating the "poems" we call selves is to some degree actualized in this very transaction. Identifying the locus of a "poem" in either of these two distinctive senses demands a radical abandonment of dualistic thinking. Not only such twin concepts as "organism and environment," but even such supposedly mutually exclusive logical categories as "external and internal" and even "space and time" must be abandoned at the threshold of transactional vision. Just as for Dewey organismic-environmental events are subsumed under evolutionary process, so for Dewey and Bentley events perceived as temporally and spatially distributed are subsumed under an existential unity: space-time.
Dewey and Bentley's Construction of Transactional Space-Time

Dewey and Bentley recognized that efforts to accommodate the sweep of transactional vision within conventional linguistic/conceptual categories such as those of "space" and "time" must necessarily fragment that vision. William James (1909)--intellectual progenitor of Dewey, Bentley, and Rosenblatt alike--articulated this recognition as follows:

When we conceptualize, we cut out and fix, and exclude everything but what we have fixed. . . . Conceptually, [for example,] time excludes space . . . .37

James considered such mutually exclusive conceptual categories alien to "the real concrete sensible flux of life experiences" within which those experiences actually always "compenetrate each other" (PU, 244). He pointed out, for example, that the flow of lived experience is incongruent with the "static cuts" whereby "past," "present," and "future" are conceptually discriminated:

Past and future . . . conceptually separated by the cut to which we give the name of present, and defined as being the opposite sides of that cut, are [actually] to some extent, however brief, copresent with each other throughout experience. The literally present moment is a purely verbal supposition, not a position; the only present ever realized concretely being the "passing moment" in which the dying rearward of time and its dawning future forever mix their lights. (PU, 244)

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37 William James, A Pluralistic Universe, in Perry, ed., Essays in Radical Empiricism and A Pluralistic Universe (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1971), 243. This work will be referred to as PU with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
James considered attempts to contain the flow of lived experience within a conceptual system comprised of mutually-exclusive categories such as past, present, and future to be as futile as trying to collect water in a sieve: "... You can no more dip up the substance of reality with them [such mutually-exclusive concepts] than you can dip up water with a net, however finely meshed" (PU, 243). To counter linguistic fragmentation of temporal continuities, James resorted to strategic hyphenation. He melded prior, present, and retrospective experience, for example, in one conglomerate word: "thunder-breaking-upon-silence-and-contrasting-with-it." More radical than his departure from conventional linguistic patterns, though, was James' rebellion against hypostatization of those conceptual categories which comprise the linguistic sieve through which human experience is strained: "Hasn't every bit of experience its quality, its duration, its extension, ... [and] many aspects besides, no one of which can exist in the isolation in which our verbalized logic keeps it? [emphasis added]" (PU, 245). This rhetorical question suggests James' conviction that temporal duration and spatial extension actually always "compenetrate" (PU, 245) as fully as the supposedly distinct categories of past, present, and future likewise "compenetrate each other" (PU, 244) within the flow of lived experience.

Building upon James' insights, Dewey (1925/1981) noted that "every event as such is passing into other things, in such a way that a later occurrence is an integral part of the character or nature of present existence" (EN, 92). Dewey's observation that "space here is joined to space there, and events then are joined to events now" (EN, 92) invites interpolation of the above passage, as follows: "Every event as such is passing into other things, in such a way that a later [or earlier] occurrence [whether geographically proximate or distant] is an integral part of the character or nature of present existence [i.e., that which we term 'the here and now']."

Recall Dewey and Bentley's memorable illustration of this very point in Knowing and the Known, whereby a supposedly temporally discrete, spatially bounded episode of interaction between rabbit and hunter is revealed from a transactional perspective actually to comprise a

cross section of evolutionary processes spanning eons of globally distributed organismic-environmental transactions. By means of this illustration, Dewey and Bentley demonstrated the equally fallacious character of both "instantaneities" and "infinitesimalities"—i.e., events conceived of as "lacking durational or extensional spread" (KK, 93). Their account of revolutionary developments in modern physics lends authority to such problematization of traditional assumptions regarding space and time. They emphasized that whereas in Newtonian physics "space and time were treated as the absolute, fixed, or formal framework within which the mechanics proceeded," the physics of Einstein "brought space and time into the investigation as among the events investigated" (KK, 106). That Dewey was already no stranger to such investigation can be seen by examining his treatment of space and time in his earlier work, notably his treatise on aesthetics.

In Art as Experience (1934/1987), Dewey emphatically rejected dualistic aesthetic systems based on Newtonian categorizations of space and time, urging in their stead an aesthetics of "space-time." He argued that "division of the arts into temporal and spatial [categories]" can no longer be justified by appeal to science since "physicists have been forced in virtue of the character of their own subject-matter to see that their units are not those of space and time, but of space-time" (AE, 187). In a (11/30/45) letter to Bentley, Dewey would further elaborate his perception that advances in the domain of physics had reconstructed the categories of space and time: ". . . The facts involve moving from Newtonian interactionism to the transactional in observation-description--Einstein's relativity of distance-motion [space-time], 'simultaneity' in particular" (PC, 497). The thoroughness of Dewey's persuasion in this regard is suggested by the extent of his painstaking efforts in Art as Experience to avoid perpetuating the dualism of "space and time" against which he preached. At one point, he even pointedly and instructively corrected his own phrasing mid-sentence: "Space and time--or rather space-time--are found in the matter of every art product" (AE, 210). Much as Dewey conscientiously sought to construct an aesthetics more congruent with transactional/field physics rather than with interactional/mechanical physics, Bentley would seek a similarly reconstructed psychology.
The extent to which Dewey encouraged Bentley to pursue this goal is suggested by this postscript to his 7/25/40 letter to Bentley:

[P.S.] As I wrote to you once before, the point about the bearing of the non-Newtonian space-time scheme upon the psychological theory of behavior is at once so important and, as far as I know so new that I hope you will develop it in full in a special article. I doubt if half a dozen persons . . . have seen just how the new physical scheme undercuts the ground that under the Newtonian scheme gave color to the "inner-outer" dualism . . . .

(PC, 80)

Bentley promptly responded to Dewey's recommendation by writing an article titled "The Factual Space and Time of Behavior."

In "The Factual Space and Time of Behavior" (1941) Bentley argued that "psychology has always concerned itself with facts which do not tolerate technical description in technical Newtonian space and time." Therefore, he proposed that psychology--indeed all the social sciences--must develop "a behavioral space-time form comparable to the freedom physics has acquired under relativity" (FSTB, 484). This proposed behavioral space-time would be capable of accommodating observation of behaviors viewed as "present events conveying pasts into futures"--events irreducible either to "successions of instants" or to "successions of locations" (FSTB, 484-485). As an example of such behavior, Bentley presented "the case of boy-planning college":

No adding of instants ever displays fully the purposing. . .
Behavior does, in fact, what for clocks is impossible; it spans the duration. Organic-boy-living is thus durationally much more complex than infinitely ticking clocks, or for that matter than

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39 Arthur F. Bentley, "The Factual Space and Time of Behavior," The Journal of Psychology 38 (1941): 478. This article will be referred to as FSTB with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
infinitely extended parallels in three dimensions. (FSTB, 480)

According to Bentley, Newtonian formulations of space and time cannot fully accommodate inquiry into such behaviors:

Experimentation could achieve a little measurement with a yardstick and a little registration of time with a clock, but never more than enough to skirt the fringe of the behavioral facts. Purposings, as behavioral facts, remained far out of reach of such manipulation. (FSTB, 477).

This limitation, according to Bentley, had stymied efforts to determine the locus of behavior.

Bentley maintained that since "behavioral facts" cannot be allotted "such locations as Cartesian coordinates could establish," these facts had been summarily assigned by psychologists to "quasi-locations," inquiry into the problematic nature of which had been by default "turned over to philosophy" (FSTB, 477-48). Bentley decried this tendency to view philosophy as a dumping ground for questions deemed irresolvable by means of scientific inquiry. He charged psychologists--indeed, all social scientists--to undertake a long neglected task: "construction of a behavioral space-time" (FSTB, 478) adequate "to fit the facts of their research" (FSTB, 479).

Dewey evidently found the argument of Bentley's "Factual Space and Time of Behavior" compelling. In his appreciative 4/15/41 response to a copy of this article shared with him prior to its publication later that year, Dewey wrote:

The point I didn't see before [reading "The Factual Space and Time of Behavior"]* is that space-time in the new physics doesn't of itself determine what behavioral space-time must be, any more than Newtonian space-time ever did. But it does free the observer of behavioral events to construct behavioral space time in terms of what he observes, and doesn't stand in the way of that construction as the separate space and separate time of Newtonian physics did [emphasis added]. (PC, 86)
In *Knowing and the Known*, Dewey and Bentley jointly indicted the separable Newtonian paradigms of space and time earlier exposed by Bentley as inadequate frameworks for behavioral research.

Characterizing Newtonian space and time paradigms as "grilles of the checkerboard type" (KK 94), Dewey and Bentley noted that whereas such grilles had adequately accommodated the data of Newtonian physics, they must necessarily prove inadequate for behavioral research:

> Full duration and extension is not represented adequately and exclusively by such specialized devices as clock-ticks and foot-rules. . . . Though these have developed into magnificent approximations for physics, they lack necessary pasts and futures across continents such as are involved in histories, purposes, and plans. They are therefore inadequate for inquiry into knowings, namings, and other behaviors. (KK, 86, n. 43)

Dewey and Bentley's contention that static Newtonian measures of space and time are incommensurate with the data of behavioral research recalls Dewey's (1911/1978) observation in "Contributions to *A Cyclopedia of Education*" that as organisms evolve--both individually and collectively as species--temporal and spatial dimensions of their environment evolve to a corresponding degree:

> . . . Environments change with the development of the organism, individual and racial. . . . With free locomotion and a nervous system the environment comes to include great stretches not only of space, but of time, since by retention and memory the animal becomes capable of reacting to conditions of its past life. There is, then, a genuine sense in which the evolution of life, the increase in diversity and interdependence of life functions, means an evolution of new environments just as truly as of new organs. (CCCE, 438)
Recognizing that spatial-temporal environments evolve proportionately as organisms evolve, Dewey and Bentley maintained in *Knowing and the Known* that the spatial-temporal framework for behavioral research must evolve correspondingly to keep pace. They urged that "a full behavioral space-time form must be employed, comprising (but not limited by) physical and physiological spaces and time" (KK, 86, n. 45).

In correspondence with Bentley, Dewey called further for a thorough problematization of space and time throughout all phases of inquiry. In a (6/8/45) letter, Dewey shared his perception of an "imperative need for [presenting]* space-time [as itself]* open to inquiry versus [accepting]* Newtonian space [and] time as fixed pre-conditions of physical inquiry" (PC 422), and hence as "pre-determinations conditioning the scope of science" (PC 423). In a subsequent (54/2/47) letter, Dewey shared his further recognition that the agendas not of science only, but also of epistemology and logical theory had been stultified by the Newtonian paradigm of space and time:

> I appreciate more and more all the time how completely the older theories of knowing--including, on the whole, logical theory--were written in terms of space-segments and time-sections. For instance it has only recently dawned on me how the whole logical theory of Generalization--and hence of laws--when stated as it was in terms of fixed uniformities, is dependent on the Newtonian space, time absolutes. . . . (PC, 579)

Dewey's recognition that even generalization theory rests upon the clay feet of "Newtonian space, time absolutes," though apparently startling to him at the time, appears to have been foreshadowed in observations shared earlier in his correspondence with Bentley. In a (11/3/42) letter, Dewey had already dismissed partitioning of space-time as anti-empirical, insisting on recognition of "a single inclusive space-time continuum" as the context for all observation (PC, 129). In a subsequent (7/15/43) letter, Dewey depicted events abstracted from this single continuum neither as uniformities fixed in space nor as identities static in time, but rather as
cross-sections of ever-evolving space-time. He noted that to define an existence only temporally and not spatially--i.e., to maintain that "every existence is an event" without recognizing "that [it] is equally true that every existence is a field"--would reduce "event" to "knife-edge thinness" (PC, 141). Such thinness would preclude, as Dewey noted in a sequel (7/19/43) letter, both "acknowledgment of the intrinsic variety of qualities in every event as a durational-extensional affair" and full recognition of any event's "indefinite shading off both temporally and spatially" (PC, 143).

As Bentley noted in a subsequent (5/18/45) letter to Dewey, temporal shadings-off of events tend to be so barely recognized that longitudinally observed events are often fragmentarily perceived as successive, discrete entities: "When it comes to egg-into-hen or gene-into-egg-into-hen, we do not . . . [recognize] a one-ness at all" (PC, 409). These illustrations bring to life Bentley's earlier (4/24/45) contention that enduring existence never denotes stasis, but always ongoing process: "... 'Duration' cannot mean just a span laid off by ticks, but certainly and always will indicate [that] the 'thing' and all its 'thinginess' is a growth--is the growth itself" (PC, 403). Approving Bentley's attribution of "continual variation" to all "durational affairs," Dewey noted in his (5/9/45) reply: "The whole enduring (duresome)... aspect [of existence]* postulates variation. Staying still or frozen isn't en-during" (PC, 411). So defined, enduring existence qua continual variation is illustrated by not only by "egg-into-hen," but also by apple-into-food, grape-into-wine, crude-ore-into-watch-spring, and text-into-"poem."

By tracing the "indefinite shading off" of the durational-extensional event she terms "the poem," Louise M. Rosenblatt has rescued that event from the knife-edged thinness to which it has been historically reduced. As Dewey and Bentley recommended, Rosenblatt has constructed a behavioral space-time commodious enough to "fit the facts of [her] research" (FSTB, 479). And, just as Dewey and Bentley critiqued dualistic self-actional and inter-actional paradigms of the knowing process, so Rosenblatt has uncovered and contested the dualistic hypostatizations underlying pre-transactional accounts of the distinctive variety of knowing we term "reading."
Rosenblatt's Anti-dualistic, Transactional Vision of Reader and Text

Recall that Rosenblatt attributes the schism dividing "reader-centered" from "text-centered" literary theorists to the same untenable epistemological dualism that pitted "foodists" against "eaterists" in Dewey's parable. In that parable Dewey demonstrated that the roles of "knower" and "known," like those of "eater" and "food," emerge only in the course of a peculiar organismic-environmental transaction. Recall that an apple, for example, becomes identifiable as "food" only in the course of its ingestion by an organism. To illustrate this point even more dramatically, consider the case of Jeffrey Dahmer's victims. Only in the course of a peculiarly grisly transaction between Dahmer and his hapless victims did they become identifiable as "food." Perhaps such an unsettling illustration of Dewey's point is needed in order to derail habitually dualistic thought patterns inculcated by Western culture. Readers steeped in a culturally inherited dualism may tend to balk at or gloss over Rosenblatt's insistent refusal to hypostatize the analytical distinction between "reader" and "text."

Rosenblatt's Deconstruction of Boundary between Reader and Text

Although Rosenblatt freely employs heuristic distinctions as analytical tools, she cautions against the tendency to let such distinctions harden into "dualisms"--Dewey's (1911/1978) pejorative term for "philosophical systems which make a hard and fast antithesis between terms which are related to each other in experience" (CCE, 424). Rosenblatt specifically rejects a dualistic hypostatization of reader and text as a particular instance of "the Cartesian dualistic paradigm that treats . . . subject and object [of cognition], knower and known, as separate entities" (RTP 180).
Rosenblatt maintains that to conceive of reader and text as "separate and distinct entities instead of factors in a total situation" is to commit a "fallacy" (TTRW, 1063). The error Rosenblatt describes here would be termed by Dewey an instance of "the philosophical fallacy"--i.e., of mistaking the consequents for the antecedents of inquiry. Rosenblatt's rejection of the notion that reader (qua knower) and text (qua the known) are "two fixed entities acting on one another" (TTRW, 1063) thus represents a specific version of Dewey and Bentley's more sweeping rejection of the entire epistemological tradition rooted in "the philosophical fallacy." Rosenblatt summarizes their rejection of that tradition as follows:

In Knowing and the Known (1949), John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley . . . suggested that the term interaction had become tied to the Cartesian dualistic paradigm that treats human beings and nature, subject and object, knower and known, as separate entities. In the light of post-Einsteinian developments, they proposed the term transaction to designate a relationship in which each element, instead of being fixed and predefined, conditions and is conditioned by the other. In a transaction, although we can distinguish between them, no sharp separation between perceiver and perception can be made, since the observer is part of the observation. (RTP, 180)

Distinguishing her transactional paradigm of the reading process from its pre-transactional precursors, Rosenblatt notes that "instead of an 'interaction' between reader and text that is seen as separate, completely defined entities acting on one another, 'transaction,' following Dewey & Bentley (1949), designates a reciprocal or circular relationship in which each conditions the

other."41 Much as Dewey (1911/1978) had earlier demonstrated that organism and environmental element take on the character of "eater" and "food" only during the peculiar transaction termed "eating," Dewey and Bentley (1949/1989) maintained that only during the transaction termed "knowing" do organism and environment take on the character of "knower" and "known." Analogously, according to the transactional paradigm of the reading process Rosenblatt pioneered, "the 'self' of the reader and the text are conceived as . . . taking on their character [only] during the [reader-text] transaction . . . ." (LT, 60).

Rosenblatt's (1978/1994) account of her discontent with non-transactional paradigms of the reading process in fact significantly parallels Dewey and Bentley's (1949/1989) account of their dissatisfaction with dualistic, pre-transactional paradigms of scientific inquiry. Much as Dewey and Bentley dismissed "self-action" as a primitive mode of scientific inquiry, so too does Rosenblatt dismiss accounts of the reading process that assume the independent existence of text and reader, assigning autonomous agency to either. And much as Dewey and Bentley considered "interaction" to be a mode of inquiry in advance of "self-action" yet less advanced than "transaction," so too has Rosenblatt characterized "interactional" accounts of the reading process as only an evolutionary link in the movement toward a fully transactional paradigm.

Rosenblatt traces the origin of "self-action" paradigms of the reading process to an isolation of reader and text as hypostatized entities, one or the other of which is assumed to be capable of independent action. She finds T. S. Eliot's depiction of the reading process inadequate, for example, because his theories invite a view of the text as a self-acting entity. Eliot contended that when the "objective correlative" of a given emotion is embodied within a text, "[that] emotion is immediately evoked" within a passive reader--whose role is much, it would seem, like that of dry tinder exposed to a lit match (qtd. in RTP, 103). Rosenblatt notes that this theory, by fostering a view of the text as an autonomous linguistic subsystem, invites a vast

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41 Louise M. Rosenblatt, "Literary Theory," in Flood, Jensen, Lapp, and Squire, eds., Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts (NY: Macmillan, 1991), 60. This article will be referred to as LT with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
"oversimplification" of the reader's role: "the implied reader seems passively to wait for the signal or formula for a particular and already completely determined emotion" (RTP, 103). Rosenblatt warns that attributing such autonomous agency to the text "would reduce literature, at worst, to a series of automatic signals, like traffic lights" (RTP, 103). Failure to challenge this erroneous paradigm leaves the reader susceptible to a "self-image as passively receiving the electric shock of the verbal stimuli" (RTP 132). But the converse error--assigning agency solely to the reader--is, according to Rosenblatt, no less a reductive oversimplification.

Just as, according to Rosenblatt, the reader is no "tabula rasa" passively enduring the "imprint" of the text (RTP, 4), so neither is the text merely a wax tablet awaiting the reader's impress. For example, Rosenblatt decries "aggressively subjective approaches" which, by assigning agency exclusively to the reader, ultimate in a kind of bibliotherapy whereby "the text may be reduced to the function of a Rorschach inkblot" upon which a self-acting reader "projects an interpretation" (RTP, 151). Similarly, Rosenblatt rejects the notion, fostered by proponents of structural analysis, that the text constitutes merely "a vessel, into which meaning derived from one or another code or metalanguage is to be poured" (RTP 171). As diverse as the approaches of bibliotherapists and structural analysts may be in other ways, Rosenblatt demonstrates that they share a similar view of "the text as empty, awaiting the content brought by the reader" (RTP, 4). Both cast the text in an entirely passive role, thereby tacitly attributing active agency solely to the reader.

Thus, Rosenblatt dismisses the paradigm of "self-action"--whether autonomous agency is assigned exclusively either to reader or to text--as a grossly oversimplified account of the reading process. She presents the supervening paradigm of "interaction"--whereby agency is attributed to both reader and text in alternating sequence--as an evolutionary link between the paradigms of "self-action" and "transaction."

Rosenblatt notes that prior to publication of Knowing and the Known (1949), both she and Dewey employed the term "interaction" as a stop-gap measure while groping independently over a period of years to express an intuitively-grasped paradigm of transaction: "The 1949
volume [Knowing and the Known] marks Dewey's choice of 'transaction' [supplanting 'interaction'] to designate a concept present in his work since 1896. My own use of the term after 1950 applied to an approach developed from 1938 on" (TTRW, 1089). But, as noted in the preceding chapter, although Dewey's intuitive grasp of the paradigm he later definitively termed "transaction" can be traced to his "Reflex Arc" essay of 1896, he for the most part employed the term "interaction" to express that intuition before reaching a clarified understanding of the distinction between "interaction" and "transaction." Hence, during the long interval between the dawning of Dewey's intuition and its clarification, the paradigms of transaction and interaction are to varying degrees interlaced within his writings. In her early writings, Rosenblatt similarly employed the term "interaction" in lieu of "transaction," but--taking of advantage of opportunities for emendation denied to Dewey by mortality--she has both substantially revised her early work and couched her more recent writing in thoroughly transactional terms.

The more thoroughly transactional the terminology she employs to render her paradigm of the reading process, the more profoundly anti-dualistic Rosenblatt's vision reveals itself to be--and hence the greater challenge her ideas pose for readers steeped in the tradition of dualism underlying Western thought. She observes, for example, that during transaction between reader and text, "the boundary between inner and outer world breaks down" (RTP, 21) to such a degree that "sharp demarcation between objective and subjective becomes irrelevant . . . " (RTP 18). She maintains that during the reading event the demarcation between reader and text becomes so blurred that paradoxically "each forms an environment for the other" (RTP 18). Accordingly, the locus of the "poem"--the literary work evoked by a reader from a text--can be categorized neither as exclusively internal nor as exclusively external either to reader or to text.

Being neither merely a "mental experience" nor existent as "an entity apart from a reader," the "poem" can be spatially located neither as "entirely mental [i.e., internal]" nor as "entirely external to readers" (RTP 105). The poem-event is thus spatially localizable neither in the text nor in a reader, but rather only "in the transaction" between them: "The poem . . . 'exists,' 'happens,' . . . in the transaction between particular readers and the text . . . " (RTP, 180). This
blurring of the distinction between externality and internality recalls Dewey's paradoxical statement that "at every point and stage . . . a living creature and its life processes involve a world or nature temporally and spatially 'external' to itself but 'internal' to its functions" (EN, 212).

But if the spatial locus of the event Rosenblatt has termed the "poem" is paradoxically neither internal nor external either to reader or to text, where precisely can this event be said to occur? No less than its spatial locus, the temporal duration of the "poem" likewise poses a conundrum. Although the poem-event is described as an "ephemeral . . . evocation" (RTP, 132) constituting only a "particular moment of relatedness-between-the-organism-and-the-environment" (RTP 173), that evocation is nonetheless termed an "ongoing process" (RTP 9) embracing subsequently remembered "episodes, characters, even speeches with voices reverberating in the inner ear" (RTP, 70). The locus of the poem then is dispersed, decentered--distributed as a field, incapable of being pinpointed either temporally or spatially.

Observations such as the foregoing hint at the extent to which Rosenblatt has abandoned the Procrustean bed of what Dewey termed "Newtonian space, time absolutes" (PC 579). In the discussion to follow it will be suggested that in her depiction of the "poem" qua event, Rosenblatt has fulfilled Dewey and Bentley's injunction to behavioral researchers to construct a behavioral space-time adapted to accommodate observation of transactional events' "indefinite shading off both temporally and spatially" (PC, 143).

**The Transactional Space-time of the "Poem"**

Rosenblatt emphatically departs from traditional definitions of the literary art work [synechdochically termed "the poem"] as a reified entity, fixed in space and static in time (TTRW, 1070). She cites as typical of this reifying tendency Wellek and Warren's depiction of "the 'existence' of the [literary] work as a set of norms . . . independent of the experience of any
particular reader." Rosenblatt wryly points out that to posit such a mode of existence necessarily implies that "the poem' would then exist somewhere as an object, separate and complete"--having a perpetually uniform though elliptically visible configuration--"like the moon . . . only partially seen at any time by any one reader" (PE, 127). Rosenblatt rejects as "unrealistic" the inference logically deducible from such a position: i.e., that "the poem itself" has a spatially fixed, temporally static mode of existence "as a continuing autonomous object" (RTP, 123). She proposes instead a "transactional view of the 'mode of existence' of the literary work" (RTP 129).

Rosenblatt's transactional view of the mode of existence of the literary work classifies the work not as a reified entity, but rather as "an event in time" (RTP 155). The "poem" thus has more in common with the relatively fleeting performance of a musician or dancer than with the relatively stable musical or choreographic score that guides such a performance. Rosenblatt, in fact, heuristically employs such analogies to differentiate between "poem" and "text," as she distinctively defines these terms.

A text, according to Rosenblatt, "is simply a pattern of signs, of vibrations in the air, or ink on paper offered as cues to the reader" (CCC, 349). So defined, a text comprises a "necessary, but not a sufficient condition" for the occurrence of "a literary work of art" (RTP, 83). Rosenblatt draws an instructive analogy between the role of a text and that of a musical score, which similarly constitutes a necessary but insufficient condition for the occurrence of a musical performance: "The text of a poem or of a novel or a drama is like a musical score. The artist who created the score--composer or poet--has set down notations for others, to guide them in the production of a work of art" (RTP, 13-14). But unlike the ink marks comprising such a score, the musical performance or "poem" evoked from it comes into being only in the course of a

42 Louise M. Rosenblatt, "The Poem as Event," College English 26.2 (1964): 127. This article will be referred to as PE with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.

43 Louise M. Rosenblatt, "Continuing the Conversation: A Clarification," Research in the Teaching of English 29 (October 1995), 349. This article will be referred to as CCC with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
distinctive kind of transaction. The "poem"--Rosenblatt's term for a literary work of any genre--comes into being only to the extent that in the course of a "reciprocally conditioning" transaction with a text, a reader adopts what Rosenblatt terms an "aesthetic" stance (CCC, 350). A reader's stance is, in turn, characterizable as aesthetic only to the degree to which the reader "focus[es] on the experiential qualities of what is being evoked during the reading event," attending "to the private aspect, the personal aura in which the referential is embedded--sensations, images, feelings, emotional, and intellectual associations" (CCC, 350). It is the reader's stance, rather than any feature of the text per se, that according to Rosenblatt determines the character of a particular transaction with the text. A reader-text transaction merits the designation "poem" only to the degree to which the reader adopts an aesthetic stance.

If the reader fails to heed or deliberately ignores cues that typically prompt adoption of an aesthetic stance, the resultant reader-text transaction will not yield a "poem," no matter how accoladed the literary merits of the text may be. On the other hand, an aesthetically-stanced transaction with a text will yield a "poem"--regardless of the text's presumed literary merits or demerits. If a Shakespearean sonnet is read, for example, for the "efferent" purpose of carrying away from the reading experience certain pre-determined items of information, that experience will not constitute a "poem" according to Rosenblatt's definition of the term. But if a "help wanted" ad culled from the classified section of a newspaper is read for the purpose of savoring the qualitative experience it evokes, that reading experience will constitute a "poem" in so far as the reader devotes attention to that purpose. Rosenblatt instructively explains the phenomenon of "found poetry" on this very basis (RTP, 81-82).

Rosenblatt demystifies the appeal of "found poetry" by demonstrating how "pop" art capitalizes on an enculturated sensitization to "cues" that typically prompt us to adopt an aesthetic stance (RTP, 81-82). Visual cues that tend to prompt readers in our culture to adopt an aesthetic stance toward a text include "broad margins" and--in the case of "free verse"--a page layout featuring vertically isolated words and phrases rather than horizontally continuous sentences (RTP, 81-82). By strategically altering the typographical format of a presumably
"banal" text (e.g., a "want ad"), the "pop" poet effectively short-circuits the reader's habitual tendency to read such a text efferently and invites adoption of an aesthetic stance instead (RTP, 81-82).

Thus, according to Rosenblatt, "efferent" and "aesthetic" stances represent not an ironclad dichotomy, but rather simply two ends of a fluid continuum of stances potentially assumable by a reader during the course of reading any particular text. Differentiating the proportionate degree to which a reader's stance may be termed either "aesthetic" or "efferent" during a given reading experience demands, in part, recognition of the proportional degree to which the reader focuses either on the evoked "poem" as it unfolds at the present moment or on a goal projected into a future lying beyond that evocation. This determination is rarely clear cut, since the reader's focus can shift moment by moment, creating ambiguous "twilight zones between . . . efferent and aesthetic stances" (CCC, 351). Recall, further, that as William James observed, the present moment and the future lying beyond it "compenstrate" in lived experience. The case of a mother who has already begun running to fetch the needed ingredients at the very moment that she is frantically reading directions for antidoting a poison ingested by her child would dramatically illustrate James' observation that present and future actually compenstrate in experience. Rather than mutually exclusive categories, therefore, aesthetic and efferent stances for Rosenblatt represent merely opposite ends of a fluid continuum of postures assumable toward a text.

To trace subtle shifts from one proportional degree of focus to another during a particular reading experience would demand a mode of behavioral observation sensitive to what Bentley termed "purposing" behaviors (FSTB, 480). As Bentley pointed out, facts gleaned from observation of such behaviors are "durationally much more complex than infinitely ticking clocks," and spatially much more complex than "infinitely extended parallels in three dimensions" (FSTB, 480). Thus, as Bentley noted, such facts "do not tolerate technical description in technical Newtonian space and time" (FSTB, 478). Recall, therefore, that Bentley debunked

44 For a thorough explanation of this point, see Louise M. Rosenblatt, "Continuing the Conversation," Research in the Teaching of English 29 (October 1995), 349-354.
reliance on quantitative measures, enshrined by Newtonian science, for research into human behavior: "Experimentation could achieve a little measurement with a yardstick and a little registration of time with a clock, but never more than enough to skirt the fringe of the behavioral facts" (FSTB, 477). Rosenblatt similarly notes the inadequacy of quantitative measures employed by behavioral researchers as the basis for drawing conclusions regarding the reading process.

Rosenblatt points out that research framed by the assumptions of statistical methodology tends to confirm the efficacy only of "traditional methods of teaching and testing," which rely on the strategy of "fragmenting [linguistic] processes into small quantifiable units" that are "quantitatively and hence economically assessable" (TTRW, 1086). She further instructively notes that standardized tests, by means of which "quantitatively based group labels" are generated and the "accountability" of schools assessed in quantitative terms, are framed by the same lock-step set of assumptions (TTRW, 1087).

Rosenblatt urges adoption of alternative reading research methodologies capable of taking into account "broadening circles of context" elusive of statistical tabulation. These widening circles would encompass compenetrating temporal and spatial contexts, reducible neither (to borrow Bentley's phrasing) to "successions of instants" nor to "successions of locations" (FSTB, 485).

Fuller recognition of the temporal context of the reader-text transaction would encompass what Bentley termed "present events conveying pasts into futures" (FSTB, 484). Rosenblatt notes, for example, that whereas associations from and reflections on past temporal contexts compenetrating the present moment are systematically eliminated from the scope of a methodological behaviorist's vision, "in talking about the literary work we must have recourse to introspection and memory--anathema though they may be to those who simplistically seek the objectivity of the scientist" (RTP, 133). She insists as well upon recognition of compenetrating future and present temporal contexts of the reader-text transaction, i.e. "the relation of the individual literary event to the continuing life of the reader in all its facets [emphasis added]"
(RTP, 161). She urges that "we need to see the reading act [not only] as an event . . . happening at a particular time, under particular circumstances, in a particular social and cultural setting," but also simultaneously "as part of the ongoing life of the individual and the group [emphasis added]" (VTVI, 100). Rosenblatt's insistence upon the compenetration of future and past within the fleeting moment of the poem-event recalls William James' contention that within "'the passing moment' . . . the dying rearward of time and its dawning future forever mix their lights" (PU, 244). According to Rosenblatt, within the "moment of relatedness-between-the-organism-and-the-environment" constituting the poem-event (RTP, 173), remembered past and anticipated future likewise forever mix their lights.

No less emphatic than Rosenblatt's insistence on recognition of the compenetrating temporal contexts of a reading act is her insistence on awareness of its compenetrating spatial contexts. Rosenblatt collectively terms these the "living context" of the reader-text transaction--the distinctive "personal, social, and cultural matrix" within which each reader-text transaction transpires. She posits a unique "world" brought to the text by each individual reader (RTP 108). Even when readers read or listen to the same text, for example, in the same "socio-physical setting" (RTP, 81)--the same culture, the same country or city, even the same classroom or home--the "world" each brings to the transaction is unique. This transaction itself creates still another "world": "the world of the [literary] work" (RTP, 69). This new world straddles the indeterminate boundary between reader and text, the so-called "subjective" and "objective" realms: "[During the reader-text transaction,] the boundary between inner and outer world breaks down, and the literary work of art, as so often remarked, leads us into a new world" (RTP, 21). This new world effects an "expansion of the boundaries of our own . . . [original] worlds" (RTP, 68), releasing us from a spatial and temporal provincialism of perspective narrowed to the here-and-now: "Literary works of art offer us a means of transcending our own provincialisms of time

45 Louise M. Rosenblatt, "Viewpoint: Transaction Versus Interaction--A Terminological Rescue Operation," Research in the Teaching of English 19 (February 1985), 100. This article will be referred to as VTVI with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
Like the original world the reader brings to the transaction with the text, this new world created in the course of the reader-text transaction defies quantitative description; it can neither be measured in terms of square inches or acreage, nor mapped in terms of longitude and latitude.

Far from being pinpointable by means of coordinates, the location of this world cannot be identified even as either within or without the reader. Rosenblatt concedes that "it is hard to liberate ourselves from the notion that the poem is something either entirely mental or entirely external to readers" (RTP, 105). Existing a priori neither "in" the reader nor "in" the text, the poem qua meaning emerges only in/during particular reader-text transactions:

The poem . . . "exists," "happens," . . . in the transaction between particular readers and the text . . . . (RTP, 181)

The "meaning" does not reside ready-made "in" the text or "in" the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between reader and text. (TTRW, 1063)

If the assertion that the location of the poem cannot be identified spatially either "in" text or "in" reader, but instead is located only temporally "in" qua "during" their transaction appears to conflate the categories of space and time, recall William James' observation that in lived experience supposedly separable spatial and temporal dimensions actually compenetrate. Recall also the parable of foodists and eaterists, by means of which it was demonstrated that "food" and "eater"--unlike, for example, worm and robin--exist nowhere before a peculiar worm-robin transaction transpires, but rather come into being only in / during that transaction.

As earlier suggested, Rosenblatt's depiction of the "poem" as a durational-extensional event rescues the literary work from the conceptual thinness to which it has been historically reduced. At the center of her transactional model of this event are the "unique moment in the

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46 Louise M. Rosenblatt, "Literature and the Invisible Reader, in The Promise of English: NCTE 1970 Distinguished Lectures (Champaign, IL: NCTE, 1970), 19. This article will be referred to as LIR with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
reader's life in which the literary transaction takes place," and the reader's unique "selecting-out of elements from the cultural milieu" in which the event transpires (RTP, 153). But far from an isolable event, the "literary work" must according to Rosenblatt always be "seen as part of the fabric of individual lives" (RTP, 143) and hence as a part of a social fabric necessarily implicating and implicated by those individual lives (RTP, 187). Rosenblatt's depiction of the poem-qua-event thus embraces its "indefinite shading off both temporally and spatially"--as Dewey and Bentley described the ever-widening contexts of behavioral events (KK, 143).

No less than the hunter-rabbit transaction described by Dewey and Bentley, any incident of reader-text transaction can be shown likewise to embrace shadowy "pasts and futures across continents" (KK, 86, n. 43). The "poem" generated during a particular reader-text transaction, as depicted by Rosenblatt, seems metaphorically reminiscent of the widening series of rings created when a stone is cast into a pond. Arbitrarily to bound the reader-text transaction temporally and spatially in terms commensurate with clock-ticks and foot-rules would be as reductive as to circumscribe observation of the stone's impact to its initial splash. In order to encourage fuller understanding of reader-text transaction, Rosenblatt urges more widespread adoption of "qualitative" research measures--if not to supplant, then at least to complement the entrenched tradition of quantitatively oriented research. She considers longitudinal and ethnographic studies, for example, to be capable of at least of hinting at the ever-widening spatial and temporal contexts of the "poem" (TTRW, 1089).

In Chapter Four of this dissertation, Rosenblatt's contention that the reader-text transaction effects not only a compenetration of contexts, but even a mutual transformation of its transacting partners will be explored. The implications of her contention that during the reader-text transaction, "the self of the reader and the text" alike "take[e] on their character during the transaction" will especially be examined (LT, 60). First, however, in order to provide an historical context for Rosenblatt's theory of the self and its mode of emergence during the reader-text transaction, Chapter Three will trace Dewey's theory of the emergent self.
Chapter 3: The Self "Wrought Out" in Transaction

In his introduction to John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley: A Philosophical Correspondence, Sidney Ratner notes a tendency even among enthusiasts of Dewey and Bentley’s Knowing and the Known to find the theories of individuality and self propounded there to be inadequately developed. He notes that even "admirers of Dewey's and Bentley's pioneering work may dissent from some of their conclusions or emphases," such as "their advising abandonment of the word 'individual' and all substitutes for it wherever positive general theory of language is undertaken or planned" (PC, 45; cf. KK, 264). Ratner summarizes the basis for the dissatisfaction of such objectors as follows:

Valuable as the transactional approach is, when the need arises to stress the moral value or historic significance of individual choice and action, a non-transactional phrasing is justifiable. Too rigid an adherence to the "transaction" formulation could liquidate the special qualities of individuality. (PC, 45)

Ratner further suggests a link between Dewey and Bentley's supposedly inadequate theory of individuality and a corresponding perceived deficiency in "a theory of the self that Dewey and Bentley never worked out adequately" (PC, 45).

Ratner and the critics whose position he has conveyed are quite right in pointing out that in Knowing and the Known Dewey and Bentley failed to explicate theories of individuality and of self consonant with the transactional mode of observation and report. However, it could be argued that Dewey's earlier work does in fact embody such theories. In the discussion to follow, I will examine these implicit theories, with an eye toward reconciling them with the transactionalism Dewey later more fully embraced.
Dewey's Theories of Individuality and Self

Following Thomas M. Alexander, I will look to Dewey's aesthetics as the key to his philosophy, including in this case his theory of individuality. In "Time and Individuality" (1940), Dewey linked actualization of human potentiality for individuality with the work of the artist:

The artist in realizing his [or her] own individuality reveals potentialities hitherto unrealized. This revelation is the inspiration of other individuals to make the potentialities real, for it is not sheer revolt against things as they are which stirs human endeavor to its depths, but vision of what might be and is not.47

Note that Dewey traces the origin of ameliorative action to a realization on the part of artists of their "own individuality" (TI, 114). This genetic attribution invites exploration of connections between Dewey's meliorism and his theories of individuality and art. Note that Dewey defined "art" itself as "the authentic expression of any and all individuality" (TI, 114). Through expressing their own individuality, artists can, according to Dewey, "disclose the meaning of the individuality of others to those others" (TI, 114).

The process by which such a successive disclosure of individuality can occur is suggested in Art as Experience (1934/1987). There Dewey explained that each perceiver of an art product--a literary text, a painting, etc.--must complete the artistic "work" begun by the artist: "There is

47 John Dewey, "Time and Individuality," in Boydston, ed., The Later Works, 14: 114. This essay will be referred to as TI with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist."48 Each "percipient"
must evoke from the artist's product a uniquely individual "work of art":

A work of art . . . is actually, not just potentially, a work of art
only when it lives in some individualized experience. As a
piece of parchment, of marble, of canvas, it remains (subject to
the ravages of time) self-identical throughout the ages. But as a
work of art, it is recreated every time it is esthetically
experienced. (AE, 113)

By thus "participating in the work of art, [the percipients themselves] become artists in their
activity" (TI, 114). Far from characterizing the role of the reader of literary works as that of a
passive spectator, for example, Dewey conceived of the role of the reader--like that of the viewer
of a painting, the listener attentive to a musical performance, etc.,--as actively participatory.
Through such participation, percipients are enabled not only to realize their own individuality,
but also to "learn to know and honor individuality in whatever form it appears" (TI, 114).

Dewey concluded that art thus serves a vitally instrumental function, not only for personal and
cultural survival, but also for the ongoing evolution of individuals and cultures: ":[Through art],
the fountains of creative activity are discovered and released. The free individuality which is the
source of art is also the final source of creative development in time" (TI, 114). Dewey
particularly highlighted the role of literature in this temporal process: "Literature [broadly
defined to encompass both its oral and written forms] conveys the meaning of the past that is
significant in present experience and is prophetic of the larger movement of the future" (AE,
348). Thus Dewey assigned to literature a pre-eminent role in the evolutionary process of
humankind's "creative development in time."

Further to account for Dewey's valuation of literature, I will next consider some of his
underlying assumptions regarding the nature of "individuality" and the notion of "self."

48 John Dewey, Art as Experience, in Boydston, ed., The Later Works, 10:60. This volume will be referred to as
AE with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
Defining individuality in negative terms, Dewey insisted that "an individual," is not just "a nodal point in the spatial redistribution of what already existed" (TI, 111). In another negative definition, Dewey ridiculed the notion that individuality is a ready-made, latent endowment: "Individuality is . . . not something given once for all at the beginning which then proceeds to unroll as a ball of yarn may be unwound" (TI, 103). Dewey insisted on recognition of the crucial role played by environmental contingencies in actualizing potential individuality.

Just as Dewey elsewhere differentiated between "individuals with minds" and the achievement of truly unique "individual minds" (NE, 169), so too he discriminated between individuality as a starting point [i.e., the kind of baseline individuality found in snowflakes, as well as human beings] and individuality as a distinctly human achievement. Dewey depicted this latter kind of individuality as existing originally only in potency: "Individuality is at first . . . a potentiality, a capacity for development." Dewey inferred that potentialities in fact constitute "a category of existence" since "development cannot occur unless an individual has powers or capacities that are not [yet] actualized at a given time" (TI, 109). These "powers or capacities" would include a unique genetic inheritance and personal history. Such potential individuality, according to Dewey, can be actualized only through and as "a series of interactions" (TI, 110) with environing conditions. Like any other potentiality, the individuality of each human self can be actualized only as it is transactionally "wrought out" as a socially constructed meaning. Dewey's choice of the phrase "wrought out" to describe the process by which individuality is socially constructed recalls metaphors--drawn from the realm of manual labor--by means of which, as we have seen, Dewey elsewhere depicted the process of meaning making.

"Wrought," derived from the Old English verb worken, is actually an irregular past participle of the modern English verb "to work" (an alternative for "worked," the more commonly used regular past participle form). Thus, the Oxford English Dictionary--characterized by


50 John Dewey, "Individuality and Experience," in Boydston, ed., The Later Works, 2: 2. This article will be referred to as IE with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
Dewey as his oft-consulted "bible" (PC, 427)--presents illustrations for usage of the phrase "wrought out" under the entry for "work"--i.e., in the section labeled "with adverbs, in special senses," under the verb phrase "work out."

Three definitions of "work out" seem relevant to Dewey's description of the process by which human individuality must be "wrought out": one applicable in a literal sense; the other two, in a figurative sense. Literally, Dewey's description of individuality as "something . . . to be wrought out" (IE, 2)--i.e., achieved, rather than given--corresponds with the following definition:

To bring about, effect, produce, or procure (a result) by labour or effort . . . .

1874 GREEN Short Hist . . . . The fortunes of England were being slowly wrought out in every incident.

In a figurative sense, the following definitions of "wrought out" drawn from the domain of manual labor--mining and wood hewing--seem metaphorically resonant with Dewey's vision of individuality as a potentiality that must be laboriously "wrought out":

To work (a mine, etc.) until it yields no more . . . .

1827 SCOTT The Highlands were indeed a rich mine; but they have I think, been fairly wrought out.

To fashion by cutting out, excavation or the like . . . .

1719 DE FOE Crusoe . . . When I had wrought out some Boards . . . , I made large Shelves. [Although this usage is labeled as archaic, Dewey's repeated allusions to De Foe's Robinson Crusoe make his acquaintance with this particular passage seem likely.]

The resonance of the term "wrought out" with the activities of mining and excavation, as indicated in the OED entries above, invites comparison of the process by which individuality is

wrought out with the excavation of natural resources, like ore or timber, in crude form. Such excavation serves only as a prelude to the further labor of transforming raw material into usable products (e.g., lumber into furniture, iron into implements, etc.), the nature and form of which are determined by human needs and desires. By analogy, inchoate individuality, wrought out through processes of communal activity, is continually transformed by the "serial" nature of those processes, the course of which will follow the channels of human need and desire (IE, 60).

The analogy thus suggested is reminiscent of Dewey's characterization of the ongoing work of human meaning making, a crucial phase of which he likened to "the working over of raw material into an effective tool" (IEEL, 354). Meanings are excavated (selectively abstracted) in relatively raw form from immediate experience--"the sensory continuum, the 'big, buzzing' blooming confusion." These meanings are then refined/alloyed/shaped into forms usable in specific contexts, readied for "use in some . . . situation" (IEEL, 353). In John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology, Larry Hickman elaborates Dewey's metaphor by describing extant meanings in various stages of refinement as the contents of a "storeroom," ready for practical use: "What is stocked is the raw material of the watch spring (the pig iron) or perhaps the spring itself, if we view it not in terms of a finished product but in terms of its future uses." An "indirect effect" of "every instance of intelligent behavior" is that "it initiates an intrinsic meaning that may be put in the storeroom to serve in some later inquiry for which it will be deemed appropriate" (JDPT, 54). Meanings thus stored range on a continuum of refinement from the relatively "coarse" (Dewey, cited in Hickman JDPT, 56) meanings that revolve in the "meaning constellations" of "common sense or institutional languages" to the more highly-refined meanings of the scientific language constellations (JDPT, 56-57). For Dewey, meanings were not hypostatized, "fixed, complete essences, unalterable for all time" (JDPT, 52). Instead of revering


53 Larry Hickman, John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 53. This book will be referred to as JDPT with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
meanings as "finalities," Dewey argued that they should rather be utilized as "tools," to be "prized" not "in contemplation" but "in use" (JDPT, 52). As a tool usable for accomplishing what Dewey termed an "end-in-view" (EN, 86), any particular stocked meaning is subject to continual reconstruction: "It may be that the meaning, like the watch spring, will have to be discarded or retooled in the event that the end-in-view (or design of the watch) changes" (JDPT, 54).

Dewey's extended "analogy . . . between the production of metal artifacts and the production of the artifacts we call ideas" (JDPT, 53) illumines his choice of the metaphorically-freighted phrase "wrought out" to describe the process by which potential individuality is actualized. Dewey seems thus to be suggesting that individuality itself is a meaning--the very meaning of the meaning-maker--that must be continually wrought out in transaction with environing conditions, including and especially transactions with fellow meaning makers.

To illustrate the process by which human individuality is thus wrought out in transaction, Dewey presents a synopsis of the career of Abraham Lincoln (TI, 102-103; 110-111). Lincoln's "unique individuality" was according to Dewey, demonstrably wrought out through and defined by "the series of interactions in which he was created to be what he was by the way in which he responded to the occasions with which he was presented" (TI, 111).

Dewey insisted that each occasion presented by environing conditions entails a choice. At each such juncture we can attempt to cling to habitual behavior patterns, or we can use the occasion as an opportunity for growth. The former choice forfeits actualization of potential individuality, since "an individual may lose his individuality" when "individuals become imprisoned in routine and fall to the level of mechanisms" (TI, 112). Only by utilizing occasions as opportunities for growth can potential individuality be actualized. Dewey noted that in tracing the process by which individuality is actualized, "one cannot leave out either conditions as opportunities nor yet unique ways of responding to them" (TI, 111). He emphasized that occasions become opportunities only as they are utilized as such: "An occasion is an opportunity only when it is an evocation of a specific event, while a response is not a necessary
effect of a cause but is a way of using an occasion to render it a constituent of an ongoing unique history" (TI, 110). Dewey noted that by consistently using occasions as opportunities, for example, Abraham Lincoln "made himself as an individual in the history he made" (TI, 103). The essence associated with the name "Abraham Lincoln" was thus a temporally emergent event; indeed, its meaning continues to emerge.

According to the degree to which occasions are utilized as opportunities for shaping one's emergent individuality, Dewey distinguished between two modes of self-identification: the "finished, closed" individual and the "individual still to make" (NE, 188-189). "Finished, closed" individuals tend to identify themselves with already actualized potentialities. They view these "possessed powers and accomplished unions with the world" as ends in themselves. Attempting to preserve these accomplished ends, they tend to view occasions of disequilibrium between themselves and environing conditions as threats rather than as opportunities for growth. Resisting deliberate change, they must inevitably undergo change--by default. "Individual[s] still to make," by contrast, identify themselves with the ongoing process of actualizing their individual potentialities. They view their already "possessed powers and accomplished unions with the world" not as ends in themselves, but as a means for "remak[ing] conditions in accord with desire" (NE, 188). They use occasions of disequilibrium with environing conditions as opportunities for growth, braving "the risks attendant upon the formation of new objects and the growth of a new self" (NE, 189).

Literature, no less than life beyond the printed page, affords ample occasions for disequilibrium between organism (qua reader) and environment (qua text). As will be more fully seen in the following chapter, literary theorist Louise M. Rosenblatt has systematically applied the foregoing theories of Dewey to the reader-text relationship. According to her paradigm of the reading process, when a reader's habitual mode of responding to a text is thwarted, the resulting sense of disequilibrium tends to induce reflection. Rosenblatt's depiction of this phenomenon recalls Dewey's more generalized portrayal of disequilibrium-producing "conflict" as "a sine qua non of reflection" (HNC, 207). Readers whose behavior fits Dewey's description of the
"finished, closed individual" tend to perceive such occasions of disequilibrium as threatening not only to their correspondingly "finished, closed" constructions of texts, but also to the static world views underlying those constructions--indeed to the very selves that constructed them. Such individuals are apt either to dismiss as inconsequential any elements that contradict their interpretations of a text or to ascribe such discrepancies to flaws within an insufficiently unified literary product. "Individual[s] still to make," on the other hand, tend to view occasions of disequilibrium encountered during the reading process as what Rosenblatt terms "growth points" (LE, 235). For such individuals, the "intellectual and emotional ferment" (LE, 235) created by disruption of habitual patterns of response signals an opportunity for revising their original interpretations of a text and for critically examining the assumptions underlying those interpretations. Thus, at critical junctures within a text, readers face choices which, like all choices (as will be shown in the discussion to follow), both reveal and reconstitute the self. By clinging to their original interpretations, defending the self and its self-perpetuating assumptions, readers may rigidly resist the process that Dewey described as the "growth of a new self" NE, 189). Or readers can, by adopting what Rosenblatt terms a "flexibly receptive attitude" (LE, 101), become willing to reconstruct their interpretations of the text and the world views that gave rise to those interpretations--i.e. to yield to the process of growth.

Dewey described the "growth of a new self" (NE, 189) as a continuous, indeterminate process: "The old self is put off and the new self is only forming, and the form it finally takes will depend upon the unforeseeable result of an adventure" (NE, 189). In this ongoing process, a new self is continually in the process of formation, much as new skin continuously forms beneath successively shed epidermal layers. But this description of a succession of selves represents only one facet of the complex configuration Dewey envisioned among the plural selves he collectively designated as "the self."

Although Dewey rejected the traditional notion of a unitary, a priori self, he frequently employed the definite article ("the") to designate a superordinate category--the self--collectively
embracing an individual's plural selves. Defining "self" as "an ongoing process" (HNC, 97), Dewey noted that any self-as-ongoing process can include within itself any number of more narrowly-defined processes or "selves." He further noted that these subsumed processes are commonly incongruous: ". . . Any self is capable of including within itself a number of inconsistent selves, of unharmonized dispositions" (HNC, 96). Still, Dewey recognized the fundamental continuity--if not unity--of the collectively-defined self. He termed this ongoing process "the enduring self," in contradistinction to the fleeting "flotsam and jetsam" apparent on the surface of consciousness." He described this relatively "enduring self" as the "core" of consciousness, "a core . . . [that] never appears in consciousness save in kaleidoscopic facets" (FSTS, 506-07). Dewey (1925/1988a) noted that ironically this enduring self is only fleetingly and fragmentarily brought to awareness precisely because of its very ubiquity: "The constancy and pervasiveness of the operative presence of the self as a determining factor in all situations is the chief reason why we give so little heed to it; it is more intimate and omnipresent in experience than the air we breathe" (FSTS, 189). Thus, we are less likely to identify ourselves with the ubiquitous self as "an ongoing process" than with one or more of the constituent processes ("dispositions" or "selves") included within it (HNC, 97; 96).

Dewey described the ubiquitous, inclusive self qua process as "a centred organization of energies" (NE, 180). These energies, though they have a common center, are by no means necessarily harmonized or balanced. Dewey described a perpetually shifting pattern of "oscillat[ing]" (NE, 188) energies within the self. One kind of energy, which might be termed "centrifugal," is "an energy of attraction, expansion and supplementation." This expansive energy "tends . . . to[ward] connection, continuity." A counterpoised energy, which might be termed "centripetal," is an energy of "resistance" and "closure." This contractive energy "tends to[ward] isolation, discreteness" (NE, 186-187). The activities of the self--most notably, its choices--are impelled to varying degrees by these competing energies.

54 John Dewey, "Foreword to Seventy Times Seven," in Boydston, ed., The Later Works, 11: 507. This foreword will be referred to as FSTS with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
In *Ethics*, Dewey described choice as "the most characteristic activity of the self." He noted that every choice--i.e., "deliberate decision"--"sustains a double relation to the self" (E, 286). Although this double relation is "especially marked at critical junctures, . . . it marks every choice to some extent however slight" (E, 287). Every choice both "reveals the existing self" and "forms the future self" (E, 287). Choices expose "the desires and habits of the self as it already exists," since the self "enter[s] so intimately into the act performed as to qualify it" (E, 287). Fossil-like, each object of the self's choosing bears the imprint of the self, betraying its character: "The self reveals its nature in what it chooses" (E, 287). Simultaneously, though often less obviously, each choice "shapes the self, making it, in some degree, a new self" (E, 287). Since Dewey conceived of "self as an ongoing process" (HNC, 97), the newly emerging self would seem to represent a supervening stage in that process. And since Dewey further defined "the self" as a "centred organization of energies," the reflexive re-formation of the self would seem to represent an ongoing reorganization of its energies--a shifting balance point, for example, between centripetal energy (identified with the "finished, closed individual") and centrifugal energy (manifest in "the individual still to make").

Given the "relative fluidity and diversity of the constituents of selfhood," Dewey summarily dismissed as fallacious any "belief in the fixity and simplicity of the self" (HNC, 96). But Dewey maintained that integration of competing tendencies within the self, though certainly not a given, is nonetheless an actualizable potentiality: "Integration is an achievement rather than a datum" (HNC, 30). Dewey noted, however, that such an achievement is relatively rare, given "the strain of thought and effort required to bring competing tendencies into a unity" (HNC, 30). Moreover, since the self is continually evolving, Dewey conceived of the process of integrating its fluid and diverse constituents as an ongoing project, as indeterminate as growth itself.

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55 John Dewey and James Hayden Tufts, *Ethics*, in Boydston, ed., *The Later Works*, 7: 286. This volume will be referred to as E with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
According to Dewey, "growth . . . has no end beyond itself."\textsuperscript{56} Likewise, the integration of the evolving self, as Dewey portrayed it, has no end beyond itself. Equating growth with education, Dewey maintained that the only end of education is "more education" (DE, 56). Likewise, the end of the self-integration process must always be further integration.

Integration of competing tendencies--"complex, unstable, opposing attitudes, habits, impulses" (HNC, 96)--within the self is never achievable once-for-all-time, like the completion of a proof in geometry. Rather, it more closely resembles the life-long project of a researcher whose quest for understanding brings to light ever more profound questions. Like the "warrantable assertions" identified by Dewey as the ends-in-view of scientific research, each temporary integration of the self serves only as a bench mark--a reference point for subsequent achievements--rather than as a capstone.

Dewey perceived the integration of the self as a process in which a dynamic equilibrium among competing tendencies within the self must be perpetually re-established on an ever more expansive basis. Since Dewey recognized the "always active" physical organism as the "vital basis" for the self (E, 289), he argued that only by fully exploiting the active tendencies of the self can such a dynamic equilibrium among those tendencies be achieved.

Categorizing human nature as a part of nature, Dewey identified the active tendencies of the self as manifestations of the tendencies of nature itself. Describing the ambivalence created by opposing energies within the self, Dewey noted that the tensions embodied in human behavior are in fact characteristic of all natural events:

One trait tends to isolation, discreteness; the other trait to connection, continuity. This ambivalent character is rooted in nature, whose events have their own distinctive [centripetal tendencies, manifested as] indifferences, resistance, arbitrary closures and intolerances, and also [centrifugal tendencies,

\textsuperscript{56}John Dewey, \textit{Democracy and Education}, in Boydston, ed., \textit{The Middle Works}, 9:58. This work will be referred to as DE with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
evident in] their peculiar openness, warm responsiveness, greedy seekings and transforming unions. (NE, 186)

Since dialectical tensions are rooted in nature itself, any attempt to eliminate opposing tendencies within the self must prove futile: "[These two characters of events in nature] . . . persist on the human plane, and as ultimate characters are eradicable" (NE, 186). As forces of nature, these opposing energies within the self can never be successfully thwarted. They can, however, according to Dewey, be intelligently controlled. Like the powerful currents of a river harnessed for production of hydroelectric power, their force can be constructively channeled and deliberately exploited.

Viewing the tendencies of the self as natural--literally, a part of nature--Dewey diagnosed imbalances within the self as symptomatic of insufficiently released natural energies. Rather than recommending attempts to cap energies perceived as excessive, Dewey proposed fuller release of constricted energies perceived as deficient.

Significantly, Dewey enclosed the pejorative adjective "bad" in quotations marks when introducing the subject of so-called "'bad' impulses and habits" (HNC, 135). Attributing such castigated impulses and habits to an asymmetrical release of natural energies, Dewey recommended righting the balance by releasing impounded, stagnant energies and channeling them constructively:

We have already seen the effects of choking them off, of efforts at direct suppression. Bad habits can be subdued only by being utilized as elements in a new, more generous and comprehensive scheme of action, and good ones be preserved from rot only by similar use. (HNC, 135-136).

Only through an ever more active utilization of the full range of natural tendencies within the self, then, can a "working harmony among diverse desires"--as Dewey defined "rationality"--be progressively established (HNC, 136).
According to Dewey, harmonization of the self must be an expansive rather than contractive process. Rather than attempting to harmonize the self by selectively cultivating only certain impulses, one must instead perpetually "widen, not narrow, his[her] life of strong impulses" (HNC, 137):

More "passions," not fewer, . . . [are needed]. To check the influence of hate there must be sympathy, while to rationalize sympathy there are needed emotions of curiosity, caution, respect for the freedom of others--dispositions which evoke objects which balance those called up by sympathy, and prevent its degeneration into maudlin sentiment and meddling interference. (HNC, 136)

Dewey's homeopathic prescription of "more 'passions'" to restore balance among emotions contrasts strikingly with behavioral engineering tactics designed selectively to extinguish certain categories of response, such as phobias.

In B. F. Skinner's Walden Two, for example, the novel's protagonist describes the tactics employed for inculcating self-control in the children of the experimental community he has founded. In order to extinguish "the emotions which breed unhappiness," these children are exposed to and progressively build increasing tolerance for situations that typically evoke emotions such as jealousy, envy, and resentment. Although engagement in and appreciation for the arts--including various modes of literature--are enjoyed by community members as leisure activities, such pastimes are regarded as largely irrelevant to the community's primary agenda of social engineering. Immunization of individuals against tendencies considered destructive is the only mechanism trusted for survival of these individuals, of their culture, and--by implication--of the human species as a whole.

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Dewey, by contrast, envisioned an ongoing process, whereby dynamic equilibrium must be established on an increasingly comprehensive basis, as the route not just to personal and cultural survival, but to human progress. Such an equilibrium can be established, according to Dewey, not by extinguishing any of the tendencies of the self, but rather by releasing ever more fully in integrated action all the energies of nature embodied within it. Dewey viewed dynamic equilibrium as a potentiality of not just of human nature, but of nature itself:

There is in nature, even below the level of life, something more than mere flux and change. Form is arrived at whenever a stable, even though moving, equilibrium is reached. . . . Order is not imposed from without but is made out of the relations of harmonious interactions that energies bear to one another (AE, 20).

Art, according to Dewey, is instrumental to realizing this potentiality within the affairs of human nature. Art both "releases energy in constructive forms" (HNC, 113) and effects a constructive integration of energies, not only for the artist, but also for the perceiver of the art work.

Fuller elaboration of this function of art lies at the heart of Art as Experience, Dewey's treatise on aesthetics. In that work Dewey elaborates his vision of the role of art--including literature--in achieving the kind of dynamic equilibrium he considered essential for the endurance of humankind. In A Common Faith, Dewey reconstructed the conventional sense of the descriptor "religious" to include any "attitudes that lend deep and enduring support to the processes of living."58 In the spirit of Dewey's definition, Robert Coles' The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination memorably depicts experiences, drawn from the experience of individual readers, in which such "religious" attitudes--inculcated by specific literary works--have impelled and sustained growth. The work of Louise M. Rosenblatt provides a theoretical base for understanding the role played by literature in the processes by which the self is

58John Dewey, A Common Faith, in Boydston, ed., The Later Works, 9:12. This work will be referred to as CF with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
transactionally wrought out and supported in its growth. These intertwined functions of literature will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.
Chapter 4: Poem and Self: Potentialities Mutually Actualized in Reader-Text Transaction

Dewey (1925/1981) scorned as antiquated the notion of unilateral transformation, labeling it a vestige of ancient Greek physics that, having long since been "banished from science, . . . remains to haunt philosophy" (EN, 65). He insisted that transformation in any context must always be simultaneously reciprocal:

. . . There is no exclusively one-way exercise of conditioning power, no mode of regulation that operates wholly from above to below or from within outwards or from without inwards. Whatever influences the changes of other things is itself changed. (EN, 65)

In Art as Experience, Dewey (1934/1989) illustrated this axiom of mutual transformation first in general terms of "a living being[s] . . . interchanges with its environment" (AE, 19). Then he described in parallel terms the mutually transformative interchanges (1) between artist and material resulting in an "art product (statue, painting or whatever)," and (2) between art product and perceiver resulting in a "work of art" (AE, 167).

Images drawn from the domain of technology unify Dewey's depiction of the sequel labors whereby the "art product" and the "work of art" sequentially emerge. An artist's "transformation" of "raw material" into "a product of art," for example, is likened to the process by which the vintner effects "the gushing forth of juice from the wine press" (AE, 70, 79). The resultant art product (e.g., a literary text) is said to "present material passed through the alembic of personal experience" (AE, 88). Shifting from the domain of the vintner to that of the metallurgist, Dewey depicted the refining process, through which the raw materials of art must pass, to a refiner's fire whereby "crude metal" becomes "a refined product" (AE, 71). And since, according to Dewey, "what is true of the producer [of an art product] is true of the perceiver,"
the perceiver no less than the artist must engage in creative labor. Note the operative pun in Dewey's emphatic phrasing, "the work of art":

. . . There is a difference between the art product (statute, painting, or whatever), and the work of art. The first is physical and potential; the latter is active and experienced. . . . (AE, 167)

Only through the percipient's sequel labor, then, can an art product become "actually, not just potentially, a work of art" (AE, 113). Since the "work of art" exists as such "only when it lives in some individualized experience" (AE, 113), it must be "recreated every time it is esthetically experienced" (AE, 113). In fact, Dewey equates the individual percipient's esthetic experience of an art product with actualization of that product's potential to become a work of art: "...An esthetic experience, the work of art in its actuality, is perception [emphasis altered]" (AE, 167). Thus, emergence of a literary work of art in its actuality--an emergence which Rosenblatt terms "the poem"--requires both the creative work of an author and the re-creative work of a reader.

Because Dewey so closely paralleled the re-creative work on the part of a percipient with the prior creative work on the artist's part, his observation that the "work of art" effects a mutual transformation of subject and object invites application to the work of artist and of percipient alike. The paired interpolations within the following passage emphasize these parallel applications: "... The work of art is itself a prolonged interaction of something issuing from the self [artist/percipient] with objective conditions [artistic medium/art product], a process in which both of them acquire a form and order they did not at first possess" (AE, 71). For example, the artist's "inner materials, images, observations, memories and emotions" are being shaped by the very labor whereby the "outer material" (pigments, marble, language, etc.) of the artist's selected medium begins to assume its distinctive form. It is only "as the writer composes in the medium of words," for instance, that "his idea takes on for himself perceptible form" (AE, 81). Likewise, when that text is read by a reader, it in turn becomes the "outer material" that will assume for the reader a shape and order peculiar to a particular reading event, even as the reader's "inner materials, images, observations, memories and emotions" are being uniquely shaped and ordered
by the self-same process. In order to qualify as artistic work, the re-creative work of the reader, no less than the original creative work of the writer, must effect these dual transformations simultaneously: "The work is artistic in the degree in which the two functions of transformation are effected by a single operation" (AE, 81). The phenomenon of book-burning bears eloquent witness to a corollary recognition that the transformation of self thus effected for a reader may endure beyond the duration of the reading event.

Louise M. Rosenblatt focuses specifically on transformations reciprocally wrought out when a reader's "interchange with the text" creates a literary work of art, or "poem" (LE, 271). During the course of this mutually transformative interchange, "the reader infuses intellectual and emotional meanings into the pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel his thoughts and feelings" (LE, 24). Like Dewey, Rosenblatt depicts such a reciprocal transformation as a mutual actualization of potential.

In order fully to appreciate the distinctive way in which Dewey and Rosenblatt depict potentiality and its actualization, it is necessary first to distinguish their vision of potentiality from that of other thinkers in the Aristotelian tradition.

**Aristotle: Potentiality as a "Lower Degree of Being"**

Recall Dewey and Bentley's characterization of Aristotle's metaphysics as a hierarchy in which potentiality was depicted as a deficient mode of being. They noted that since according to Aristotle only the fixed stars "continue eternally in action (movement) under their own power," they alone "completely, inherently, and hence necessarily, possess Being" (KK, 104); anything that could not "thus act through its inherent power was looked upon as defective Being . . . the gradations [of which] ran down to 'matter' on its lowest level, passive and inert" (KK, 105). Said differently, the gradations of Being descend in order from pure actuality, to potentiality actualized to some degree, to pure potentiality. Thus, according to Aristotle's ranking system, "."
All the individual things in the world may be graded according to the extent to which they are infected with potentiality."59 Note the progressive deterioration from one mode of Being to the next:

1. Only the being of certain ethereal substances (the fixed stars) is a necessary state. Their actuality is eternal, never admixed with potentiality.

2. The being of temporal, sublunary substances (those comprised of air, fire, earth, or water) is a contingent state. Such a substance comes into being as an actualization of some potentiality, and is continually subject to change--i.e., to further actualization of potentiality.

3. The being of unformed "matter at its lowest level" (KK, 105) is only a potentiality. This "most fundamental form of matter" is (according to H. M. Robinson's summary of "the traditional interpretation" of Aristotle on this point) "a bare 'stuff,' lacking all positive determinations," which hypothetically "persists" through transmutations of "determinate matter" from one element (air, fire, earth, or water) to another. Hence, "this prime matter" (to use the term coined by scholastic exegetists of Aristotle) is "nothing but a potentiality which can exist only as actualized in some determinate matter--i.e. in one of the elements."60 The purely potential mode of existence accorded by Aristotle to this lowest rung on the ladder of being is thus a shadowy one at best.

Recall that according to Dewey and Bentley's exegesis of Aristotelian metaphysics, the degree to which a thing possessed actual being (vs. merely potential being) could be inferred from its observable capacity for self-action. The following synopsis of Aristotle's system for thus ranking degrees of being (drawn from an 11/30/45 letter from Dewey to Bentley) clearly parallels the passage from Knowing and the Known excerpted above:

According to this [Aristotelian Science], there were things that so


completely, inherently, and hence necessarily, possessed Being that they continued in action ("movement") under their own power. . . . The fixed stars with their eternal circular movement are instances. . . . Other things, because of Defect of Being, lost movement, and needed to be boosted from without to keep it up. All natural events, physical through psychological, were graded according to the degree of self-action retained or parted with--deprived of--till we get down to pure "matter," which is wholly passive, and "inert." (PC, 497)

The satiric tone of this synopsis hints at the extent to which Dewey's own brand of neo-Aristotelianism must be understood as a radical reconstruction of the metaphysics of Aristotle.61

As Dewey noted in Experience and Nature (1925/1981), Aristotle's "physics is a fixation of ranks or grades of necessity and contingency so sorted that necessity measures dignity and equals degree of reality, while contingency and change measure degrees of deficiency of Being" (EN, 48). Change--any actualization of potentiality--would then belie an "inherent deficiency of Being over against complete [eternally actual] Being which never changes" (EN, 48). Thus, according to Dewey's exegesis of Aristotle, "things have potentialities . . . because they are not Being, but rather Being in process of becoming" (EN, 102). This distinction introduced "a split in Being itself . . . into some things which are inherently defective, changing, relational, and other things which are inherently perfect, permanent, self-possessed" (EN, 102). Dewey was adamant in his insistence that this dualistic "split in Being" is a fiction bearing no relation to lived experience.

As Dewey pointed out, "thinkers like Heracleitus and Lao-tze"--untainted by the Aristotelian tradition--have observed that "we live in a world which is [a] mixture of sufficiencies, tight completenesses, order, recurrences which make possible prediction and control, and singularities, ambiguities, uncertain possibilities, processes going on to consequences as yet indeterminate" (EN, 47). In other words, we live in a world in which actuality and potentiality are perpetually admixed, since ongoing actualization of potentialities is the indeterminate, universal process of nature. Actuality and potentiality--being and becoming--are therefore separable only in cognition: "We may recognize them separately but we cannot divide them, for . . . they grow from the same root" (EN, 47). Dewey identified the illusory Aristotelian "split in Being" between fully-real actuality and less-than-fully-real potentiality as the "primary metaphysical dualism" from which all other dualisms derive (EN, 102). The resultant dualism infecting epistemology was of special concern to Dewey because of its incompatibility with empirical methods for scientific inquiry.

Dewey maintained that the hierarchical "Aristotelian metaphysics of potentiality and actuality" (EN, 109) had in turn shadowed forth a corresponding epistemological hierarchy, a "one to one correspondence with different levels of Being" being posited for each level of knowing (EN, 111). That which is known by "sensation," for example, was considered "just an inferior grade of Being" (EN, 111). Thus, "[in ancient thought], all stages of knowledge were alike realizations of some level of Being, so that appearance in contrast with reality meant only a lower degree of Being, being imperfect or [matter] not fully actualized [as form]"(EN, 111). Dewey emphatically rejected this "Aristotelian division into form which is actuality and matter which is potential, when that is understood as distinction of ranks of reality" (EN, 53). Dewey elevated potentiality from a marginally-real, deficient mode of being to unqualifiedly-real, full-fledged existence.
Dewey: Potentiality and Actuality Equally Real and Existent

To illustrate Dewey's vision of the equipollence of potentiality and actuality, consider the case of grapes and wine. Obviously, grapes and wine are equally real and existent, though wine actualizes a potentiality of grapes. In fact, in a particular case of grapes-made-into-wine, grapes and wine constitute sequential phases of a single existential event. Actually-existent grapes are potentially wine. Actually-existent wine existed potentially as grapes. Neither phase of this single grapes-into-wine existential event can be said to be more real or more fully-existent than the other. Viewed from a broader perspective, what we term "grapes" and "wine" can be seen as two "freeze frames" capturing phases of a longitudinal process. Other snap shots of this ongoing process might picture the germination of the seed from which the grape vine grew, the fermentation of juice expressed from the grapes, and ingested wine being subjected to catabolic processes. Wine is potentially vinegar or urine as surely as grapes are potentially wine. Viewed from this perspective, "potentiality" and "actuality" can be seen as constructs arbitrarily abstracted from a single wholly-real, existential event.

If depicting wine as potential urine seems an indelicate illustration of Dewey's point, consider a sympathetically-resonant passage from Shakespeare's Hamlet, in which human beings are envisioned as potential food for worms, and ultimately--in the form of ingested nutrients passing through the food chain--for one another:

King: Now Hamlet, where's Polonius?

Hamlet: At supper . . . . Not where his eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots: your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service
two dishes but to one table . . . . A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

King: What dost thou mean by this?

Hamlet: Nothing, but to show how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar. (Act IV, scene 3, ll. 17-31)⁶²

Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" traces such a longitudinal process even further--from decaying corpse to fertilized soil to vegetation springing from that soil:

And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but that does not offend me,

I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,

I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of melons.

(49: 6-9)

Dewey's vision of potentiality and actuality as arbitrary, functional distinctions has more in common with the world view of Whitman and Shakespeare as illustrated in the passages above than with the rigid categories posited by Aristotle.

In his Metaphysics, Aristotle does admit that "it is hard to say why wine is not said to be . . . potentially vinegar (though vinegar is produced from it) . . . . "⁶³ His explanation as to why wine cannot be designated as potential vinegar hinges on an ironclad dichotomy between the categories of form and matter.

Aristotle designated form as "purely actual" and therefore "eternal," since "no specific form ever begins or ceases to be; it only comes to be actualised in fresh individuals" (A, 178). He

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⁶² In a similar vein, Hamlet explains to Horatio how Alexander the Great can be viewed as a potential stopper for a keg of beer: “Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole? . . . . Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam, and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?” (Act V, scene 1, ll. 187-195)

designated matter--except for its "potentiality of not-being"--as "sheer potentiality" (A, 178). Observing a change such as that of wine to vinegar, Aristotle assumed not that a potentiality of the former has been actualized as the latter, but rather that two eternally-distinct forms consecutively impressed the same malleable matter: "... Vinegar [comes] from wine, as night from day. And all the things which change thus into one another must go back to their matter; e.g., ... vinegar first goes back to water, and only then becomes wine" (BWA, 818). Because Aristotle assumed that vinegar and wine embodied eternally-distinct essential forms, vinegar could not possibly be viewed as a potentiality of wine. Aristotle elevated form, the active principle impressing matter, to the status of the "perfectly actual," while matter--passive to the imprint of form, subsisting through changes such as that of wine to vinegar--was designated as that which "infect[s] with potentiality" (A, 178). Dewey's construct of potentiality radically reconstructs Aristotle's definition.

Dewey: Potentiality as Power

In Democracy and Education, Dewey noted two intertwined definitions of the term "potentiality": "We may mean by potentiality a merely dormant or quiescent state--a capacity to become something different under external influences. But we also mean by capacity an ability, a power and by potentiality potency, force" (DE, 46). In "Time and Individuality" (1940/1988), Dewey defined potentiality as a full-fledged "category of existence" comprised of "powers or capacities that are not actualized at a given time" (TI, 109). Dewey's definition of potentiality as "force" and "power" rescues it from the limbo of marginally-real, deficient being to which had Aristotle relegated it.

In fact, Dewey debunked the whole notion that being/reality can be possessed to varying degrees. In his "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy" (1917/1980), Dewey deconstructed the conventional boundary between fully-real being and so-called phenomenal events marginalized as
less than wholly existent/real. Experiences such as dreams, hallucinations, and "instance[s] . . . of so-called relativity in perception" such as "the stick bent in water; the whistle changing pitch with change of distance from the ear; objects doubled when the eye is pushed, . . . etc." must, Dewey insisted, be accorded the same degree of reality/existence as any other event occurring "in the course of the one continuous world."64 He maintained, for example, that dreams experienced during sleep cannot legitimately be relegated to some mythical existential category of spurious being/reality, but rather must be acknowledged as events continuous with other events in the universe:

Dreams are not something outside of the regular course of events; they are in and of it. They are not cognitive distortions of real things; they are more real things. (NRP, 27)

Accordingly, distinctions between dreams and waking experiences, between hallucinations and intersubjectively verifiable events, between the visual evidence of a stick bent in water and the contradictory tactile evidence of that same submerged stick--like all other valid distinctions between real events--rest not upon a priori categorical designations but rather upon empirical observation of differences in experienced effects.

As a pragmatist, Dewey validated differences in meanings only as they reflect differences in effect. In his stringent adherence to this criterion for conceptual differentiation, Dewey follows Charles S. Peirce. According to "the pragmatic maxim" formulated in Peirce's "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," practical consequences constitute the exclusive basis for definition of and hence for legitimate discrimination between concepts:

. . .There is no distinction of meaning so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice. . . .

Our idea of anything is our idea of its sensible effects. . . .

Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical

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64 John Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," in Boydston, ed., The Middle Works 10: 27-29. This essay will be referred to as NRP with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.  

Embracing these central assumptions underlying Peirce's brand of pragmatism, Dewey traced the emergence of the meaning-making process itself to shared social practices involving recognition and anticipation of practical consequences of events. In *Experience and Nature* (1925), Dewey emphasized that meaning making is a communal project arising from and instrumental to other communal projects: "To understand [a meaning] is to anticipate together, it is to make a cross-reference which, when acted upon, brings about a partaking in a common, inclusive, undertaking" (EN, 141). As Dewey had earlier noted in "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy" (1917), meaning emerges in proportion as participation in social practices gives rise to cross-referencing between events and their anticipated outcomes: "When . . . the bare presence of the thing . . . begins to operate in connection with a forecast of the consequences it will effect when responded to, it begins to acquire meaning . . ." (NRP, 34). For example, as a consequence of participating in social practices involving water, such as drinking, wading, fire-quenching, etc., we come—both evolutionarily as a species and developmentally as individuals—to anticipate consequences such as thirst-slaking, cleansing, flame extinguishing, etc. as results of subsequent experiences involving water. Thus, meanings emerge in the course of "a serial process, the successive portions of which are as such telescoped and condensed into an object [in this case, "water"], a unified inter-reference of contemporaneous properties, most of which express potentialities rather than completed data" (NRP, 36). Ironically, however, once the alembic of logic has distilled highly refined essences from such abstracted objects (e.g., H2O from water), their genetic origins tend to be forgotten. Essences—highly refined products of a process whereby grunts and gestures originally facilitated thirst-quenching, etc.—have thus been historically elevated by philosophers.

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to the status of complete, real being, in contradistinction to the supposedly marginal reality of existential events in flux.

Most insidious of all, according to Dewey, has been the tendency of philosophers to equate "specific logical traits" with "physical occurrences as such" (NRP, 36). Objective idealists, "hav[ing] seized upon these [logical] traits as the very essence of Reality" have thus erroneously "proclaim[ed] that they are readymade features of physical happenings. . . ." (NRP, 36). In other words, they have committed "the philosophical fallacy" of confusing the products of inquiry with existential events extant antecedent to inquiry. The stable products of inquiry are thus accorded the status of real being, while immediately experienced events--fleeting and protean, by comparison--are accorded an inferior status.

In Experience and Nature (1925/1981), Dewey noted that it is only "the philosophic fallacy" which "supplies the formula of the technique by which thinkers have relegated the uncertain and unfinished to an invidious state of unreal being, while they have systematically exalted the assured and complete to the rank of true Being" (EN, 51). In fact, for Dewey, "the ongoing, unfinished and ambiguously potential world" (EN, 51) of immediate experience is no less real than the essences cognitively abstracted therefrom. "The philosophic fallacy" reigns whenever thinkers (following the lead of Aristotle, rather than of Heracleitus/Lao-tze) "transmute the imaginative perception of the stably good object into a definition and description of true reality in contrast with lower and specious existence" (EN, 51). Further distinguishing his construct of potentiality from that of Aristotle, Dewey depicted actualization of potentiality as a process occurring over a course of time, a radical departure from the "instantaneity" of actualization described by Aristotle.

In his commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics, Sir David Ross observes that in the case of "all production of artefacta," as well as in individual cases of biological reproduction, "Aristotle speaks of form as coming into being and passing out of being instantaneously" (A, 175). In neither case is the form "brought into being by a process"; rather, "it supervenes instantaneously on a process. At one moment it is not and at another it is, but it is never coming
into being" (A, 175). In the case of building a house, for example, "the form of the individual house comes into being instantaneously with the last instantaneous contact of tile with tile" (A, 175). In the case of metal craft, "the form of the individual bronze vessel with the last contact of the hammer with the bronze" (A, 175). In the case of biological reproduction, "the individual form of the individual animal comes into being instantaneously at the last moment of the vitalising transformation of the female element by the male" (A, 175). Zev Bechler, author of Aristotle's Theory of Actuality (1997), brings to light the implication of necessity underlying Aristotle's depiction of instantaneous actualization.

Bechler links passages from the Metaphysics like those cited above with the following passage from Aristotle's Physics, translated by Bechler as follows: "Whenever that which can act and that which can be acted upon come together, then the potential at once . . . becomes actuality."66 Bechler notes that the qualification "at once" implies that actualization occurs not only instantaneously, but also necessarily:

The "at once" means literally . . . that there can be no time
lapse between the genuine potentiality . . . and its actualization.

. . . For Aristotle this is equivalent to necessity, on par with the
statement that to possess genuine potentiality and yet not
actualize it is to be in a contradictory state (ATA, 39).

Bechler notes that for Aristotle "where potentiality does exist, there its actuality must exist; potentiality necessarily actualizes. . . . Hence, by necessity, all potentials actualize eventually" (ATA, 104). In fact, "what causes the actualization of the potential is always the logical necessity involved in genuine potentiality," since it is its "essence (i.e., it is logically necessary for it) to become actual [emphasis added]" (ATA, 113). Bechler cites a corresponding example in Aristotle's Metaphysics: ". . .There is no cause of the potential sphere's becoming actually a sphere, but [i.e., except that] this was the essence of either [i.e., it was the essence of the

potential to actualize; and it was the essence of the actual to supervene upon the potential]"
(ATA, 113). In the case of a potential bronze sphere, for example, the essence of its potentiality
is necessarily to become actual. Accordingly, since "only . . . an instantaneous creation can be
joined to logical necessity," the essence of "the actuality of the circle [i.e., 'insofar as the universal
circle is such and such'] supervenes by necessity and so instantaneously on this [particular]
bronze" (ATA, 114). Note that conspicuously absent from the foregoing account of
instantaneous actualization of potential is any mention of the temporal processes of human-
environmental transaction—including those of miner, metallurgist, and craftsman.

Dewey's vision of actualization as a temporal process contingent upon environmental
transaction obviously departs from the Aristotelian notion of instantaneous actualization. Recall
that Knowing and the Known debunked even the very notion of instantaneity (KK, 93). So far
from contracting vision to hypothetical pinpoints of instantaneity and infinitesimality, the
transactional perspective of Knowing and the Known in fact so widens vision as to encompass
the scope of eon-spanning, globally-distributed processes. Dewey thus predictably rebelled
against Aristotle's narrow account of the actualization process as an instantaneity.

Dewey rebelled, as well, against the deterministic assumptions underlying Aristotle's
ascription of necessity to potentiality. Dewey insisted that "potentialities are not fixed and
intrinsic, but are a matter of an infinite range of interactions [i.e., transactions] in which an
individual may engage" (TI, 109). On this latter point, Dewey explicitly noted his intent to
"revive the category of potentiality . . . in a different form from that of its classic Aristotelian
formulation" according to which "potentialities are connected with a fixed end which the
individual endeavors by its own nature or essence to actualize . . . ." (TI, 109). Both Dewey and
Rosenblatt radically depart from this Aristotelian formulation in their depiction of emergent
poem and emergent self as potentialities, neither of which is "connected with a fixed end" but is
instead indeterminately wrought out in the course of each unique reader-text transaction.
Emergence of Self and of Poem:

Indeterminate Process vs. Movement toward Fixed Ends

To grasp the distinction between actualization as indeterminate process (as depicted by Dewey and Rosenblatt) and actualization as movement toward a fixed end (as depicted by Aristotle), consider the differing notions of "form" underlying each. For Dewey and Rosenblatt, form emerges only in the course of open-ended transactional process. Unique to each transactional situation, emergent forms never pre-exist their situations of origin, and endure only until supplanted by new forms continually emerging in ongoing transactional processes. For Aristotle, by contrast, form constitutes the pre-determined, static end toward which a created thing moves.

Aristotle: Form as Fixed End

Aristotle's notion of form, embracing both metaphysics and aesthetics, is conceived as "the plan of structure considered as informing a particular product of nature or of art" (A, 74). For Aristotle, "form," like God in that it has "no element of unrealised potentiality," is "perfectly actual" (A, 178). As the Metaphysics of Aristotle explains, " . . . No eternal thing exists potentially. . . ," since because unlike "perishable" things, an eternal thing is not "capable of not being," but rather "is of necessity" (BWA, 830-831). Because it has no potentiality for non-being, form is eternal: "No specific form ever begins or ceases to be; it only comes to be actualised in fresh individuals" (A, 178). Yet for Aristotle, form is immanent, not (as for Plato) transcendent; it "does not exist apart from individual instances" (A, 175); hence, "form is eternal only by virtue of the never-failing succession of its embodiments" (A, 175). Although in the
sublunary realm these individual embodiments are themselves subject to potentiality--including the potentiality of non-being--"even there there is something that is purely actual, viz. the infimae species which are eternal by reason of the never-failing succession of the generations" (A, 178). These infimae species, consisting in the "fixed combinations of characteristics which form the core of the nature of all the individuals in which they are present," are "alone what nature seeks to secure and to perpetuate" (A, 170). The form of each member of an infima species is identical; individual variations within the species are attributed to "the union of identical form with different matter" (A, 170). Hence, Aristotle identifies matter as "the principle of individuality" (A, 170), the basis for accidental differentiae among members of the same species. These accidental attributes reflect the various limited degrees to which the perfect, generic form of the species can be actualized in specific, embodying matter.

Translated into aesthetics, Aristotelian metaphysics attributes the variations among art products to the limitations of the specific matter individuating embodiments of generic forms qua fixed ends. Likewise, it attributes variations among the esthetic experiences of various percipients of the same art product to the specific matter individuating each percipient's actualization--to varying degrees of perfection--of the generic form of the art work.

Commenting on Aristotle's polysemous notion of "form," Sir David Ross points out that "form for Aristotle embraces a variety of meanings" (A, 74). Although sometimes used to denote "sensible shape, as when the sculptor is said to impose a new form on his material," it more often denotes "intelligible structure"--i.e., eidos. According to Ross, eidos constitutes "the main element in Aristotle's notion of form" (A, 74) since Aristotle used the term eidos synonymously with terms both for "formula or definition" and for "essence" (A, 74). Furthermore, as Ross notes, Aristotle "often indicates the identity of form with . . . final cause [telos]" (A, 74). As Ross explains, form (eidos) and final cause (telos) can be distinguished only as chronologically distinct perspectives from which one-and-the-same "plan of structure" can be viewed: "The form is the plan of structure considered as [in the present] informing a particular product of nature or of art. The final cause is the same plan considered as not yet embodied in
the particular thing but as aimed at [in the future] by nature or by art" (A, 74). Reflecting Aristotle's equation of form (eidos) with final cause (telos), Ross terms this "plan of structure" the "formal-final cause" (A, 74). Further, according to Aristotle, "this formal-final cause is also the efficient cause" both in nature and in art. In nature, "the [final-]form which is to find fresh embodiment is already present and is the cause of movement"--for example, the male parent's contribution, considered to be "purely that of form, find[ing] in the matter contributed by the female parent a new embodiment for the form of the species" in sexual reproduction. In art, the final-form of the artifact, for example "the form of a bed or of a Hermes, as imaginatively apprehended by an artist, is said to be actually 'in his soul,' and the form in his soul is what sets him to work to embody it in wood or in marble" (A, 74). Surely Dewey would spot a close cousin of "the philosophical fallacy" in operation here. Recall that "the philosophical fallacy" confounds the logical with the ontological, confusing the products of inquiry with the situation that has given rise to inquiry. In Experience and Nature, Dewey describes this pivotal fallacy more generally as a "conversion of eventual functions into antecedent existence" (EN, 34). This description would certainly apply to Aristotle's assumption that the final-form of an artifact emergent through an artist's transaction with the materials and tools of his media pre-exists that transaction as its essence qua authorial/artistic intent.

Note that in all cases--both natural and aesthetic--actualization is viewed by Aristotle as movement to varying degrees toward a pre-determined fixed end, or essence. In nature, that fixed end, essence, or form is "a structure common to a whole infima species, to which individual members of the species strive without conscious purpose to give a fresh individual embodiment" (A, 74). As Dewey noted in "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy," consistencies observable among living beings "severed in time . . . [and] severed in space" first gave rise to the notion of a transcendent essence or eidos "which leaping the boundaries of space and time, keeps individuals distant in space and remote in time to a uniform type of structure and function."67

67John Dewey, "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy," in Boydston, ed., The Middle Works, 4:5. This essay will be referred to as IDP with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
As Zev Bechler points out, this assumption in turn gave rise to a "sharp-edged classification of the world's population into its variety of universals, such as orders, genera, and species," variations within which were attributed to "identical essences . . . produc[ing] individuals of various approximations to the pure form" (ATA, 116). Tracing the pervasive influence of the notion of eidos Dewey noted that since "this principle seemed to give insight into the very nature of reality itself" (IDP, 5), it became more and more widely applied until eventually "the force of this term was deepened by its application to everything in the universe that observes order in flux and manifests constancy through change" (IDP, 6). Thus the extension of the term came to include the fixed ends of beings not only in the realm of natural creation, but also in the domains of human creation: technology and art.

Aristotle defined the eidos qua fixed end of a work of art as "a certain structure which some artist is consciously striving to embody in a particular material" (A, 74). Whether in nature or in art, the degree to which a particular fixed end can be realized in a given case is determined by its embodying matter. The embodying matter thus functions as the delimiting, individuating principle. The eidos or generic form of a horse, for example, can be perfectly manifested only to the degree that the embodying matter individuating that form allows.

Sir David Ross attributes Aristotle's designation of matter as the individuating principle to the pervasive influence of the notion of generic form (i.e., eidos or infima species) in Aristotle's thinking:

Aristotle's tendency to find in matter the principle of individuality is due to the dominance in his mind of the idea of the infima species, the notion that there are fixed combinations of characteristics which form the core of the nature of all the individuals in which they are present, and that these alone are what nature seeks to secure and to perpetuate. All differences of less importance and permanence than these are deemed unworthy of the name of form, and treated as the result of the
union of identical form with different matter. (A, 170)

Scholastic theologian Thomas Aquinas' wholesale adoption both of Aristotle's designation of matter as the "principle of individuation" and of the form-matter dualism upon which it rests, is traced by Frederick Copleston in the following passage:

Every material substance [according to Aristotle] is composed . . . of matter and form. . . . Prime matter . . . in itself . . . is without any form, pure potentiality . . . [Aquinas] follows Aristotle in asserting that the form needs to be individuated. The form is the universal element, being that which places an object in its class, in its species, making it to be horse or elm or iron: it has not those determinations which are necessary in order that it should individuate the form of this particular substance. What is the principle of individuation? It can only be matter [i.e., not indeterminate "prime matter," but that determinate matter which "from union with form" has received "those determinations which are necessary in order that it should individuate form"].

As Dewey noted, "the fixed dualisms which Mediaevalism . . . extracted from Greek philosophy . . . [have been] handed on to modern times." The influence of Aristotle's dualistic thought system has certainly been perpetuated by the rigorous world-wide parochial educational system undergirded by Aquinas' teachings. The discussion to follow will trace further implications of the matter-form distinction as originally articulated by Aristotle.


Recall that according to Aristotle, the form of a natural species is extant prior to any particular embodiment in matter: "... In nature, the form which is to find fresh embodiment is already present and is the cause of movement" (A, 74-75). Recall further that citing sexual reproduction as "the leading type of this natural movement," Aristotle treats the contribution of the male parent as "purely that of form, find[ing] in the matter contributed by the female parent a new embodiment for the form of the species" (A, 75). The grade of matter contributed by the female parent will thus determine the degree to which the eidos can be perfectly actualized in a particular embodiment. An inferior grade of matter will result in imperfect actualization of the eidos, construed (according to Dewey's paraphrase of Aristotle) as the "fixed end which the individual endeavors by its own nature or essence to actualize" (TI, 109). As Aristotle notes in his *Metaphysics*, members of the same species "are different in virtue of their matter (for that is different), but the same in form ... " (BWA, 795). Hence, it is from variations in the embodying matter that accidental variations arise, for example in physique, stature, musculature, temperament, coloration, intelligence, etc. of various horses within the same breed.

To draw a corresponding example from the realm of art, consider the case of a sculptor endeavoring to embody the form of a horse in marble. Distinguishing the etiology of artistic products from that of natural products, Aristotle notes in his *Metaphysics*: "... From art proceed the things of which the form is in the soul of the artist" (BWA, 792). In a helpful commentary on the foregoing passage, Sir David Ross elaborates thus: since "the mind is entirely informed and characterized by that which it knows," an intentional form (for example, that of a horse) "as imaginatively apprehended by an artist, is said to be actually 'in his soul,' and the form in his soul is what sets him to work to embody it in wood or in marble" (A, 74). Just as the specific matter embodying the eidos determines the accidental attributes of a product of nature, so too does the specific embodying matter of the artist (determining the acuteness of his perceptions, the nimbleness of his fingers, the strength and dexterity with which he wields his chisel, etc.) and of the medium (accidental qualities such as density, grain, plasticity, etc. of the
particular block of wood or marble chosen for executing this project) likewise serve to delimit and individualize the generic form of the resultant art product.

To extend the foregoing example to the realm of esthetic experience, consider the case of the viewer of the statue of a horse. In this case, the fixed end is the work of art conceived as having an autonomous existence—an essence isolable from the experience of its percipient. Again it is the degree of refinement of the matter in which this essence is embodied that determines the degree of its actualization or perfection. The percipient ideally endowed with refined sensibilities, educated tastes, cultivated judgment, even temperament, etc. can embody this essence more perfectly than can a percipient of crude sensibilities, untutored taste, naive judgment, erratic temperament, etc. The essence of the art work—identified as the essence existing in the mind of the artist (i.e., authorial intent)—will necessarily be actualizable to a lesser degree in a percipient representing an inferior grade of matter. Hence, variations in esthetic experience among spectators of the same statue can be systematically accounted for.

Lest the foregoing account of esthetic experience be dismissed as a vestige of superannuated philosophy, consider the drift of I. A. Richards' *Practical Criticism* (1960). Richards portrays the literary work of art as an autonomous essence identical with the author's intention, fully realizable only as embodied in the experience of a reader of a superlative grade. He defines the "aim of the poem" as "the collection of impulses which shaped the poem originally, to which it gave expression, and to which in an ideally susceptible reader it would again give rise"\(^70\). Note his depiction here of the poem as an autonomous, self-acting entity, impressing itself upon a passive reader.

Richards reinforces this depiction by discrediting readings which fail to "respect the liberty and autonomy of the poem" (PCSLJ, 240). Such inferior readings result from the reader's susceptibility to a competing collection of self-acting impulses: "stock responses" constituting

\(^70\) I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* (New York: Harcourt, 1960), 204. This book will be referred to as PCSLJ with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
wayward systems of energy (PCSLJ, 242). Note the self-action phraseology patently evident in the following depiction of various responses vying for supremacy in the reader's consciousness:

[An 'idea' is] . . . an active system of feelings and tendencies which may be pictured as always straining to appear and ready to seize any opportunity of disporting itself. We shall not understand the phenomena of stock responses unless we regard them as energy systems which have the right of entry, unless some other system of greater energy can bar them out or perhaps drain their energy away from them. (PCSLJ, 242)

Stock responses and other extraneous systems of energy thus compete with "the collection of impulses which shaped the poem originally" (PCSLJ, 204)--i.e., the authorial intent constituting its fixed-end form, or Aristotelian essence.

**Dewey: Form as Snapshot of an Evolving Process**

In "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy," Dewey definitively distanced his own concept of form from that of Aristotle. Dewey contended that Aristotle's concept of eidos--eventually "embodied in the word species" (as the term was later rendered in Latin when assimilated into medieval scholastic philosophy)--had in effect "controlled philosophy for two thousand years" prior to the advent of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution (IDP, 4). Dewey noted that Aristotle's counter-empirical notion of form as eidos had in effect thwarted scientific inquiry throughout that interval. He accounted for the iron grip this Aristotelian concept held upon Western thought by laying bare its epistemological as well as metaphysical implications:

The conception of eidos, a fixed form and final cause, was principle of knowledge as well as of nature. Upon it rested the logic of science. . . . [According to that logic,] . . . nature as directly
and practically experienced [being always "in flux"] does not satisfy the conditions of knowledge [i.e., containment "within the metes and bounds of fixed truth"]. (IDP, 6)

Such epistemological strictures effectively bereave science of empirical methods for advancing knowledge:

. . . The instrumentalities of sense-perception and of inference based upon observation are [by Aristotelian epistemology] condemned in advance. Science is [thus] compelled to aim at realities lying behind and beyond the processes of nature, and to carry on its search for these realities by means of rational forms transcending ordinary modes of perception and inference.

(IDP, 6)

Although science has since the Renaissance progressively thrown off such fetters, the humanities have been slower to abandon these constricting epistemological assumptions.

Consider, for example, I. A. Richards' (1960) depiction of the meaning of a literary work as a stable, essential reality that lies (to borrow Dewey's phrasing above) "behind and beyond the processes of nature" (IDP, 6) as manifest in the meaning-making processes of each individual reader. Richards speaks, for example, of the need vigilantly to question whether a reader's "train of association . . . is rooted in something essential, and whether or not accidents of the individual reader's mood or history or temperament have twisted it" (PCSLJ, 238). If a reader must transcend his own individual evocation of the text as shaped by his mood, history, temperament, etc., it would seem that no recourse is left except (again to borrow Dewey's phrasing above) "to carry on . . . [the] search for these realities by means of rational forms transcending ordinary modes of perception and inference" (IDP, 6). Dewey's alternate vision of form liberates science and literary criticism alike from such stultifying assumptions.

Directly opposing Aristotle's concept of eide or "rational forms transcending ordinary modes of perception and inference" (IDP, 6), Dewey defined logical categories as instrumentally-
evolved social constructions. Dewey traced the etiology of such categories to shared social practices whereby certain relatively stable phases of natural events have for practical purposes been cognitively abstracted from the temporal flux. As Garrison points out, "For Dewey logical forms devolved out of the events of nature" (RDPER, 9). But unlike the eide assumed by Aristotle to be categories immanent within nature, logical forms according to Dewey's account emerge through specialized processes of human inquiry, hence exist prior to those processes only as potentialities of natural events. As Dewey wrote in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938/1986):

> Existence in general must be such as to be capable of taking on logical form, and existences in particular must be capable of taking on differential logical forms. But operations which constitute controlled inquiry are necessary in order to give actuality to these capacities or potentialities. (387)

To presume the actual existence of logical forms prior to such operations (as did Aristotle) is, according to Dewey, to commit "the philosophic fallacy" of mistaking the consequents for the precedents of inquiry. Only when inquiry has evolved sufficiently can the potentiality of existential events to take on logical forms be actualized. Having no inherent existence of its own, any rational/logical formation can be said to pre-exist the processes of inquiry by which it is wrought out only as an intuited qualitative "character" of existential events:

> The fact is that all structure is structure of something; anything defined as structure is a character of events, not something intrinsic and per se. (EN, 64)

Rather than residing as immanent within nature, an intuited qualitative character of events can emerge only through processes of transaction between human beings and their environment. According to Dewey, the potentiality of existential events to take on logical structure can be actualized only through highly-evolved modes of transaction between human beings and their environment. No mere passive spectators of pre-existent structures, human beings must actively
participate in the labor through which logical/rational forms are wrought out. As Dewey noted in *The Quest for Certainty*, it was physicist Werner Heisenberg's "uncertainty principle" (1929) that finally loosened the grip the spectator theory of knowledge had for centuries held on philosophy:

The principle of indeterminacy . . . presents itself as the final step in the dislodgment of the old spectator theory of knowledge. It marks the acknowledgment, within scientific procedure itself, of the fact that knowing is one kind of interaction [or transaction--to use the term Dewey would surely, in retrospect, have favored] which goes on within the world. . . . (163)

Thus, as Dewey maintained, it must be recognized that "knowing is a form of doing . . . to be judged like other modes [of doing] by its eventual issue" (QC, 164). The products of logic--no less than of technologies such as metallurgy and vinification--come into being only when potentialities of raw materials are actualized: i.e., wrought out and, through sequel labors, successively refined. Like the unmined ores and unpicked grapes constituting the raw materials from which steel artifacts and vintage wines are produced, a "total qualitative situation" (LTI, 74) constitutes the raw material from which meanings can be wrought out and--through highly specialized technologies of inquiry--refined to yield logical structures such as forms, essences, etc.

Besides viewing logical structures as potentialities of natural events rather than as immanent within nature, Dewey further diverges from Aristotle by defining such forms as temporal rather than as eternal categories. Dewey viewed logical forms not as cosmic templates molding amorphous matter, but rather as snapshots of perpetually evolving processes. These snapshots focus on observable regularities within the range of existential events. Although according to Dewey all existential events constitute evolving processes, the rates of these processes vary widely: "The rate of change of some things is so slow, or is so rhythmic, that these changes have all the advantages of stability in dealing with more transitory and irregular
happenings" (EN 64). Relatively more enduring and regular processes have historically given rise to logical categories such as forms and structures (they "stand still" long enough to be cognitively "photographed"). Relatively less enduring, less regular events are alone perceived as processes (stymieing cognitive "photography"). Although this imprecise distinction obscures the character of slow-motion existential events as processes, Dewey conceded its usefulness for practical purposes: "To designate the slower and the regular rhythmic events structure [form], and more rapid and irregular ones process, is sound practical sense. It expresses the function of one in respect to the other" (EN 64). But Dewey warned against treating this "relational and functional distinction as something fixed and absolute" (EN 64). Just as in daily life we refer to the "rising" and "setting" of the sun without embracing these archaic figures of speech as literally accurate designations, so too (according to Dewey) should we bear in mind that all existences--whether or not immediately so discernible to the human eye--constitute temporal events-in-progress.

For Dewey, any "structure, whether of the kind called material or of the kind summed up in the word mental, is stable or permanent [only] relationally and in its office," rather than in any categorical or absolute sense (EN, 65). As Dewey insisted, structure cannot exist in isolation from its ordering "office" as "an arrangement of [specific] changing events": "Structure . . . cannot be discovered or defined except in some realized construction, construction being, of course an evident order of changes" (EN, 64, 65). To conceive of structure in isolation from existential events, according to Dewey, is to hypostatize it: "The isolation of structure from the changes whose stable order it is, renders it mysterious--something that is metaphysical in the popular sense of the word, a kind of ghostly queerness" (EN, 65). Such an isolation is, in fact, as impossible (to borrow a phrase from W. B. Yeats) as to "separate the dancer from the dance." The choreographic structure of a dance endures, in fact, because it is performed by successive generations of dancers, not because it is preserved in some transcendent realm immune from the ravages of time. Like the structure of a dance, a logical structure, or essence, endures according to Dewey only "secula seculorum"--in and of temporal events comprising this present world--not in the static eternity of a metaphysical bell jar (EN, 63).
Unlike the eternal categories posited by Aristotle, logical structures as depicted by Dewey are merely relatively enduring. Dewey's observation that "a thing may endure secula seculorum and yet not be everlasting" applies to logical structures no less than to relatively stable existential events such as "solid earth mountains" (EN, 93). In either case, any "assertion of the permanent and enduring" must, as Dewey insisted, be qualified as only "comparative"--never absolute (EN, 63). Furthermore, unlike the eternally static forms envisioned by Aristotle, logical forms in their Deweyan incarnation continually evolve as surely as do the natural events from which they are selectively abstracted.

According to Dewey, the logical structures that emerge through controlled inquiry endure only so long as they function as useful tools for further inquiry. According to this Darwinian view, the sorting devices instrumental to logical inquiry are--like all tools--subject to replacement by more efficient tools. Note, for example, that as scientific inquiry evolved, "phlogiston"--a hypothetical substance believed by eighteenth-century physicists to account for flammability--eventually became extinct as a logical category. As Garrison points out, "For Dewey structure is functional and transitory rather than fixed and final" (RDPER 9). Just as Dewey substituted temporarily "warrantable assertions" for certitude as the goal of scientific inquiry, so too did he substitute temporarily warrantable logical structures for the eternal, rational forms of Aristotelian metaphysics. Both substitutions acknowledge that human inquiry into the perpetually evolving processes of nature is itself a perpetually evolving process. In fact, since human nature is, according to Dewey, a subset of nature, "the intelligent activity of man is not something brought to bear upon nature from without; it is nature realizing its own potentialities in behalf of a fuller and richer issue of events" (QC, 173). As Dewey insists, to term nature "intelligible" is to acknowledge "a potentiality rather than an actuality" (QC, 171-172). This potential ability--i.e., intelligibility--is actualizable not from without, but only from within nature itself:

Nature is capable of being understood. But the possibility is realized not by a mind thinking from without but by operations conducted from within . . . . Nature has intelligible order as its
possession in the degree in which we by our own overt
operations realize potentialities contained in it. (QC, 172)

This vision of the indispensable participatory role of humankind in actualizing the potentiality of
the universe for intelligibility forms the theme of a poem attributed to Dewey.

The opening stanza of an untitled poem found among Dewey's papers depicts the natural
processes of the universe prior to any actualization of their potentiality for intelligibility:

Long time the world lay level and open,

. . . a common motion, . . .

Meaningless . . . .71

With the advent of human life, depicted in the poem's second stanza, the processes of human-
environmental transaction begin to actualize potentialities for intelligibility:

Then life, with things to seek and things to shun,

Was born, frail creature that both lost and won.

And when he found, or when he searched in vain,

Dull blank things grew to meanings clear and plain. . . .

The progressive actualization of potential meanings--including that of self ("me") as knowing
subject and of other ("thee") as known object--is depicted in the final verse of the poem not as
the construction of a barrier, but rather as a liberation. The potentiality--qua power--of the
universe for meaning has thus been "set free":

Not as bars between but as the world set free

Have things thus grown to be a me and thee . . . .

The perpetual process of the universe is still "a common motion"--shared by so-called subject
and object--but that motion is no longer "unknown"; its potentiality for intelligibility has to some
degree become realized. The "things thus grown to be a me and thee" are now "sharing no longer
an unknown motion"; they are sharing instead a motion that is known. This knowing occurs

from the perspective of an involved participant--not a detached spectator viewing nature from a focal point beyond nature. It is nature self-knowing and self-known. The human species--itself an actualized potentiality of the universe--thus actualizes a further potentiality of the universe: intelligibility.

To view meaning as a potentiality of the universe in no way assumes, however, that latent meanings reside within existential events. Perhaps Dewey's "The Subject-Matter of Metaphysical Inquiry" (1915/1979) most clearly presents the crucial distinction he drew between potentiality and latency. According to Dewey, the theory of latency illegitimately robes retrospective accounts of development in the vestures of inevitability. To envision potentiality, by contrast, is prospectively to glimpse possibilities for change through indeterminate transactional processes. For example, as Dewey notes, "To say that an apple has the potentiality of decay does not mean that it has latent or implicit within it a causal principle which will some time inevitably display itself in producing decay, but that its existing changes (in interaction with its surroundings) will take the form of decay, if they are exposed or subjected to certain conditions not now operating upon them."72 It should be added that to say that an apple has the potentiality of decay by no means contradicts the statement that it has the potentiality of becoming an ingredient in a pie, or sustenance for a worm, or ashes in the wake of a forest fire. The range of envisionable potentialities in any given case is in fact narrowed only by our ignorance of possibilities for transaction or our lack of foresight as to the possible outcomes thereof.

Reductive accounts that glibly assume development of certain "latent" tendencies to be inevitable turn a blind eye to the transactional situation indispensable to actualization of any potentiality. Reinforcing this distinction between potentiality and latency in "Time and Individuality" (1940/1988), Dewey emphatically "excluded" from his reconstructed definition of

72 John Dewey, "The Subject-Matter of Metaphysical Inquiry" in Boydston, ed., The Middle Works 8: 11. In retrospect, Dewey would surely have substituted "transaction" for "interaction" in the parenthetical phrase "in interaction with its surroundings."
potentiality "the idea . . . that development is a process of unfolding what was previously implicit or latent" (TI, 109). Rather than being "unfolded from within," Dewey envisioned potentiality as hitherto unactualized "powers . . . called out through interaction [i.e., transaction] with other things" (TI, 109).

Dewey's recognition of the indispensable role of human transactions in actualizing the potentiality of the universe for intelligibility entails a dramatic psychological reorientation: "The change from intrinsic rationality in the traditional sense to an intelligibility to be realized by human action places responsibility upon human beings" (QC, 172). Here the basis for Dewey's meliorism--his conviction that intelligent collaboration to solve problems confronting our planet is an actualizable potentiality--is clearly differentiated from naive optimism.

In Reconstruction in Philosophy, Dewey defines meliorism as "the belief that the specific conditions which exist at one moment, be they comparatively bad or comparatively good, in any event may be bettered."\(^{73}\) He distinguishes meliorism from "wholesale optimism" on the basis of their respective behavioral outcomes:

> It [meliorism] encourages intelligence to study the positive means of good and the obstructions to their realization, and to put forth endeavor for the improvement of conditions. It arouses confidence and a reasonable hopefulness as optimism does not. For the latter in declaring that good is already realized in ultimate reality tends to make us gloss over the evils that concretely exist. (RP, 182)

Ironically, as Dewey points out, its behavioral outcomes make optimism and its supposed opposite, pessimism, surprisingly compatible bedfellows:

> Too readily optimism makes the men who hold it callous and blind to the sufferings of the less fortunate . . . . It thus

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\(^{73}\)John Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy in Boydston, ed., The Middle Works 12: 181-182. This work will be referred to as RP with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
cooperates with pessimism, in spite of the extreme nominal differences between the two, in benumbing sympathetic insight and intelligent effort in reform. (RP, 182)

Dewey thus depicts unqualified optimism as no less a "paralyzing doctrine" than is pessimism, since both discourage intelligent initiative (RP, 182).

The optimism of Pangloss in Voltaire's *Candide*, for example, contents itself with rationalizing away present evil, convinced "that the world is already the best possible of all worlds" (RP, 181). The teleological optimism observable in the works of nineteenth-century poet and novelist George Meredith vests the forces of natural evolution with inevitably ameliorative power, irrespective of present human initiative.74 The eschatological optimism of Scholastic theology enervates present-world problem solving by pinning hope on a future-world salvation, "beckon[ing] men away from the world of relativity and change into the calm of the absolute and eternal" (RP, 182). "Wholesale optimism" of any stamp thus tends to engender complacent inertia (RP, 181). Similarly, pessimism "in declaring that the world is evil wholesale, . . . makes futile all efforts to discover the remediable causes of specific evils and thereby destroys at the root every attempt to make the world better and happier" (RP, 181). Dewey’s meliorism eschews equally the stagnant world views of both optimism and pessimism.

Unlike Pangloss, Dewey refuses to "explain evil away" (RP, 181). Unlike Meredith, he views evolution as an indeterminate process. Unlike scholastic theologians, he sees no end to the admixture of the potential and the actual. Unlike optimists of any stamp, Dewey places responsibility for the welfare of our planet squarely on the shoulders of its most highly evolved species. As Dewey noted in *The Quest for Certainty*, the paradigm shift from viewing intelligibility as latent in nature to viewing intelligibility as a potentiality of nature charges human beings with a profound responsibility:

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74 See Richard H. P. Curle, *Aspects of George Meredith* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1908). According to Curle, Meredith attributes to nature “the undeviating wisdom of a beneficent but impersonal power.” Curle describes Meredith’s vision of nature’s agency as follows: “Working in huge circles of time, she evolves for herself her true and balanced future and is ever looking forward. Perpetual progress in just and absolute sequence marks the path of her advance” (64).
Nature has intelligible order as its possession [only] in the degree in which we by our own overt operations realize potentialities contained in it. The change from intrinsic rationality in the traditional sense to an intelligibility to be realized by human action places responsibility upon human beings. (172)

To view the universe as potentially intelligible and human beings as potentially intelligent, responsible agents is surely a far cry from the blind faith of a Pollyanna.

Just as Dewey presented intelligibility as a potentiality of the universe and intelligence and responsibility as potentialities of humankind, so too have both Dewey and Rosenblatt viewed texts as potentially intelligible as works of art, and readers as potentially intelligent and responsible.

**Texts as Potential Works of Art**

For both Dewey and Rosenblatt intelligibility constitutes a potentiality--rather than an intrinsic or latent property--of texts. Dewey argued that just as intelligibility remains only a potentiality of natural events until actualized by human inquiry, so too does the potentiality of a text, painting, musical composition, or any other "product of art" (AE, 111) to become intelligible as a "work of art" remain only a potentiality until actualized by means of individual aesthetic experience: "A work of art . . . is actually, not just potentially, a work of art only when it lives in some individualized experience" (AE, 113). As Dewey pointed out, this distinction between a potential and an actual "work of art"--perhaps easiest to grasp in the case of a musical composition--actually applies to all forms of art: "... In the rendering of a musical score[,] . . . no one supposes that the lines and dots on paper [constituting staff, clef, time signature, notes, articulatory cues, etc.] are more than the recorded means of evoking the work of art. But what is true of it is equally true of the Parthenon as a building" (AE, 113). Rosenblatt builds on this
generalized analogy between music and the other arts by specifically likening the potentiality of a musical score to evoke a musical performance to the potentiality of a literary text to evoke a "poem": "The text of a poem or of a novel or a drama is like a musical score. The artist who created the score--composer or poet--has set down notations for others, to guide them in the production of a work of art" (RTP, 13-14). Dewey and Rosenblatt thus alike identify individualized, aesthetic experience as the sine qua non for actualization of a text's potentiality to become intelligible as a "work of art."

Although he did not use the term "aesthetic" to characterize it, English literary critic A. C. Bradley (in a passage quoted by Dewey with evident approbation in Art as Experience) similarly identified an individual reader's fully attentive experience of a text as the sole means by which its potentiality to become a work of art can become actualized: ". . . An actual poem is a succession of experiences,--sounds, images, thought--through with we pass when we read [the text of] a poem as poetically as we can [emphasis added]."75 For both Dewey and Rosenblatt, the kind of fully participatory experience described by Bradley is summarized by the term "[a]esthetic experience." (Note: since Dewey spelled this term "esthetic" while Rosenblatt spells it "aesthetic," the two spellings will be used interchangeably throughout this dissertation).

For both Dewey and Rosenblatt, the degree to which the term "[a]esthetic experience" is applicable to an individual evocation of a text depends upon the degree of attentiveness the reader devotes to the full qualitative range of that experience. Dewey notes that a reader's purpose determines the scope and depth of attentiveness brought to a particular reading experience. A reader may, for example, read "academically, looking for identities with which he already is familiar; or learnedly, pedantically, looking for material to fit into a history or article he wishes to write or sentimentally for illustrations of some theme emotionally dear" (AE, 113). In contrast

75A. C. Bradley, "Poetry for Poetry's Sake," in Oxford Lectures on Poetry (London: Macmillan and Co., 1926), 4. Note that Dewey quotes this passage from Bradley only elliptically, omitting its final clause: ". . . An actual poem is the succession of experiences--sounds, images, thought, emotions--through which we pass when we are reading . . . " (AE, 113). However, in a sentence of his own closely following this excerpted quotation, Dewey restored the idea expressed in the omitted clause when he wrote, "A new poem is created by every one who reads poetically . . . ." [emphasis added] (AE, 113).
with the limited fruition of such narrowly and superficially attentive modes of reading, Dewey describes the rich harvest to be reaped by one who reads "esthetically,"--who performs "the work of art"--fully attentive to the reading experience as a qualitative whole.

According to Dewey, a reader who transacts with a text in this way in fact actualizes a unique and hitherto unactualized potentiality of the text: "... If... [a reader] perceives esthetically, he will create an experience of which the intrinsic subject matter, the substance, is new. ... A new poem is created by every one who reads poetically... [thereby] creat[ing] something new, something previously not existing in experience" (AE, 113). Consistent with his account of humankind's transactions as instrumental in actualizing potentialities of the universe for meaning, Dewey depicts the reader's transaction with a text as instrumental in actualizing potentialities for its meaning. The qualitative character of that transaction determines the range of actualizable potentialities.

Routinized encounters dictated by habitual expectations--in the case of transactions with the macrocosm of our environment, no less than with the microcosm of a text--will narrowly circumscribe the scope of actualizable potentialities. In either case, only to the extent that human beings are "perceiving esthetically"--attending fully to their experience, rather than cruising on automatic-pilot habitual responses--can such transactions actualize potentialities for meanings "previously not existing in experience" (AE, 113). Neither created ex nihilo nor pre-existing as latencies, these meanings can be wrought out only through "the work of art" --a creative labor continuous with and culminant of the perpetually creative processes of nature.

Dewey's vision of human creativity as contiguous with the creative processes of nature is perhaps most fully elaborated in the second chapter of Art as Experience, "The Live Creature and 'Ethereal Things.'" The title of this chapter alludes to John Keats' depiction of the natural universe ("The Sun, the Moon, the Earth and its contents") from the artist's perspective as "material to form greater things, that is ethereal things--greater things than the Creator himself..."
made" (AE, 26). Like Keats, Dewey depicted natural existences as raw material from which meanings "previously not existing in experience" (AE, 113) are wrought out and then refined to produce "ethereal things"-- i.e., essences. These essences are arguably "greater" than natural existences in that--like essential oils wrung from bushels of rose petals to produce a single ounce of attar of rose--they concentrate the distilled import of these existences in intensified form. Also like Keats, Dewey depicted the creative labor of humankind as indispensable to actualization of potentialities for meaning in the universe of nature. Potentialities for meaning in a text likewise, according to Dewey, can be actualized only through the indispensable re-creative labor of a reader.

Although Dewey does not state the comparison outright, juxtaposing Keats' description of the artist's creative work and Dewey's description of a reader's re-creative work suggests the following analogy: the creation of the artist is to the creation of nature, as the reader's re-creation (individual evocation of a text) is to the writer's creation. In each case within this implied extended analogy, a subsequent mode of creation continues and advances the original work of creation. Thus, creation is depicted in both cases not as a fait accompli, but as an open-ended, ongoing process. In both cases, the original creation provides material for creation anew. The work of the artist, according to Keats, is creatively to shape the "material" of the natural universe "to form greater things than the Creator himself made"; similarly, according to Dewey, the reader "in . . . interaction with old material creates something new, something previously not existing in experience" [emphasis added] (AE, 26; 113). In both cases, it is the quality of the artist's or reader's "interaction"--or (to substitute the term Dewey would surely have retrospectively preferred) transaction--with previously created "material" that determines the character of the new creation.

For Rosenblatt, no less than for Dewey, the degree to which a reader's transaction with a text is fully participatory shapes its qualitative character. To the extent that a reader's

transaction with a text is experienced as a qualitative whole, that transaction will evoke a "work of art" (Dewey's generic term) or a "poem" (Rosenblatt's specific term). By contrast, when a reader's transaction is experienced as the sum of its selectively-observed parts, that transaction will evoke a configured data set. In other words, when reading becomes a "fishing expedition," it will predictably yield a string of "fish"--the particular fish borne home reflecting the reader's pre-determined agenda. Although both Dewey and Rosenblatt have distinguished between the effects of these two differing modes of reader-text transaction, Rosenblatt's treatment of this distinction is more elaborate and precise than is Dewey's.

In The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work, Rosenblatt elaborates and sharpens the contours of Dewey's rather sketchy delineation of differences among reading behaviors involved in "perceiving esthetically" (on the one hand) and perceiving "academically," "pedantically," or "sentimentally," etc. (on the other). Recall that Rosenblatt attributes such differing modes of perception to the effect of two kinds of "stances" adoptable to varying degrees by a reader. To adopt a predominantly "aesthetic stance" is deliberately to cultivate awareness of the full qualitative range of experience intrinsic to transaction with a text. To adopt a predominantly "efferent" stance is selectively to focus on certain pre-determined aspects of transaction with a text for purposes extrinsic to that transaction--at the cost of suppressed awareness of the lived-through experience as a whole.

Recall further that Rosenblatt distinguishes between these two stances not as polar opposites, but rather as relatively distanced positions on a continuum. The character of any particular reader-text transaction is determined not by features inherent within the text, but rather exclusively by the degree to which the reader adopts either a predominantly aesthetic or a predominantly efferent stance during the course of that transaction. To the extent a text is read "efferently," its potentiality to assume a data-set configuration useful for specific practical purposes will become actualized to that degree in an individual reader's experience. To the degree that the same text is read "aesthetically," its potentiality to evoke an intensely lived-through, subjective experience--a Rosenblattian "poem" or Deweyan "work of art"--will become actualized
to that extent in an individual reader's experience. Thus, as Rosenblatt points out, the "aesthetic potentialities" either of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* or of a weather report to become "a poem" can be actualized only in proportion to the degree to which its reader adopts an aesthetic stance (RTP, 184). Likewise, the utilitarian potentiality of *Julius Caesar* to serve as "an example of Elizabethan syntax" or of a weather report to serve as a guide to appropriate clothing choice can be actualized only in proportion to the degree its reader adopts an efferent stance (RTP, 184). Note the operative phrases "to the degree," "to that extent," and "in proportion" in the foregoing summary of Rosenblatt's position.

In her essay "Continuing the Conversation: A Clarification" (1995), Rosenblatt has taken pains to disabuse less-than-careful readers of *The Reader, the Text, The Poem* of the notion that the functional distinction she has drawn between aesthetic and efferent stances is intended to represent an absolute dichotomy. In fact, as she makes clear in the following passage, no reading event can ever be either purely efferently or purely aesthetically stanced:

. . . The transaction with any text stirs up both the public, or denotative, conventional, literal, referential, aspects of meaning and the private, or personal, affective, associational, aspects of meaning. The proportion of attention given to these will determine where the reading event falls on a continuum ranging from predominantly efferent to predominantly aesthetic. (CCC, 350)

As Rosenblatt explains, the terms "predominantly efferent" and "predominantly aesthetic" designate attitudes potentially actualizable in inverse proportion throughout the course of any particular reading event:
The term "predominantly" is used above, because at any moment during the reading event the proportion of attention to public or private aspects may fluctuate. But always both aspects are present in a potential continuum . . . [emphasis added]. (CCC, 350)

Rosenblatt illustrates this potential continuum by means of a helpful diagram.

Labeled "The Efferent-Aesthetic Continuum: Reader's Potential Stances in Transactions" (see figure 1), Rosenblatt's diagram depicts a high degree of correlation (1) between adoption of a predominantly efferent reading stance and selective attention to "intersubjectively verifiable" (RTP, 185) or "public aspects of sense" and (2) between adoption of a predominantly aesthetic reading stance and attention to exclusively "private aspects of sense" (CC, 351). As she explains in an interpretive note:

Any linguistic activity has both public (analytic, abstracting, lexical) and private (experiential, affective, associational) components. Stance is determined by the proportion of each admitted into the scope of selective attention. The efferent stance draws mainly on the public aspect of sense. The aesthetic stance includes proportionally more of the experiential private aspect. (CCC, 351)

Criss-crossing the diagram are "wavy lines" approximating vertical and transverse axes. As Rosenblatt explains, these nebulous boundaries illustrate the potential for moment-by-moment shifts in proportion within the admixture of stances (efferent and aesthetic) adoptable by a reader within the course of a specific reader-text transaction: “The wavy lines indicate the twilight zones between public and private aspects of meaning and between efferent and aesthetic stances” (CCC, 351). Rosenblatt's insistence upon recognition of such "twilight zones" and her assiduous avoidance of terms suggestive of mutually-exclusive, polar opposites certainly bear out her self-characterization of her thought processes as "guided by a Deweyan anti-dualism" (RTP, xiv).
Figure 1: The Efferent-Aesthetic Continuum:
Reader's Potential Stances in Transactions with Texts

Both Rosenblatt and Dewey have portrayed the actualization of potentialities within a text in distinctly anti-dualistic terms. Both have eschewed Aristotelian form-matter dualism and its corollary assumption that the eternal "form" of a literary work (qua authorial intent) can be perfectly manifest only to the degree that the "matter" (qua reader's consciousness) it impresses is free from imperfections. In other words, both have rejected a paradigm for the reader-text relationship congruent with the Aristotelian model of insemination.

Recall that Aristotle's self-action paradigm of sexual reproduction depicts semen as a self-acting principle--the purely actual, eternal, generic "form" of a species; the passive role of the womb being merely to provide inert, purely potential matter for individual embodiment of the self-complete generic form. Recall further that according to Aristotle's model, accidental variations within a species are attributable solely to variations in quality of the embodying matrix--imperfections in the offspring belying an inferior grade of matter.

Now compare this model with I. A. Richards' paradigm of reader-text transaction. Recall that Richards depicts "the aim of the poem" (i.e., authorial intent) as a self-acting "collection of impulses which shaped the poem originally, to which it gave expression, and to which, in an ideally susceptible reader it would again give rise" (PCSLJ, 204). Consider his depiction of the reader's essentially "passive" role in a "transmission" process, and his rueful admission that "there is always some degree of loss and distortion in transmission" (PCSLJ, 180). Consider his attribution of such distortions to an individual reader's less than ideal susceptibilities--i.e., inferior grade of embodying matter. Note that the high standard of ideal susceptibility he describes would disqualify readers whose susceptibilities are marred by "stupidity" (PCSLJ, 43), "willful silliness" (PCSLJ, 251), maudlin sentimentality (PCSLJ, 258), or even the kind of temporary sensibility-warping indisposition to which Richards admits to having experienced, at least once, himself (PCSLJ, 257). Finally, compare Richards' depiction of "the autonomy of the poem" (PCSLJ, 240) with Aristotle's depiction of the autonomous spermatozoon--the perfect unfoldment of whose latencies is hindered only by limitations imposed by imperfections inherent within the embodying matter of the womb in which it is deposited. The shadow cast on the
teaching of literature by the form-matter dualism implicit in this Aristotelian insemination model of text-reader relationship will be traced in the final chapter of this dissertation.

In their emphatic departure from dualisms of every kind, Dewey and Rosenblatt have alike thoroughly reconstructed the Aristotelian concepts of form and matter. The transactional paradigm for the reader-text relationship embraced by Dewey and Rosenblatt conceives of each individual evocation of a text as unique. There is no autonomous, self-complete literary work. A work of art comes into being only as an individual reader performs "the work of art." That work assumes a form unique to each particular reader and each specific reading event; there is no generic, eternal form to be embodied.

Acknowledging the unique form of each "work of art" invalidates questions concerning the extent to which an autonomous eidos can find perfect embodiment in readers whose susceptibilities approach or fail to approach the ideal. Rather than being attributed to the limitations of the embodying "matter" of the reader's susceptibilities, the individuality of each "work of art" is attributed to the ineffably rich, full transactional situation of a reading event uniquely actualizing potentialities of a text. From the same "raw material" of a given text, a uniquely formed "work of art" is thus wrought out through each transaction with that text. Deconstructing the temporal and spatial boundaries of such transaction opens vision to a scope of events that beggars human understanding.

In place of odious comparisons grading degrees of perfection among embodiments of a generic eidos, acknowledging the unique form of "the work of art" wrought out by each reader invites mutually enriching dialogue among readers. Openness to such dialogue helps to actualize the potential of its participants to become increasingly intelligent, responsible readers.
Readers as Potentially Intelligent and Responsible

Dewey emphasized the crucial role played by dialogue in actualizing the potential of its participants for increasingly intelligent, responsible transaction with both the natural and social environment. Rosenblatt focuses specifically on the crucial role played by dialogue in actualizing the potentiality of readers for increasingly intelligent, responsible transactions with texts as artifacts within their social environment.

Dewey portrayed dialogue as a kind of compass for correcting the course of human inquiry. As Larry Hickman has observed, "... it is a distinguishing mark of Dewey's instrumentalism that conversations are ... [employed as] tools that enable practiced interlocutors to distinguish men and women who are responsible from those who are not, as well as to distinguish assertions that are better and more reliable from those that are less so" (198). In fact, as Hickman points out (in a rare moment of accord with Richard Rorty), Dewey tended to construe inquiry as itself "an ongoing conversation" (198). Accordingly, Dewey termed the products of inquiry not "truths," but rather "warranted assertion[s]"--i.e., assertions deemed warrantable by inquirers qua conversationalists in an ongoing conversation (LTI, 16). Unlike the term "truth" (connotative of a fixed, definitive conclusion), the designation "warranted assertion" refers to a conclusion only tentatively and temporarily warranted by a given community of inquirers. A warranted assertion is continually subject to revision or replacement as the course of empirical inquiry brings new evidence to light. Viewing the products of inquiry from this Darwinian perspective in effect subjects them to constant trial on pragmatic grounds of fitness for survival.

Not surprisingly, Dewey acknowledges "great indebtedness" to pragmatist C. S. Peirce for formulating the paradigm for which Dewey coined the phrase "warranted assertibility" (LTI, 17). Apparently appreciating Peirce's foresight in formulating a paradigm expansive enough to
accommodate the burgeoning evolution of scientific inquiry, Dewey observed: "C. S. Peirce, after noting [in a paper published in his Collected Papers] that our scientific propositions are subject to being brought in doubt by the results of further inquiries, adds, 'We ought to construct our theories so as to provide for such [later] discoveries . . . by leaving room for the modifications that cannot be foreseen but which are pretty sure to prove needful" (LTI, 17). Note that the phrase coined by Dewey to summarize Peirce's paradigm--"warranted assertibility" [emphasis added]--recalls Dewey's insistence that, as products of inquiry, "warranted assertions" pre-exist the process of inquiry only as a potentiality--not as a ready-made actuality awaiting discovery. In other words, Dewey's phrasing precludes "the philosophical fallacy" of mistaking the products for the precedent conditions of inquiry.

Defending his phrasing of the term "warranted assertibility," Dewey noted, "The use of a term that designates a potentiality rather than an actuality involves recognition that all special conclusions of special inquiries are parts of an enterprise that is continually renewed, or is a going concern [i.e., rather than a fixed system reflecting a finished universe]" (LTI, 16-17). Recall that Dewey had justified his choice of the term "intelligible" on similar grounds: "... the term intelligible is to be understood literally. It expresses a potentiality rather than an actuality" (QC, 171-172). A corresponding focus on potentiality can be seen in Rosenblatt's choice of the term "defensible" [emphasis added] in her phrasing of the designation "the most defensible interpretation [of a text]."

As Rosenblatt has noted, her concept of "the most defensible interpretation[s]" of a text specifically "adapt[s] the idea of warrantable assertibility to literary interpretation" (RTP, 183) as a branch of inquiry:

Forgoing the quest for certainty, in his Logic . . . [Dewey]

contributes the idea of "warranted assertibility" in [scientific]

[Likewise, in literary interpretation] we must indeed forgo the wish for a single "correct" or absolute meaning for each text.

. . . If we agree on criteria for validity of interpretation, however, we can decide on the most defensible interpretation or interpretations.

(RTP, 183)

Note the plural pronouns in Rosenblatt's stipulatory assertion: "if we agree . . . we can decide"

[emphasis added]. Like Deweyan "warrantable assertions," Rosenblatt's concept of "defensible interpretation[s]" assumes a community of inquirers engaged in an ongoing dialogue. The conditional clause ("if we agree . . .") qualifying her assertion, however, cautions such inquirers that although consensus is a potentially achievable goal, it is by no means an inevitable outcome of dialogue.

As Rosenblatt has observed, "the conditions for consensus" typically "involve a cultural community with shared assumptions and criteria" (RTP, 144). When such culturally inherited congruent values are lacking, "our conceptions of the nature of art, our habits of approach to the text or ways of handling our responses to it may be so much at variance that we can find no common fulcrum for discussion" (RTP, 147). A critical mass (so to speak) of tacitly shared assumptions--or at least a spirit of compromise sufficient to agree on minimal criteria for judgment--seems to be needed in order for dialogue to result in mutually corrective give-and-take.

Under such conditions, Rosenblatt notes, reference to the text itself may be accepted as the arbitrative "control" or "norm":

. . . Since the discussion of a reading of a particular work tends to be carried on among people within a particular cultural context, the text as "control" or "norm" usually seems to them to be paramount. The readers point toward the set of symbols as they seek to compare what the words called forth for them. The adequacy or inadequacy of a reading can be demonstrated by
indicating the parts of the text which have been ignored, or
which have not been woven into the rest of the semantic
structure built on the text. (RTP, 129)

The scenario Rosenblatt presents to illustrate the corrective potential of such dialogue envisions a
motive of mutual helpfulness to fellow readers, rather than jockeying to privilege competing interpretations:

As we exchange experiences, we point to those elements of the
text that best illustrate or support our interpretations. We may
help one another to attend to words, phrases, images, scenes,
that we have overlooked or slighted. We may be led to reread
the text and revise our own interpretation. (RTP, 146)

Besides offering immediate corrective benefits such as these, habitual engagement in such dialogue
offers long-term benefits as well.

Participation in dialogue with other readers can eventually enable a reader to internalize
the voices of that dialogue. Such internalization contributes to actualization of a reader's
potentiality to cultivate a "responsibly self-aware and disciplined" approach to reading (RTP,
130). Such increased self-awareness of "the needs, the assumptions, the sensitivities, and blind
spots that . . . [a reader] brings to the [reader-text] transaction" (RTP, 145) may even augment
self-awareness of the reader's idiosyncratic "readings" of situations experienced beyond the pages
of texts. Furthermore, reader-reader dialogue can foster a habitual reflexivity capable of alerting
the reader to potentialities within the self actualizable through the very transaction that actualizes
the potentiality of a text to become a "poem."

Having experienced a distinctively individual evocation of a "poem" from a text, a
habitually reflective reader may well ask: "What hitherto-untapped potentialities for feeling,
thought, and perhaps action have I discovered through this experience?" (RTP, 145-146). Recall
that Dewey maintained that every choice both "reveals the existing self" and "forms the future
self" (E, 287). As Rosenblatt observes, the re-creative work of evoking a poem from a text does,
in fact, necessarily entail active choices--indeed a "continuing process of selection" (RTP, 53). The reader actively "selects out" from among "the images, feelings, and ideas welling up under the sequential stimulus of the words" those perceived as "relevant" to the pattern of expectations hitherto aroused by the text (53). But, though always active, the reader's choices are not always deliberate, since "both conscious and unconscious choices" are involved (RTP, 60). Whether or not the reader is consciously "aware of the . . . process of selection . . . that goes on as his eyes scan the page" (RTP, 52), Rosenblatt suggests that the choices involved do indeed not only reveal "the existing self" (to use Dewey's phrase), but also reveal its "untapped potentialities" (RTP, 145) for future evolution.

Would Rosenblatt go so far as to agree with Dewey's contention that every choice--including by definition each choice within the complex series of conscious and unconscious choices made during the act of reading--even as it "reveals the existing self" also "forms the future self"? The examples she has selected to illustrate possible outcomes of bringing such "untapped potentialities" to light suggest that she would. She notes, for example, that if a "sadistic impulse" is thus revealed, it "may now be faced and perhaps controlled"; when a "compassion for others formerly felt to be alien" (RTP, 145-146) is thus uncovered, it may presumably find expression in acts of caring and concern for the welfare of others.

Recall Rosenblatt's contention in "Literary Theory" (1991) that "the self of the reader and the text" both "take[e] on their character during the transaction" (LT, 60). Subsequent reflection on this emergent character affords opportunities for its deliberate embrace or rejection. As Rosenblatt notes, "Reflection on our meshing with the text can foster the process of self-definition in a variety of ways" (RTP, 145). That revisions in self-definition do have the capacity to shape choices and hence to shape the qualitative character of the future self can be inferred from the behavioral outcomes of revised self-definition described or implied in Rosenblatt's foregoing examples.

Besides mutual correction, increased self-awareness, and deliberate self-definition, dialogue among fellow readers (and the internalization thereof), offers even further benefits.
Dialogue guided by adherence to common criteria and disciplined by the invocation of the text as arbiter can result in consensus under either of two conditions: (1) if dialogue participants agree to privilege a given reading, or (2) if the participants "agree to disagree"—i.e., to acknowledge the equal validity of plural readings. In the latter case, dialogue participants can reach a broadened perspective allowing for justification of a particular interpretation of a text "without denying its potentialities for other interpretations" (RTP, 146). This latter form of consensus—"agreeing to disagree"—can in turn encourage openness to consideration of alternative perspectives for viewing the macrocosm embraced by and embracing the microcosm of the text. Note the crucial auxiliary verb "can" employed in sketching the hopeful scenario Rosenblatt's depiction of potentialities invites us to imagine. Like the contingencies of foundational culturally-inherited or hammered-out consensual criteria, cooperative collaboration in the work of meaning-making must be recognized as a potentiality, rather than presumed as the inevitable outcome of dialogue among readers.

Requisite for such cooperative cooperation is a willingness to view texts and evaluative criteria through the eyes of others. In Deweyan terms, such willingness demands the by no means universal kind of openness to new experience he characterized as self-identification in terms of "the individual still to make," rather than in terms of "the finished, closed" individual (NE, 188-189). Thus, in presenting the goal of cooperative dialogue among readers neither as an impossibility nor as a foregone conclusion, Rosenblatt reveals herself to be, like Dewey, a meliorist.

Recall that Dewey's meliorism steered a straight course through the Scylla-and-Charybdis extremes of optimism vs. pessimism—neither wrecking on the treacherous shoals of naive optimism nor succumbing to the downward spiral of pessimistic despair. Similarly, Rosenblatt neither resigns herself to despair over the possibility of reaching sufficient consensus to enable mutually enriching dialogue across differences among readers, nor does she blithely assume the automatic emergence of such a consensus. Just as Dewey placed responsibility for the welfare of our planet squarely on the shoulders of its most highly evolved species, Rosenblatt places
responsibility for achieving consensus regarding interpretive criteria and their application to literary works squarely on the shoulders of inquirers engaged in dialogue toward this end.

The "form" of the self qua intelligent, responsible reader is thus neither a latency readymade nor an entity self-created ex nihilo. Rather, much as the "work of art" or "poem" can be wrought out from the text only through reader-text transaction, so too can the "form" of the self as intelligent, responsible reader be wrought out only through the kind of transaction--both with texts and with fellow readers--that Rosenblatt helps us to envision.

Rosenblatt's own contributions toward the goal of creating conditions favorable to actualization of "potentialities for participation" (RTP, 143) both in reader-text and in reader-reader transaction can scarcely be overestimated. Consider, for example, the steadying sense of balance she brings to readers caught in the undertow of fluctuating reactions and counter-reactions between extreme positions in the field of literary theory, as critiqued in the final chapter of The Reader, the Text, the Poem, entitled "Epilogue: Against Dualisms." Perhaps Rosenblatt's contribution most treasured by teachers of literature is the meliorism she has inspired by encouraging engagement of students in "lived-through" transactions with texts and recommending transactions among students and teachers as fellow readers. These melioristic educational implications of the emerging paradigm of reader-text transaction will be more fully explored in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Chapter 5: Implications for Educators

“Since the text never exists in vacuo, it can be evaluated in relationship, actual or potential, to particular readers at particular points in time and space . . . .

Such an effort to consider texts always in relation to specific readers and in specific cultural situations, and to honor the role of literary experience in the context of individual lives, has powerful educational implications, which cannot be elaborated here.”

- Louise M. Rosenblatt,
The Reader, the Text, the Poem, p. 161

Like the fruit-yielding tree “whose seed was in itself” (Genesis I), the paradigm of reader-text transaction bears within itself promising implications for educators adopting a transactional perspective. Some implications for the teaching of literature will be examined in this chapter.

The Teacher as Facilitator of Reader-Text Transaction

According to an aphorism attributed to Albert Schweitzer, there are only three effective teaching methods: the first is by example; the second, by example; and the third, by example. This formula aptly characterizes the only effective method for facilitating reader-text transaction. Only by modeling reader-text transaction in the role of self-revelatory fellow reader, as well as modeling reader-reader transaction in the role of fellow participant in communal meaning-making activity, can a teacher demonstrate the processes by which (1) “poems” can be wrought out from raw textual material, (2) meanings can be abstracted from “poems,” (3) interpretations can be
distilled/refined from meanings, and (4) interpretations can be comparatively valuated. Likewise, as a self-revelatory fellow-participant in a communal meaning-making process, the teacher can model for students the ongoing process through which reader-reader transactions can generate new poems, meanings, interpretations, and valuations.

The Teacher as Self-revelatory Fellow Reader:

Modeling Reader-Text Transaction

Before defining the “self-revelatory fellow reader” role, I will begin by specifying what it is not. It does not consist in imparting coherent, unified interpretations of literary works appropriate for presentation in lecture format. A teacher who shares such interpretations with students may well enrich their understanding of specific literary works, but their own ability to forge such interpretations for themselves is not likely to progress. To couch this critique of the lecture method in metaphorical terms: It is as if the professionally-garbed teacher displays from the podium only polished watch springs or sealed bottles of wine, conveying no hint as to the labor that went into producing such final products.

The teacher as self-revealing fellow-reader, by contrast (to extend the metaphor) begins by taking the students on a tour of the mine or vineyard. Dressed in work overalls, so to speak, the teacher demonstrates techniques useful in the grape-gathering /ore-mining stage of reader-text transaction. The students observe first-hand the effort demanded by this stage of the process--they see the sweat and grime on the laborer’s brow, if you will--as the teacher qua reader grapples with a text, demonstrating processes by which a “poem” can be wrought out. Next, the teacher metaphorically ushers the students into the chambers of the foundry/winepress to observe the processes by which meanings can be abstracted from poems. Again, the process demands sacrifice of a superficial sense of dignity on the teacher’s part--the students will see the teacher up to the elbows in a messy process, stained by grape juice or begrimed by smoke from
the smelting furnace, so to speak. Then, the teacher conducts the students to the winery/foundry where technologies of vinification/metallurgy--i.e., processes by which abstracted meanings are distilled/refined--can be observed. Here, at last, the students see the finished product emerge: a unified, coherent interpretation of a literary work (cf. fabricated watch springs / bottled wine). Only then does the teacher compare the resultant product with other products of the same kind (cf. quality-control inspection/wine tasting), demonstrating techniques for valuating the relative defensibility of various emergent interpretations in light of their relation to the text.

Allowing students such a glimpse of the behind-the-scenes workings of the processes of literary analysis and criticism is something like exposing the role of the puppeteer who pulls the strings of marionettes during a puppet show. Such a revelation destroys the illusion that the events being observed occur autonomously; it also shows the observer how such manipulations can be achieved by others. Students who come to know their teachers as fellow readers may indeed lose the sense of awe that a teacher’s authoritatively delivered interpretation of a literary work may inspire, but they may well gain a sense of their own potential to craft workmanlike interpretations of their own.

The proverb that characterizes not filling empty bellies with fish, but rather teaching hungry people how to fish as the more efficacious charity comes to mind when I reflect on my own experiences as a student in English classes through the years. I have attended many lecture-format classes in which the final products of a teacher’s transactions with texts have been shared, much as polished watch springs might be displayed for inspection, or aged wines offered for sampling. These decontextualized explications often enriched my understanding of particular literary works, but left me more humbled by the teacher’s expertise than inspired to attempt to “go and do likewise” myself. Therefore, the teachers who dared to expose themselves as fellow readers, who generously pulled aside the curtain cloaking the workings of the craft that ultimated in their craftsmanlike performance, stand out in memory.

I’m sure that Mrs. Katherine S. Motley, my 11th and 12th grade English teacher at Canton (Missouri) High School, for example, explicated many literary works in the course of our
study of literature during the two years I sat in her classroom. Although the rest of what she said
now mostly lies lodged in the depths of subconscious memory, I vividly recall her discussion of
the line “Filled is Life’s goblet to the brim” from Longfellow’s “The Goblet of Life.” Why?
Because she shared with us an image that these words evoked for her personally as an individual
reader. The tremendous gift she gave us by so doing has made that particular line memorable for
me decades later. But now, as an English teacher myself, I value even more highly her generosity
in showing her students that individual responses to poems—including, by implication, my own—
were not merely (to use I. A. Richards’ deprecatory phrase) “mnemonic irrelevances” (PCSLJ,
15) akin to static marring the reception of a radio broadcast. By sharing an image evoked in
memory by her own reading of the poem, she in effect affirmed the value of such memories as
“mnemonic relevances” (to turn I. A. Richards’ phrase on its head). She thereby tacitly
conveyed the message that such images—unlike radio static needing to be fine-tuned out—are
worth heeding, worth reflecting on, worth sharing with others.

As I recall, Mrs. Motley launched her discussion of Longfellow’s poem not with an
analysis of its theme, tone, rhyme scheme, etc., but rather by remarking that the poem’s first line
reminded her of an occasion when, balancing a brimful cup, she had walked across a room
endeavoring with each step to steady the cup as she walked. Her decision to introduce the poem
by sharing the kind of “home movie” Longfellow’s words had projected on the screen of her
imagination dramatized for me quite literally “the priority of the lived-through relationship with
the text” that Rosenblatt urges “should be maintained” (RTP, 125). As I recall, Mrs. Motley’s
unexpected reminiscence startled me out of my habitually passive note-taking frame of mind.
When I re-read Longfellow’s words, it was no longer from the standpoint of wondering what
questions we might be asked to answer on the unit test that would include this poem. Instead, I
was hoping to experience my own “lived-through relationship with the text.” Not surprisingly,
when I exchanged what Rosenblatt would term an “efferent stance” for an “aesthetic stance,” the

reels of my own mental home-movie projector suddenly began to turn. Now that I am a teacher of English myself, my vivid memory of this pivotal experience has served to remind me that it is by modeling an aesthetic stance that a teacher of literature can most powerfully (as Rosenblatt advocates) “honor the role of literary experience in the context of individual lives” (RTP 161). Mrs. Motley’s departure from the grooves of her standard (probably state-mandated) lesson plans in order to include a vignette drawn from her own lived-through literary experience did in effect elevate the role of such experience to a place of honor.

In metaphorical terms, Mrs. Motley’s detour from objective analysis into the realm of subjective response—the realm Rosenblatt terms “the private, the qualitative or affective, the experiential aspects of consciousness” (RTP, 185)—can be likened to escorting our class on a field trip to the vineyard/mine so that we could see for ourselves the raw materials from which interpretations of literary works are derived. Later, as a graduate student in English at Hollins College, I was afforded glimpses of the subsequent wine-press/smelting-furnace phases of the labor Dewey so aptly termed “the work of art” (AE, 166).

Ironically, I was initially unappreciative of that privilege as extended by Dr. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. in his Modern Novel course. My expectation upon entering the class was that Dr. Rubin, a renowned scholar, would deliver the kind of tidy lectures I had become accustomed to hearing as an undergraduate—following familiar grooves of introduction, body, and conclusion, much like the polished final draft of an essay. Instead, what he shared with us sounded more like a draft he was still in the heated process of revising. In fact, I found Dr. Rubin’s approach to the teaching of literature as startling and instructive as when, later that same year, I found a book in the college library containing successive drafts of W. B. Yeats’ poems laid bare for public scrutiny—multiple cross-outs, lists of alternative phrasings, and all. Starting with the first page of Proust’s Swann’s Way, Dr. Rubin inched his way (as it seemed to me) through the text, drawing our attention to particular incidents, lines, words; sharing with us responses these specific aspects of the text had evoked in him over the course of many readings; demonstrating the ongoing process by which he was still actively engaged in the process of abstracting meanings
from those responses. In short, he had the audacity (as it seemed to me that day) or the magnanimity (as I now recognize) to demonstrate the act of meaning making in public. To me this strategy was as disconcerting as if--having arrived at a dinner party and sought my place at the table, expecting to be served a prepared meal--I found myself being unceremoniously ushered into the kitchen, where preparation of foodstuffs fresh from the garden, barnyard, and mill was still underway! Needless to say, however, when it came time for me to assume the role of meaning maker myself by writing papers later that semester, the scales soon fell from my eyes. Marginal notes recording my own responses--analogous to those Dr. Rubin had so generously shared with us--now glossed the pages of all my books. And the process by which meanings could be abstracted from such material seemed no longer a mystery, but rather a demonstrable technology. Each step in the recursive meaning-making process having been demonstrated by Dr. Rubin for our example, I began to see for myself how meanings wrought out from raw textual material can be successively refined. Whereas the papers I had written as an undergraduate had been largely compilations of opinions garnered from the work of published critics, I now found that I had resources of my own to form the substance of my papers.

During several decades of experience as a teacher of literature since that time, I have found (not surprisingly) that my attempts to follow in Dr. Rubin’s footsteps have yielded results radically different from those reaped from experiments with other pedagogical approaches. When I have presented tidy lectures delivered from the summit of authoritative pronouncement, my students have tended to award me high marks on student evaluations in the category of “knowledge of subject,” but I’ve noticed that they tend to take notes in silence and then produce essays that essentially recycle the same ideas--often echoing the very words--presented in my lectures (occasionally peppered with borrowings from other sources, chiefly Cliff notes). When, however, I have accompanied my students on a walking tour through texts at ground level (so to speak)--daring to share publicly my own personal responses, frankly admitting when a coherent interpretation of a passage eludes me and asking for the students’ help--I have tended to lose ground on student-evaluation scores in the category labeled “knowledge of subject.” But the
wonderful trade-off is this: my students have to varying degrees begun participating in what Dewey called “the work of art” (AE, 167)—that wonderfully apt double entendre characterizing the reader’s re-creative labor. Admitting my uncertainties and modeling a willingness to risk sharing tentative interpretations seems to have helped at least some of my students to begin honoring their own responses, to gather the courage to share them, and to join me in the risky but potentially highly rewarding work of collaborative meaning making.

Sometimes seeds sown by modeling public meaning-making germinate quickly. I have found in my World Literature classes, for example that after I have shared my personal responses to a literary work, some students reciprocate promptly by sharing experience-based responses of their own, for example via freewriting assignments or by staying after class to talk with me privately. After I had shared my responses to Robert Hayden’s tribute to his father, “Those Winter Sundays,” for example, Ellen F. in a subsequent free-writing assignment wrote a poignant memoir of her coal miner father’s self-sacrifices for the sake of his family.80 After I had shared memories evoked by my reading of Tolstoy’s “The Death of Ivan Ilyitch,” Katrena B. lingered until the rest of the class had left to share with me memories of visiting her terminally ill grandfather in the hospital. Eavesdropping on small group discussions of works, I sometimes overhear students sharing such responses with each other, as well. But the avenues for self-revelatory sharing that seem to demand considerably more courage on the students’ part are whole-class discussions and formal writing assignments.

A longer germination period is typically needed for such a harvest. Sometimes the attentive interest of fellow small-group members or my appreciative marginal comments on freewriting assignments seem to serve as nurturing seedbeds for future transplantation of ideas. I have found that such cultivation, combined with patient waiting, can pay off in gratifying ways.

I am heartened by the memory of Katie E., for example, who having sat in silence during whole-class discussions from August through early December, finally “broke the sound barrier”

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80 Except when permission has been obtained to use a student’s real name, I have changed the names of students referred to in this chapter. I would like to thank Katrena Bolin, Marsha Wilson, and Larry Thompson for granting permission to use their real names.
one day toward the end of the semester. In response to W. D. Snodgrass’ “Memento, I,” a wrenching portrait of the after-effects of divorce, Katie spontaneously shared with the whole class some ways in which the poem had stirred memories of emotional aftershocks of breaking up with her ex-boyfriend. I saw several students nodding in affirmation as she spoke, and her words prompted still another student—Ernest M., whose voice had likewise formerly not yet been heard—to join in the discussion.

Equally heartening was Nick G.’s decision to incorporate into his formal essay on Frost’s “Home Burial” comparisons between the crisis depicted in that poem and his memory of an emotionally analogous situation from his own experience. Glimpsing Frost’s poem through Nick’s eyes has irrevocably altered my own experience of the poem. Further, reading his analysis of the poem has cast a remembered experience of my own in a new light, revealing links between the characters’ experience and my own to which I had previously been blind. Much as Katie’s courage in sharing the links she sensed between Snodgrass’ poem and her own experience seems to have reinforced Ernest’s connection with that poem, so too Nick’s courage in sharing his response to Frost’s poem helped me find the courage to recognize a salutary, though painful connection with my own experience. For me, rewards such as these are well worth the risk of losing ground on student evaluation scores! Exposing the underpinnings of my own meaning-making strategies seems also to embolden some students to challenge the authority of my conclusions and to offer their own alternative--at times electrifyingly intuitive--constructions of meaning.

The Teacher as Fellow Participant in Communal Meaning Making:

Modeling Reader-Reader Transaction

Again, before defining this target role, I will begin by ruling out what it is not. To foster communal meaning making in the classroom, the teacher must not assume a role resembling that
of the so-called wizard in The Wizard of Oz. Recall that this ruler strategically distanced himself from his subjects, attempting to maintain his position of authority by shrouding himself in secrecy. Similarly, a teacher who withholds useful information from students grappling with a text has figuratively withdrawn behind a curtain, observing their meaning-making processes from the vantage point of a detached spectator.

I. A. Richards’ attitude toward the students who participated in the “experiment” reported in his Practical Criticism (1960) reminds me a bit of the attitude the so-called wizard assumed toward his underlings in Oz. Although I cannot fault Richards’ decision to withhold from his experimental subjects the authorship of the poems he selected for them to explicate, I do question the grounds for his decision deliberately to withhold the kind of information typically provided by footnotes—the lack of which, for most of his students, rendered the poems he selected virtually incomprehensible. Then, from behind his figurative “curtain,” we hear Richards smugly ridiculing his students’ attempts to construct their own meanings within a contextual vacuum. Admittedly, the procedure of Richards’ experiment was not intended to demonstrate a teaching strategy. Still, the attitudes towards students conveyed in Richards’ discussion make me wonder whether the attitudes he exhibited as experimenter differed radically from his habitual posture as a teacher. Listen, for example, to these less than charitable descriptions of his students’ efforts:

The failures to grasp the meaning which are the impressive feature of [the students’ responses to a poem by John Donne] . . . are not easy to range in order. Distractions, preconceptions, inhibitions of all kinds have their part, and putting our finger on the obstructing item is always largely guesswork. The assumption, however that stupidity [emphasis added] is not a simple quality, such as weight or impenetrability were once thought to be, but an effect of complex inhibitions is a long stride in a hopeful direction. The most leaden-witted blockhead thereby becomes an object of interest [emphasis added].” (PCSLJ, 43)
The poem in question (Donne’s *Holy Sonnets VII*), it should be noted, contains a number of pivotal references to specific passages from the Bible. Unless a reader’s education happens to have included a thorough grounding in the scriptures, it seems to me unsurprising that the poem’s allusions to specific Bible verses, introduced without footnotes or introductory material of any kind, would prove baffling even to the most otherwise highly-educated, ingenious reader. Equating his students’ bafflement with “stupidity,” hurling epithets like “leaden-witted blockhead,” Richards reminds me of the self-proclaimed wizard hidden behind his curtain, pathetically attempting to inflate his own self-esteem by deflating others.

For me as a teacher, Richards’ account of his experiment serves to provide some instructive object lessons: 1) Don’t ensure the failure of students by withholding privileged information. 2) Don’t disparage their creative attempts to construct meanings from runes of decontextualized allusions (reminiscent of archeologists’ attempts to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics prior to discovery of the Rosetta stone). 3) Above all, don’t judge a student’s potential on the slender basis of acquaintance or lack thereof with a particular body of knowledge. To frame these observations in broader terms, it should be added that these very object lessons have yet to be appreciated by educational psychologists who devise culturally-specific “aptitude” tests qua thinly-veiled achievement tests; for a trenchant critique of the fallacious assumptions underlying the construction and interpretation of such tests, see F. Allan Hanson’s *Testing Testing: Social Consequences of the Examined Life* (1993).

But even if a teacher finds a supercilious, detached-spectator role repugnant, cultivating the role of fellow meaning-maker still may not come easy. Teachers may find, for example, that even when they sincerely assume the vulnerable role of self-revelatory fellow-reader, their students may seem unwilling to reciprocate. In such a case, it may prove instructive to reflect on patterns of teacher-student transaction. For example, if a teacher has discredited even one contribution on the part of a single student, the memory of that inhospitable reception could in effect dampen the willingness of all the other students in a class to “put their necks out” either
by revealing their own individual responses to a text or by participating in the give-and-take of communal meaning making.

Instructive examples of this sort are recorded in Joanne M. Golden’s “Reading in the Classroom Context: A Semiotic Event.” In the course of her analysis of a sixth-grade teacher’s handling of a reading lesson, Golden incidentally provides an object lesson for teachers who, despite wholehearted adoption of a self-revelatory reader role, have stumbled in their attempts to facilitate an atmosphere of communal meaning making. Golden notes that in the course of discussing the text (an excerpt from the autobiographical Barrio Boy by Ernesto Galarza), the observed teacher routinely “introduced her own personal life experience as a child to illustrate that she [had] experienced a reaction similar to the narrator’s” (RCC, 77). For instance, responding to a passage depicting Galarza’s uneasiness on his first day of school, this teacher recounted an analogous experience of her own, focusing on similar feelings—confiding to her students, for example, “I can still recall how [as a new kindergartner] I felt this wave of panic thinking ‘oh no, I don’t know where to go’” (RCC, 77). Golden infers that this teacher’s motive in sharing such reminiscences was to provide a model for her students to follow in forging analogous links between the text and their own life experiences. As Golden explains, “The reader response the teacher apparently sought was identification with the narrator’s feelings; . . . she approached this by relating her own experiences . . . . The teacher thus modeled a way to respond to the written symbol by linking life experiences to text experiences” (RCC, 77). When students were prompted to follow her lead by sharing remembered experiences of their own, however, this teacher seemed quickly to revert to an authoritarian mode, dismissing as “chaff” any response unlike her own conception of the essential “wheat” constituting her own interpretation of the text.

81Joanne M. Golden, "Reading in the Classroom Context: A Semiotic Event," Semiotica 83.1-2 (1989): 67-84. This article will be referred to as RCC with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
Listen, for example, to the following exchange between the teacher (“T”) and a student (“S”) after the teacher had read aloud a passage in which Galarza recalls his first awed encounter with the school principal:

T: . . . Have you ever met somebody or been around somebody [who] just [by] their very presence made you feel a certain way? . . . . There’s just something about them that [makes you feel] you can tell they know exactly what they’re doing and they’re not afraid to say what they think or what they feel. Can you think of anybody like that? . . . . My dad was like that. I mean he could [just] stand there . . . .

S: . . . my stepdad.

T: Your stepdad? Are you scared of him or are you just . . .

S: No, not really. I mean[,] well[,] every time I look at him he like[,] well[,] I mean[,] well. [. . .]

T: Gee, well[,] I mean[,] well[,] hmmm.

S: Well[,] see[,] like if I look at him he just gives me this real dirty look and I think he’s gonna beat me, but I know he’s not because my mom won’t like . . .

T: Won’t let him?

S: Right.

T: Well, uh[,] I’m not so sure that’s so much what I meant. Maybe I’m conveying the wrong--let me see. I think I always felt that way about principals. I remember . . . the principal in my elementary school . . . .

(RCC, 78)

In this episode, as Golden notes, the teacher had strategically “introduced her own life experience to frame the discussion” and then “opened the discussion to students’ experiences” (RCC, 78). Her modeling strategy was obviously successful in that a student felt encouraged to share in an analogous vein. Instead of expressing respectful interest in the basis for a fellow reader’s
response, however, this teacher beat a hasty retreat when the student’s response diverged from her own. She then summoned up an alternate personal memory to divert the conversation in a direction congruent with her own construction of the narrator’s feelings.

In what seems to me to be a parallel interchange, this same teacher later asked her students to describe the young Galarza’s impressions of his newly-met European-American first-grade teacher. One student responded, “Like she’s tall and sort of weird because she speaks American a lot and stuff” (RCC, 79). As Golden notes, this student’s choice of the term “weird” was promptly challenged: “When the student’s response did not entirely conform to the teacher’s perception of the text, she confirmed his observations that the teacher seemed tall but questioned whether the teacher was weird” (RCC, 79). In place of the term “weird,” the observed teacher suggested alternative adjective choices--”beautiful,” “wonderful,” “smart,” “kind”--based on the Galarza’s description of his teacher as “blonde” and “radiant” (RCC, 79).

But who is to say that the observed student’s interpretation of Galarza’s initial impression of his European-American teacher as “weird” lacks validity? After all, prior to entering school Galarza had presumably been surrounded mostly by dark-haired, Spanish-speaking family members and neighbors in the barrio. A close encounter with a blonde woman who spoke only in English might indeed seem to him anomalous, or “weird.” Consider, by analogy, Native American Joseph H. Suina’s account of culture shock in his essay “And Then I Went to School”—especially the discomfiture inspired by his European-American, English-speaking teacher, whose appearance and speech differed so radically from that of the women of his home culture. As Suina recalls,

> To begin with, unlike my grandmother, the teacher did not have pretty brown skin and a colorful dress. She was not plump and friendly. Her clothes were one color and drab. Her pale and skinny form made me worry that she was very ill. . . . I didn’t think she was so smart because she couldn’t understand my language. . . .
All I could say in her language was “yes teacher,” “my name is Joseph Henry,” and “when is lunch time.”

Had the adjective “weird” been included in his English vocabulary at that point, the young Suina might well have chosen it to describe this teacher! And had the adult Suina taken the place of the observed teacher leading the discussion of *Barrio Boy*, surely the student who inferred from Galarza’s description of his blonde, English-speaking teacher that she must have seemed “sort of weird” to him would not have been rebuked for inattentiveness to details within the text.

The tendency of the teacher observed by Golden to privilege her own interpretations of Galarza’s text recalls I. A. Richards’ assumption that only certain select responses to texts are “rooted in something essential,” in contradistinction to those distorted by “accidents of the individual reader’s mood or history or temperament” (PCSLJ, 238). To privilege certain responses as “essential,” dismissing all others as “accidental,” in turn recalls the Aristotelian metaphysical hierarchy, which marginalizes the contingent as accidental, according necessity and hence full-fledged reality only to essences (BWA, 862-863). But recall Dewey’s contrary insistence that discrimination between varying degrees of reality is a mythical attainment. Recall his refusal metaphysically to marginalize even events such as dreams, hallucinations, so-called optical illusions, etc., recognizing them as existences in the full sense of that word, along with all other events that occur “in the course of the one continuous world” (NRP, 28). The metaphysical gulf that separates I. A. Richards’ aesthetics from Dewey’s now becomes even more apparent.

Recall that for Richards the meaning of a literary text is assumed to be a single, “essential” entity equivalent to authorial intent. Richards accordingly defines “the aim of the poem,” as “the collection of impulses which shaped the poem originally, to which it gave expression, and to which, in an ideally susceptible reader it would again give rise” (PCSLJ, 204). He marginalizes responses he attributes to less-than-ideally-susceptible readers by discrediting them as “accidents

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of the individual reader’s mood or history or temperament” (PCSLJ, 238). By his own admission, even Richards could lapse from the high standard of ideal susceptibility. He ruefully admits that once, when stricken by illness, his habitual critical stance as a reader had been undermined by a culpable emotionality: “I reluctantly recall that the last time I had influenza a very stupid novel filled my eyes with tears again and again until I could not see the pages” (PCSLJ, 257). Attributing his altered sensibility to the accident of a temporary biochemical abnormality, he discounts the reality of this experience. Noting that “influenza is thought by many to be a disorder of the autonomic nervous system,” he virtually dismisses his anomalous response as a kind of mild hallucination (PCSLJ, 257). However, Richards seems untroubled by doubts that under normal circumstances his own ideal susceptibility as a reader guarantees privy access to the one and only essential meaning—qua authorial intent—of any literary text.

Dewey, by contrast, celebrates the infinite variety of meanings abstractable from “works of art” created anew by each reader in every reading of a text. No measuring rod of degrees of reality, no hierarchy of essential vs. accidental being can be applied to these individual evocations. All are full-fledged realities, though—as in the case of dreams and hallucinations— inquiry will lead to discriminations between them as bases for drawing warrantable assertions.

As Dewey points out in “The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism” (1905/1977), the task of determining warrantable assertibility does not consist in determining “a Reality” in contradistinction to “various approximations to, or phenomenal representations of Reality.” Rather, the task consists in drawing valuative inferences based on “contrast . . . between different reals of experience” (PIE, 159). Dewey insisted that “if one wishes to describe anything truly, his task is to tell what it is experienced as being” (emphasis added) (PIE, 158). Asked to describe a horse, for example, each individual respondent will describe a different “[real] of experience”: “If it is a horse that is to be described, or the equus that is to be defined, then must the horse-trader, or the jockey, or the timid family man who wants a ‘safe driver,’ or the zoologist or the

83John Dewey, "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism," in Boydston, ed., The Middle Works, 3: 159. This essay will be referred to as PIE with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
paleontologist tell us what the horse is which is experienced” (PIE, 158-159). Like the reports of the proverbial blind men exploring the features of an elephant, all these distinctive accounts can be pooled to form a composite report more comprehensive than that of any single individual. But no individual report can be discounted as unreal: “If these accounts turn out different in some respects, as well as congruous in others, this is no reason for assuming the content of one to be exclusively ‘real,’ and that of others to be ‘phenomenal’; for each account of what is experienced will manifest that it is the account of the horse-dealer, or of the zoologist, and hence will give the conditions requisite for understanding the differences as well as the agreement of the various accounts” (PIE, 159). Though differing selective interests distinguish the zoologist’s account of equus caballus from the horse dealer’s account of pedigreed stallion or brood mare, both accounts are equally real.

By extension, a Van Gogh portraiture of a horse would be neither more nor less real than Grandma Moses’; an equine image captured via digital photography would rank no higher in the scale of reality than a toddler’s stick-figure sketch. And by further extension, a student’s individual evocation of a literary text would be equally as real as the teacher’s; the teacher’s evocation of the text, equally as real as the literary critic’s; and the literary critic’s evocation, equally as real as that of the author reading the words he has himself written. Even the most highly “refined” accounts can ascend no higher in rank of reality than their “cruder” counterparts. As Dewey pointed out, “the principle varies not a whit if we bring in the psychologist’s horse, the logician’s horse or the metaphysician’s horse” (PIE, 159). Not in degree of reality, then, but only in comparative degree of value for specific practical purposes can “different reals of experience” legitimately be ranked.

According to Dewey, the purpose for comparing/contrasting various “reals of experience” should never be to establish exclusive legitimation of certain accounts at the expense of discounting others. Rather than invalidating or mutually excluding one another, all accounts of experience can prove useful for the purpose of constructing an ever more inclusive, perspective-correcting composite account. Just as each of the parabled blind men’s individual reports proved
inadequate as a basis for formulating warrantable assertions about the elephant, so any particular account of experience must be recognized as susceptible to correction and enrichment when viewed in light of complementary accounts. Sharing variant interpretations of a literary text that have arisen from readers’ differing “reals of experience” thus affords an invaluable opportunity for mutual enrichment and compensatory correction of what Rosenblatt terms the “blind spots” of individual readers (LE, 196).

The route to such correction--to emphasize Dewey’s point--is never to dismiss any particular experience as unreal. Correction and expansion of perspective proceed from pooling and comparing various “reals of experience,” not from privileging some and discounting others. Our visual experience of a stick half-submerged in water and our tactile experience of this stick in the same situation, by analogy, will be different. Yet both experiences must be acknowledged as equally real. Only by comparing these two “reals of experience” can an understanding of the phenomenon of refraction be gained as the basis for practical behavioral compensations. Likewise, dream-state and waking-state experiences, though different, are equally real. Only by comparing waking-state and dream-state experiences as alternative “reals of experience” can an understanding of their mutually illuminative character be gained. Likewise, in dialogue with others, only by acknowledging the equal reality of all the “different reals of experience” reflected in the participants’ differing views can comparisons effect a mutual enrichment and correction of perspective. In dialogue among readers, then, differing interpretations of a text must be recognized as reflections of the readers’ “different reals of experience,” including and especially their differing individual evocations of that text.
Honoring Individual Evocations of Texts

As “Different Reals of Experience”

Much as Dewey insisted on the primacy of immediate experience, so too does Rosenblatt insist on the primacy of imaginative evocation, or “the priority of the lived-through relationship with the text” (RTP, 125). She reminds us that vicarious evocation of a literary text by means of a “surrogate-reader” (RTP, 147) is an impossibility. Unfortunately, however, teachers of literature often unwittingly encourage their students to seek just such a surrogate. If a teacher fails to honor each student’s own evocation of a text as the indispensable starting-point for the meaning-making process, the students may well feel they have no recourse but to seek a “surrogate-reader” upon whose responses to build their interpretations. This surrogate may be another student whose responses have been approved by the teacher. Or it may be the editor of their textbook, or a literary critic, or the apocryphal “Mr. Cliff” of Cliff Notes fame. The surrogate reader of choice, however, will likely be the teacher. The teacher’s reliance on the lecture method of instruction in a literature course may well be interpreted by the students as an invitation to adopt the teacher’s interpretations wholesale wherever these diverge from the student’s own construction of the text, or even to wait until after the lecture to read the text--i.e., to skim the pages looking for passages supportive of the teacher’s interpretations.

Besides unwittingly encouraging their students to rely upon a surrogate reader, another way in which teachers may fail to honor their students’ individual evocations of literary texts is by devising assignments that encourage a predominantly efferent reading stance. The question comprising the title of Rosenblatt’s essay “What Facts Does This Poem Teach You?” epitomizes this misguided approach to the teaching of literature. Rosenblatt notes that this question, printed above a poem in a third-grade workbook, “has come to symbolize for . . . [her] the ways in which
in our educational process the aesthetic stance is, often unwittingly, nullified or subverted.”84 Posing such a question tends to encourage students to perceive reading as a kind of fishing expedition. If questions that tend to reduce a text to a fish pond are posed in advance of a reading assignment, the students may altogether abandon the effort to read the text as a whole. Abstraction of facts being the goal apparently most prized by the teacher, the students may logically conclude that imaginative evocation of a text is only an accidental by-product of reading to locate facts. The most practical expedient, then, would apparently be to skim the text looking for the answers to assigned questions—much as a college student might bypass aesthetically-stanced reading of the text as a whole in favor of skimming to find passages supportive of the teacher’s interpretation. Such an approach to reading virtually precludes actualization of what Rosenblatt terms “the aesthetic potentialities” (RTP, 184) of a text.

Unfortunately, a teacher does not even have to assign “study questions” in advance of reading assignments in order to trigger such an approach. For students habituated to reading solely for the purpose of finding answers to assigned questions, even when a set of “study questions” has not been assigned, the very presence of such questions following a reading selection in a textbook will often dictate the focus of selective attention as the students read. I have observed students first turn to the end of an assigned selection within an anthology to read the set of questions posed by the editor before reading the selection itself. I have observed this behavior even when the assignment was simply to read the selection and record personal responses in the form of freewriting. All the foregoing observations—based on personal experience on both sides of the desk—convince me that the urgency of Rosenblatt’s insistence on maintaining “the priority of the lived-through relationship with the text” (RTP, 125) is appropriately emphatic.

To insist on maintaining “the priority of the lived-through relationship with the text” is not, however, tantamount to embracing all possible interpretations of a text as equally defensible.

It is simply to recognize that each unique evocation of a text is equally a real experience. It is not such evocations themselves, but rather the inferences drawn from these evocations that can and should be weighed in the balance. Like Dewey, Rosenblatt sees no contradiction between insisting on the primacy of immediate experience and recognizing that systematic processes of inquiry alone can determine whether inferences drawn from such experience should be valuated as equally defensible or (to use Dewey’s term) “warrantable.” Rosenblatt notes that she deliberately “adapt[ed] the idea of warranted assertibility [as articulated by Dewey] to literary interpretation” in her paradigmatic construction of “the most defensible interpretation or interpretations” of a text (RTP, 183). Thus, Rosenblatt’s paradigm of defensibility is undergirded by the metaphysics and epistemology underlying Dewey’s paradigm of warranted assertibility.

Recall that unlike Aristotle, who assigned a differing degree of reality to each link within a Great Chain of Being, Dewey identified reality as synonymous with being. As Dewey summarized his position in “The Philosophy of Immediate Empiricism”: “. . . [strictly speaking] ‘real’ means only existent” (163). Recall further that correspondingly, for Dewey, all instances of “immediate experience” (PIE, 166) are equally real—though the warrantable assertibility of inferences drawn from such experiences may vary. The necessary starting point for the specialized processes of inquiry through which warranted assertibility is determined must always be “determinate experience” (PIE, 164)—i.e., each individual inquirer’s own experience not as cognitively mediated, but as immediately lived. Dewey’s insistence on the primacy of such immediate experience—no matter how nebulous—as the indispensable starting point for inquiry is illustrated by examples drawn from the twilight zone of human perception:

It may be dark; I may have only the vaguest impression that there is something which looks like a table. Or I may be completely befogged and confused, as when one rises quickly from sleep in a pitch-dark room. But this vagueness, this doubtfulness, this confusion is the thing experienced, and qua real, is as “good” a reality as the self-luminous vision of an Absolute. . . . Whatever gain in clearness,
in fullness, in trueness of content is [subsequently] experienced must grow out of some element in the experience of this experienced as what it is. (PIE, 64)

Note that progress towards experiential “clarity,” “fullness” and “trueness of content” cannot be gained vicariously by appropriating another’s clearer, fuller, truer experience.

Similarly, Rosenblatt insists on the priority of each individual reader’s own “lived-through relationship with the text,” no matter how nebulous that relationship may be. A reader may indeed grope through an unfamiliar text as through a dark room, forming “only the vaguest impressions” of its contours. Yet those very impressions--doubtful and confused though they may be--constitute the indispensable basis for growth toward “whatever gain in clearness, in fullness, in trueness of content is [subsequently] experienced.” Such gains can “grow out” only from the reader’s own immediate experience of the text; they cannot be grafted from the experience of a “surrogate-reader.” Such a strategy must prove as futile as attempting to grow flowers by strewing one’s yard with blossoms cut from another’s garden. Growth toward clarity, fullness, integrity must proceed instead, so to speak, from vegetation rooted in the native soil of one’s own immediate experience. The gift of a bouquet garnered from another’s garden may inspire emulation of that gardener’s work but cannot substitute for the labor of cultivating one’s own garden.

Applications of this metaphor to the teaching of literature come readily to mind. The teacher who presents students with ready-made interpretations of texts offers them bouquets of cut flowers. From the perspective of the students, the origin of these interpretations--their relation, so to speak, to root systems, soil, sunshine, and rain--may seem obscure. Chagrined by the floral splendor of the teacher’s interpretations, students may even try to uproot vegetation native to their own garden soil--their own individual evocations of a text. The unintended consequence of a teacher’s gift bouquets may thus be to discourage the students’ own gardening efforts altogether.

In order to encourage overawed or disheartened students to cultivate their own “gardens,” the teacher must adopt the two modeling strategies defined earlier in this discussion. The first
strategy--summoning the courage to model a vulnerable self-revelatory-reader role--can be
figuratively described in agrarian terms as inviting the students to observe the teacher’s own
gardening techniques in action. In metaphorical terms, the students can thus see for themselves
the composting, hoeing, raking, planting, watering, weeding, etc., that must precede the garnering
of bouquets. But, though necessary, this first step alone will prove insufficient for encouraging
neophytes to persevere in the work needed to cultivate their own gardens. The second requisite
strategy on the teacher’s part must be to find the humility needed to embrace the role of co-
participant with the students in a communal meaning-making process. Metaphorically speaking,
this step consists in working shoulder to shoulder with the students to create a common garden
plot--a space for communal meaning making where various “reals of experience” can flourish side
by side.

Dewey’s “Individuality and Experience” (1926/1971) perhaps best conveys his vision of
the teacher’s role in creating a classroom atmosphere conducive to creating a shared space for
communal meaning making. In the scenario advocated by Dewey, the teacher works
collaboratively with students on cooperative projects--the kind of cooperative labor Dewey
described in Democracy and Education as “conjoint activities” (40). Dewey envisioned a
classroom in which the individuality of both teacher and students is mutually “wrought out” as
they work together as partners engaged in transaction with their environment (IE, 55). As fellow
learners, they embark on jointly-conceived projects, the tentatively defined purposes for which
are perpetually re-shaped “during and because of the operations subsequently performed” (IE,
60). Teacher and students then share as co-participants in each successive stage of their
collaborative work: framing a tentative purpose, planning activities to achieve it, grappling with
materials, rethinking their purpose as transactions with materials and fellow workers bring new
possibilities to light, etc. Emergent purposes thus evolve through the very “serial process of
execution” of shared tasks (IE, 60).

Metaphorically speaking, in their collaborative work of meaning making teacher and
students are gardeners who begin by putting their heads together to make selections from seed
catalogues, map out the garden plot, etc. Then they share tasks to implement their plans (to continue the metaphor: they plow, disc, spread fertilizer, pull weeds, etc.). As the project progresses, they collaboratively revise their initial plans as needed in light of results of their implementation efforts (to extend the metaphor further: they experiment with various methods for controlling pests, mulching, etc.). Throughout this “serial process,” the teacher freely shares technological know-how, practical advice based on experience, academic knowledge, etc. Most importantly, the teacher leads by example, modeling both expertise-based authority and respect for co-workers at various levels of expertise.

It is this quality of respect for students as co-workers, irrespective of their current level of expertise—to honor all the “reals of experience” shared in the process of meaning making—that is perhaps hardest for a teacher to model. Speaking from my own experience, I find consistent adherence to this standard to be the most daunting challenge of teaching. It is far easier to observe motes in the eyes of other teachers in this regard than to become aware of beams obstructing my own vision. For example, earlier in this discussion I noted my perception of a need for further respect for students’ contributions on the part of the teacher observed by Golden. But the glimpses I have occasionally been afforded of a corresponding need in myself make me reluctant to cast any stones of condemnation at that teacher or anyone else. A couple of examples may serve to illustrate this insidious tendency (weed-like in its tenacity) to privilege my own interpretations at the expense of due respect for my students’ contributions.

A number of years ago (before beginning the intensive study of Dewey’s work which laid the groundwork for this dissertation), I received an essay from Kevin F., an outstanding student in my World Literature class, examining Shakespeare’s portrayal both of nature and of human nature in King Lear. My comments on his essay, as I recall, focused on what I perceived to be a lack of unity within the discussion. I remember noting that the term “nature” had been used in an equivocal way, so that only a sort of incidental verbal pun held the two halves of the essay together. Imagine my chagrin when, a year or so later, I encountered John Dewey’s classification of human nature as a subset of nature! In light of this more inclusive definition of nature, of
course, the seamless unity of Kevin’s essay became retrospectively crystal clear. Having
privileged my own fractured vision of nature/human nature in haste, I have had occasion to repent
at leisure during the years following discovery of my error.

Another humbling revelation of this kind dawned more recently. While reflecting on this
very section of my dissertation, I found myself thinking about an analysis of Ellen Gilchrist’s
short story “Revenge,” in an essay written by John D., a student in my freshman composition
class several years ago. John’s discussion focused on two forms of prejudice depicted in this
story set in the 1940s in the deep South: that faced by the pre-adolescent female protagonist
because of her gender (a situation central to the story’s plot) and that faced by African-American
domestic workers in the home of the protagonist (minor characters only sketchily developed).
My response to John’s two-fold analysis, like my response to Kevin’s essay on Lear, was to
fault it for lack of unity. Were the two forms of discrimination so integrally connected within the
story, I asked, as to justify yoking them together within a single discussion? Wasn’t the author’s
incidental depiction of racial prejudice included merely for the sake of historical authenticity? I
mentally chalked up John’s yoking of these two apparently disparate aspects of the story to his
sensitivity to discrimination as a member of a historically-oppressed ethnic minority group.
Only recently has it dawned on me that my dismissal of Gilchrist’s portrayal of racial prejudice
as tangential to the story sells short the unity of the story itself! Seen in this light, Gilchrist’s
point in depicting both forms of discrimination within the same story becomes clear: The world
view that marginalized African-Americans and the mind set that tolerated marginalization of
females were not just historically coincidental. Instead, both manifest the self-same tendency to
devalue fellow human beings. But of course this connection was not spelled out within the story
itself, for the protagonist (through whose consciousness the story’s events are filtered) was
ironically blind to the implicit unity of events within her experience.

Regularly reminding myself of experiences like these has encouraged me to persist toward
the goal of hospitably welcoming each student’s individual evocation and consequent
interpretation of a text. Figuratively speaking, I have aimed to value all contributions to the
variegated bouquet collected when students try out in their own backyards the gardening methods practiced in our communal plot. It is far better, I have decided, to make room for a few dandelions, etc., than to risk discarding a contribution that may be retrospectively prized as a rare wildflower.

Louise M. Rosenblatt’s pedagogical theories seem compatible with the gist of this gardening metaphor. In a 1991 interview with Mary H. Maguire (published as “Looking Back and Looking Forward” in a collection of interviews entitled Dialogue in a Major Key: Women Scholars Speak), Rosenblatt offered reflections on her role as editor of a special issue of the English Journal (June 1946) “dedicated to the theme that the teaching of language and literature can be a means of nourishing the democratic appreciation of each person as a human being.”

Acknowledging the role her study of anthropology played in deepening her own appreciation of individuals from diverse backgrounds, Rosenblatt recalls that she thereby “learned very early to respect other cultures and to realize that there were many different ways that human beings organize or structure their basic human needs and capacities” (LBLF, 156). This realization, it seems to me, goes hand in hand with a corresponding recognition that there are many different ways that human beings can organize or structure the raw material of texts in the course of individual evocation and meaning making processes. Learning to respect the diversity of individual readers’ responses to a text can thus be seen as one step toward learning to respect the diversity of individual constructions of meaning—“readings”—of situations in the world beyond the pages of texts. Teachers of literature who model such respect by appreciating the full range of students’ responses to texts—by making room, so to speak, within a variegated bouquet for all offerings culled in the communal meaning making process—may well be doing more than they know toward (in the words of Rosenblatt) “nourishing democratic appreciation of each person as a human being.” As Rosenblatt notes, English teachers have an opportunity—and responsibility—

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85 Louise M. Rosenblatt, “Looking Back and Looking Forward,” interview by Mary H. Maguire, in Dialogue in a Major Key: Women Scholars Speak, ed. Mary H. Maguire (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1995), 156. This interview will be referred to as LBLF with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.
to counter insular viewpoints that would tend to restrict communication and cooperation: “It is the image of a freely harmonizing society that we as teachers of English constantly need to support” (LBLF, 161). The collaborative meaning making afforded by reading and discussing literary works within an atmosphere of mutual interest and respect provides a laboratory experience for work toward such a freely harmonizing society. Rosenblatt’s vision of this goal as an actualizable potentiality has done much to inspire in her readers the kind of “reasonable hopefulness” Dewey identified as a defining characteristic of meliorism (RP, 181).

Rosenblatt’s Melioristic Vision:

I. Classroom Dialogue Embracing “Different Reals of Experience” of Literature:

A Laboratory for Participatory Democracy

Recall that Rosenblatt envisions dialogue among readers as a means for effecting mutual enrichment and correction of individual interpretations of a literary text. My own experience as a teacher of literature has convinced me that the benefits of dialogue described by Rosenblatt in the following passage can be reaped by the teacher, no less than by the students:

As we exchange experiences, we point to those elements of the text that best illustrate or support our interpretations. We may help one another to attend to words, phrases, images, scenes, that we have overlooked or slighted. We may be led to reread the text and revise our own interpretation. (RTP, 146)

Through such dialogue, each participant—including the teacher—can come to recognize “the needs, the assumptions, the sensitivities, and blind spots that . . . [any reader] brings to the [reader-text] transaction” (RTP, 145). The teacher of literature who views engaging students in discussion of literary works as an opportunity for sharing all the participants’ “different reals of experience”—rather than as a strategic means for effecting convergence with the teacher’s views—is in fact providing a laboratory for the kind of participatory democracy envisioned by Dewey.
As Rosenblatt reminds us in the epilogue appended to the 1994 edition of The Reader, the Text, the Poem, Dewey specified fully-inclusive, perspective-broadening intercommunciation among citizens as the sine qua non of authentic democracy. The passage from Dewey's The Public and Its Problems Rosenblatt cites in her concluding paragraph both prophesies and stipulates the conditions necessary for such a crowning achievement: "'Democracy . . . will have its consummation when free social inquiry is wedded to the art of full and moving communication . . .'" (RTP, 188). Rosenblatt clearly envisions the project of literary interpretation as an opportunity to engage in "free social inquiry"; and the sharing of diverse views perspectives on a literary work as an occasion for practicing "the art of full and moving communication."

As Rosenblatt points out, engaging students in “group discussion of alternative responses and interpretation[s]” of a literary text, encourages all participants in the dialogue to become increasingly “aware not only of unnoticed verbal clues [within a text] but also of . . . [their] own biases or blind spots” (LE, 196). That cultivation of this kind of attentiveness and self-reflexivity invaluably prepares citizens for constructive dialogue and cooperative action within a democratic society seems self-evident. As Rosenblatt points out, “There is more than a verbal parallel between the process of reflective thinking arising from response to literature and the process of reflection as a prelude to action in life itself” (LE, 216). To move from the collaborative classroom project of determining “the most defensible interpretation or interpretations of texts” (RTP, 183) to the collaborative civic project of determining the most warrantable assertion or assertions regarding issues facing the citizenry of a democratic society is not a great leap. Rosenblatt’s conviction that this kind of learning transfer is possible brings to her counsel to educators the kind of “reasonable hopefulness” urged by Dewey.

In the chapter entitled “Retrospect and Prospect” concluding her most recent (1995) edition of Literature as Exploration, Rosenblatt urges teachers of literature to realize the potential of their classrooms as a crucible for participatory democracy:

Students should be actively helped to develop criteria based on democratic assumptions about the freedoms and responsibilities of individuals, men and women creating a shared future. . . . (LE, 296)

Rosenblatt, however, clearly distances her “reasonable hopefulness” for this outcome from glib optimism:

I am not under the illusion that the schools alone can change society. However, I can reaffirm the belief uttered so many years ago: We teachers of language and literature have a crucial role to play as educators and citizens. We phrase our goals as fostering the growth of the capacity for personally meaningful, self-critical literary experience. The educational process that achieves this aim most effectively will serve a broader purpose, the nurturing of men and women capable of building a fully democratic society. The prospect is invigorating!” (LE, 296-297).

Envisioning the potential of a literature class to become a microcosmic participatory democracy reveals and impels a demand for responsible action on the teacher’s part. Distanced as far from the inertia of complacent optimism as from the stagnancy of pessimistic despair, Rosenblatt’s melioristic vision of the teacher’s role as a participant within such a participatory democracy “invigorat[es]” endeavor. Likewise, Rosenblatt’s melioristic vision of each student’s capacity for growth as a potentiality to be wrought out in transaction galvanizes responsible action on the teacher’s part.
Rosenblatt’s Melioristic Vision:

II. Recognizing Students’ Capacity for Growth

as a Potentiality to Be Wrought Out

As one teacher of literature whose “reasonable hopefulness” for my students’ growth has been encouraged by Rosenblatt’s work, I would identify as the primary contributing factor her assumption that teachers can strategically promote a kind of reader-text transaction that can empower students to actualize their individual potential for growth as readers.

Rosenblatt’s depiction of a reader’s capacity for growth as a potential to be wrought out—rather than a ready-made latency (such as IQ) to be unfolded—certainly fosters the kind of “reasonable hope” Dewey ascribed to the world view of a meliorist. Recall that Dewey defined meliorism as “the belief that the specific conditions which exist at one moment, be they comparatively bad or comparatively good, in any event may be bettered” (RP, 181-182). Recall further that, distanced as thoroughly from complacent optimism as from pessimistic despair, meliorism as Dewey defined it both impels and demands of the meliorist persistent effort:

It [meliorism] encourages intelligence to study the positive means of good and the obstructions to their realization, and to put forth endeavor for the improvement of conditions. It arouses confidence and a reasonable hopefulness as optimism does not. (RP, 182)

As a teacher of literature, I can attest to the sense of “reasonable hopefulness” Rosenblatt’s theories have helped me increasingly to sustain in my work with students. Prospectively envisioning a reader’s capacity for individual growth as a potential-to-be-wrought-out, rather than retrospectively inferring the presence or absence of a ready-made latency, has encouraged me to persist toward the twin goals articulated by Dewey above: “to study the positive means
of good and the obstructions to their realization” for my students and to “put forth effort for the improvement of conditions” comprising the learning environment.

Presuming the extent of a reader’s capacity for growth to be a ready-made latency, by contrast, would predictably tend to foster either optimism or pessimism, depending on the teacher’s perception of the extent of a student’s latent abilities--or lack thereof. A teacher who views a student’s capacity for growth as a latency tends to gravitate toward an educational philosophy analogous to the sink-or-swim method of swimming instruction. I must admit that, despite my sincere conviction that Rosenblatt’s theories lead the practitioner in quite an opposite direction, honest self-examination of my own teaching strategies has revealed inconsistent adherence to these theories in practice. I regrettably speak from personal experience, then, in exploring the following implications of this swimming-instruction analogy.

Teachers of literature who gravitate toward a sink-or-swim philosophy may plunge their students into “deep water”—texts typically perceived by the students to be “over their heads”—without attempting first to help the students establish links between the material and their own experience. An unflinching look at the assumptions underlying my own lapses into this practice reveals an expectation that those students endowed with a latent capacity to understand the material will manifest this capacity spontaneously--while those considered deficient (as predicted, for example, by low SAT/ACT scores) will not. I can recall a teacher in an undergraduate class in which I was a student expressing this sink-or-swim expectation by means of an alternative Biblical metaphor: “This assignment should separate the sheep from the goats!”

Teachers whose practices reflect a vision of their students’ capacity for growth as a potential to be wrought out in transaction, by contrast, resemble swimming teachers who choose the shallow end of the pool as the initial setting for instruction. Modeling and facilitating linkages between texts and personal experience (creating learning conditions in which the students’ feet can “touch bottom,” so to speak), the teacher then progressively engages the students in step-by-step processes toward reader-text transactions of increasing “depth.”
A learning environment in which the students’ feet can, figuratively speaking, “touch bottom” is one within which the students can most readily establish connections between texts and their own prior--actual or vicarious--experience. As Rosenblatt points out, establishing viable connections between a literary work and a student’s own experience consists less in identifying objective “equivalents in our own society of the different aspects of life represented in the work” than in recognizing “the basic emotional patterns of the work itself” (LE, 208). Rosenblatt suggests that recognizing such universal “basic emotional patterns” will make a work accessible to students regardless of obstacles posed by surface features such as archaic language patterns or a plot involving “the externals of life and the manners and morals” of an alien culture (LE, 207-208). Rosenblatt points out, for example, that recognition of “basic emotional patterns” underlying the depiction of the friendship between Achilles and Patroclus in Homer’s The Iliad can make that supposedly less accessible work “as personally important to a . . . [student] as would a treatment of friendship [in a predictably more accessible work] such as in John Steinbeck’s Of Mice and Men” (LE, 208). As literary critic A. C. Bradley pointed out in comparing works as seemingly disparate as Shakespeare’s Othello and Wordsworth’s Alice Fell (a poem in which a poverty-stricken child is devastated by the loss of her only cloak), an emotional pattern common to the two works forges an affective link between them, regardless of superficial differences: “It is the agony of a soul from which something is torn away that was made one with its very being. What does it matter whether the thing is a woman, or a kingdom, or a tattered cloak? It is the passion that counts.”87 It has been my experience as a teacher of literature that when students sense the affective congruency between two works, the more readily accessible of the two can serve as a bridge to fuller understanding and appreciation of the work considered less accessible.

In teaching an undergraduate literature course (a “general studies” requirement for graduation), for example, I have come to recognize the potential of works drawn from popular

culture--especially, song lyrics and movies--effectively to serve as such bridges. I have found that encouraging students to write essays drawing parallels between literary works drawn from the various historical periods spanned by the course and contemporary movies, song lyrics, etc. with which they feel personally connected has engaged the interest of many hitherto unengaged students. Students who have taken advantage of this option have often expressed gratification (sometimes amazement!) at their newfound sense of connectedness with and appreciation for literary works of a kind they had initially dismissed as “over [their] head[s],” “irrelevant” to their own lives, or “boring.”

As gratifying as such positive feedback from students can be, teachers adopting a “shallow-end-of the-pool-first” approach to the teaching of literature must be prepared to face critics like Dana Mack, author of The Assault on Parenthood: How Our Culture Undermines the Family. Mack apparently views the process of helping students forge links between personal experience and art works as superfluous and expendable, even for students much younger than those I teach. Mack maintains that “children must be taught to appreciate a work of art regardless of its immediate relevance to their personal lives.”88 That an injunction to teach any subject “regardless of its immediate relevance to . . . [the designated learners’] personal lives” constitutes an oxymoron will likely be apparent to anyone who has ever actually attempted to accomplish such a goal.

In a literature class taught by a teacher of Mack’s persuasion, the students--if any--whose backgrounds have already prepared them to feel a sense of connectedness with the assigned literary works will predictably manifest the kind of increasing appreciation targeted as Mack’s instructional objective. Retrospectively attributing these students’ growth in appreciation to an unfoldment of latent capacity, the teacher may well feel optimistic about these students’ prospects for further growth. Other students, by contrast, who bring to their encounters with assigned works little or no sense of personal connectedness, will predictably manifest little or no

growth in their appreciation of the works. Retrospectively attributing these students’ deficient appreciation to a deficit of latent capacity, the teacher may well feel pessimistic about these students’ prospects for future growth.

Recall that, characterizing optimism and pessimism as twin “paralyzing doctrine[s],” Dewey maintained that both tend equally to discourage intelligent initiative (RP, 182). Whether conducive to optimism or to pessimism in a specific case, construing students’ current level of achievement as a gauge of latent ability relieves the teacher of a large degree of responsibility--since presumably such latencies are inborn and beyond the power of the teacher appreciably to affect. A Deweyan meliorism, by contrast, fuels action on the teacher’s part.

Like the vintner who sees the potential for production of wine in unharvested grapes no less than in vats of juice, like the mine owner who sees the potential for the production of artifacts in unmined ores as well as in the smelting pot--the melioristic teacher sees in students at various stages of achievement the potential for growth. This is no idle vision. Complacent waiting for the unfoldment of latencies or despair over their failure to unfold will serve the teacher no better than the vintner or mine owner. No less than in the case of other technologies, the craft of teaching according to the vision of Dewey and of Rosenblatt demands labor and technological know-how. Actualization occurs not as an instantaneity, but only as potentialities are wrought out through temporal processes. These processes consist wholly in transactions.

The Teacher’s Growth as a Potentiality Transactionally Wrought Out

The teacher of literature who hopes to grow in the capacity to engage students in the kind of transactions advocated in the preceding pages will find it necessary to abandon certain culturally-inherited baggage. A retrospectively-focused latency model for interpreting and predicting student achievement must be consciously exchanged for a prospective vision of potentialities to be transactionally wrought out. An insemination model for the reader-text
relationship must be deliberately exchanged for the paradigm of reader-text transaction. In fact, these two stultifying models can be seen as metaphysically next-of-kin. The latency model ascribes a student’s achievements or lack thereof to the presence or absence to varying degrees of ready-made abilities. The insemination model attributes inadequacies in a reader’s interpretation of a text to a deficiency of a ready-made “ideal susceptibility” to its “essential” meaning, ready-made within the text.

I have found that outgrowing these stultifying models is easier resolved than accomplished. Viewing my own capacity for progress in this regard as a potentiality to be wrought out in daily transaction with students is a helpful perspective. I think of two students, Larry T. and Marsha W., both of whom during the past two weeks initiated a series of conferences with me about their essays (the due date for which was looming near) for the World Literature course I teach. Although neither invoked the latency model explicitly, I could read it between the lines of their remarks as we talked: Both expressed anxiety about their ability to come up with enough ideas to fulfill the minimum length guideline of two typed pages. Neither had ever felt successful in or confident about interpreting literature in the past; on that basis, both despaired of their ability to complete the assignment successfully. Intertwined with pessimism born of the latency model, I could read the insemination model for the reader-text relationship between the lines as well: How could they be sure that their interpretations of the poems they had chosen to write about would match what the authors meant? I also heard a plea for a reader surrogate: What did I think the authors meant? I’m grateful to say that the insights embodied in this dissertation helped me to counter the pessimism these students exuded on their first visits to my office.

Larry’s discouragement was so extreme that several times he spoke of giving up trying to write the essay altogether. As we talked about the two poems he had chosen to compare, it became increasingly apparent to me that he was seeing much more in them than was evident in the early drafts of his paper. Only in the course of several conferences did these insights emerge.
I learned in our first conference that his response to Anne Sexton’s “The Abortion” was colored by his own experiences as a parent. He shared with me that he had been present at the births of his three children. Describing these experiences as perspective-altering, he added that in fact he had begun to sense a permanent change in perspective from the moment he had learned of the conception of each of his children. He described this change in terms of a widening vision to include the child’s imagined future. He speculated that an expectant mother might experience such an expansion of perspective even more profoundly.

When I asked him to relate these observations to his reading of Anne Sexton’s “The Abortion,” he noted that the poem’s speaker observed vivid colors in the landscape through which she drove on her trip to an appointment with an abortionist: “Blue mountains” and “green” hills. He noted that, by contrast, her narration of the return trip is totally devoid of descriptive coloration. In the next conference, Larry noted that the landscape as described in the first part of the poem is compared with the art work of a child--the hilly terrain “wearing, like a crayoned cat, its green hair.” In still another conference, I learned that he attributed this imagery to the speaker’s subliminal consciousness of the prospective viewpoint of the child she might have borne--had she canceled her appointment for the abortion. Since none of these powerful observations had been communicated by the drafts he had earlier shared with me, I was especially glad to have these opportunities to find out what he was thinking and to provide supportive feedback as he groped for the words to express his insights in written form. The sincere appreciation I expressed for the original thinking reflected in his observations seemed to provide the encouragement he needed to complete the assignment successfully.

I encouraged Marsha to follow through on her interest in comparing Don Marquis’ poem “The Lesson of the Moth” with the movie Gattaca. I encouraged her to “bounce ideas off me”--first in conversation, then in written form--each time she came to my office for successive conferences. When after several visits she apologized for the demands she was making on my time, I shared with her the following story. When I was a child, my father helped me learn to ride a bicycle by walking behind me, holding on to the seat to steady the bike as I pedaled and steered.
Evening after evening, we circled the block in this fashion until finally, when he sensed I no longer
needed his help, he let go. Much to my amazement, I discovered some time later that I had been
riding unassisted! I assured her that she, too, would soon find herself ready to proceed on her
own. When she reached the stage of writing her conclusion and seemed at a loss as to how to tie
all her insights together, I had coincidentally reached a similar stage of my work on this
dissertation. When I shared this parallel with her, she asked what I was writing about. Looking
back on our conversation, I am grateful to recognize that the series of questions she asked as I
tried to summarize the gist of what I had written helped to “jump-start” my writing of the final
section of this chapter. The benefits of our “bouncing ideas” off one another were clearly mutual,
enabling us both to complete our respective projects.

Recent experiences such as the foregoing have made me profoundly grateful to Dewey and
to Rosenblatt. I can see that the ideas I’ve been grappling with during the past several years
while working on this dissertation have changed my approach to teaching for the better. I’m
convinced that my responses to Marsha and to Larry, for example, grew out of exposure to these
ideas. Reflecting on my responses to other students in similar situations in the past, I can see
progress toward increasing helpfulness. My hope now is that readers of this dissertation will
find the transactional vision shared by Dewey and Rosenblatt to be similarly helpful.
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South Atlantic Philosophy of Education Society annual meeting, University of South Carolina at Spartanburg, SC, with co-author Jim Garrison: "The Influence of John Dewey on the Work of Louise M. Rosenblatt" (published in 1995 SAPES Yearbook)

### Copyediting / Proofreading Experience:

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