

Dewey

A Beginner's Guide

David L. Hildebrand



O N E W O R L D
O X F O R D

A Oneworld Book

Published by Oneworld Publications 2008

Copyright © David L. Hildebrand 2008

All rights reserved
Copyright under Berne Convention
A CIP record for this title is available
from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-85168-580-6

Typeset by Jayvee, Trivandrum, India
Cover design by Simon McFadden
Printed and bound in the United States
of America by Thomson-Shore Inc.

Oneworld Publications
185 Banbury Road
Oxford OX2 7AR
England
www.oneworld-publications.com

Learn more about Oneworld. Join our mailing list to
find out about our latest titles and special offers at:
www.oneworld-publications.com

Contents

Preface	ix
Acknowledgments	xii
Abbreviations	xiv
Introduction	1
1 Experience: mind, body, and environment	8
2 Inquiry: knowledge, meaning, and action	40
3 Morality: character, conduct, and moral experience	63
4 Politics: selves, community, and democratic life	94
5 Education: imagination, communication, and participatory growth	124
6 Aesthetics: creation, appreciation, and consummatory experience	146

viii **Contents**

7 Religion: religious experience, community, and social hope	183
Conclusion: philosophy as equipment for living	207
Notes	213
Bibliography	229
Further reading	235
Index	238

1

Experience: mind, body, and environment

Psychology is concerned with the life-career of individualized activities. . . .[Its] subject-matter is the behavior of the organism so far as that is characterized by changes taking place in an activity that is serial and continuous in reference to changes in an environment that persists although changing in detail.

(LW5:224)

After ignoring impulses for a long time in behalf of sensations, modern psychology now tends to start out with an inventory and description of instinctive activities. This is an undoubted improvement. But . . . till we know the specific environing conditions under which selection took place we really know nothing. And so we need to know about the social conditions which have educated original activities into definite and significant dispositions before we can discuss the psychological element in society. This is the true meaning of social psychology.

(MW14:66)

Introduction

To understand the world, we try to understand ourselves: how we perceive, feel, think, and act. We ask questions like, what is an

Experience 9

emotion and what, if anything, is it about? How do habits form and why are some so difficult to change? What is consciousness? More grandly, we wonder about the relation between all of our mind's various functions and our sense of what life is all about. We wonder, in short, how psychological experiences can add up to the experience of a meaningful world.

Many today hope that psychology can resolve questions about life's meaning. We look to surgery, pills, and therapy to help 'correct' our brain functions, expecting that these procedures will answer our questions. Dewey, too, began his career with the expectation that psychology held the key to philosophy's big questions. As he developed his own psychological theories, Dewey came to two realizations: first, that psychology's accounts of human behavior were inadequate because they were built upon several old and misleading philosophical assumptions. Second, he came to see that grappling with the meanings of human existence required more than the discipline of psychology could ever provide. In his view, psychology was one, and only one, tool for understanding experience, but much about experience is comprehensible only through art, politics, ethics, and religion – all beyond the bounds of psychology. He came to see that philosophy as a discipline was morally bound to greater engagement with these arenas than scientific psychology.

This chapter is foundational to the rest of the book because it explains how Dewey's reconstruction of the psychological components of human behavior (instincts, perceptions, habits, acts, emotions, and conscious thought) lead to his development of the concept of experience – a concept that Dewey invokes in *every other area of his philosophy*. This notion of experience is crucial because it empowers Dewey to liberate the individual mind from subjective isolation so that it can be understood as it functions with and through the natural and social environments.

To understand Dewey's mature psychology and philosophy of experience, let us briefly consider several important

10 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

philosophical and psychological influences near the start of Dewey's career. Philosophically, Dewey began as a Hegelian Idealist. His graduate study of Hegelianism in the 1880s with George Sylvester Morris offered Dewey hope that longstanding divisions between 'subject and object, matter and spirit, the divine and the human' could be overcome (LW5:153). Hegelianism inspired Dewey to believe that all kinds of human experience – bodily, psychical, imaginative, and practical – could be explained as integrated parts of whole, dynamic persons. Though Dewey eventually leaves Hegelianism behind (for experimentalism), his early study of Hegel inculcated in Dewey a fundamental bent toward interpreting phenomena in synthetically organized ways. (As later chapters on morality, politics, education, etc., will show, this approach – overcoming dualisms and reaching new syntheses – remains central to Dewey's approach for the remainder of his career.) It was also during this period that Dewey ambitiously pursued studies in psychology. He had high hopes for this new discipline's ability to describe and explain experience; at this time he referred to psychology as the 'completed method of philosophy' (EW1:157). Though he later downgrades this lofty estimation of psychology's potential, it nevertheless remains for Dewey one of the most important ways that solid scientific fact can be put in conceptual connection with more freeform philosophical theories.

The period in which Dewey studied (and tried to reconstruct) psychology was a fertile one for the field, and a few words about the historical context should be helpful. During the late nineteenth century, psychology was dominated by two schools, introspectionism (or 'mentalism') and the newer physiological psychology (imported into America from Germany). Introspectionism arose out of the classical associationist psychology of eighteenth-century British empiricists such as John Locke and David Hume. The vocabulary used by these early figures varies somewhat, but in essence classical associationism accounts

Experience 11

for intelligent behavior with two main components: (1) internally inspected – ‘introspected’ – entities, such as perceptual experiences (which can supposedly be discovered through mental self-examination) and (2) thoughts or ideas. Intelligent behavior, they argued, arises as the product of associative learning. In short, the mind takes its internal sensations (sometimes called ‘impressions’) along with their fainter copies (mental images) and through repeated associations with ideas (or thoughts), basic intelligence develops. These basic associative pairings (e.g., pairing of ‘red’ with a red-stimulus or internal image of red) are then further associated with other such discoveries, and the resulting web of interrelated concepts is what we commonly call ‘knowledge’. Through complicated sets of such associations, animals and people become familiar with their environment and how to act in it; more sophisticated animals use association to discover the causal structure of the world.

The important link between the associationists’ account and ‘introspectionism’ stems from the fact that the method of discovery (of the mind’s components and their linkages) is one of introspection. This method had a tenacious hold on many in psychology; even when later psychologists such as Wilhelm Wundt (Leipzig) and E.B. Titchener (Cornell, NY) endeavored to explain mental phenomena with the ascendant physiological and experimental methods (e.g., by using dedicated laboratories), they nevertheless retained classical associationism’s commitment to introspection as an indispensable part of the method for revealing mental life. In the early part of the twentieth century, introspectionism was further attacked by the ascendant behaviorist movement, which condemned its perpetuation of a mind–body dualism and for the lack of explicit, experimental, and verifiable standards.¹

The other important movement during Dewey’s formative period was physiological psychology. Dewey first studied it in graduate school with G. Stanley Hall, taking all of Hall’s classes

12 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

(including classes in theoretical, physiological, and experimental psychology); in addition, Dewey conducted experiments on attention in Hall's laboratory. Unlike the intuitive approach of introspectionism, its methods incorporated strict experimental controls. Furthermore, this approach to psychology brought with it an organic and holistic model of experience, which Dewey thought could overcome the dualisms that made older, associationist models too subjective and isolated for the evolutionary spirit of the times. Dewey writes,

The influence of [evolutionary] biological science in general upon psychology has been very great . . . To biology is due the conception of organism . . . In psychology this conception has led to the recognition of mental life as an organic unitary process developing according to the laws of all life, and not a theatre for the exhibition of independent autonomous faculties, or a *rendezvous* in which isolated, atomic sensations and ideas may gather, hold external converse, and then forever part.

(EW1:56)

Still, Dewey could not simply adopt physiological psychology as it was. While appreciating its more rigorous scientific approach, Dewey saw that physiological psychology still retained some of the modern period's more noxious epistemological elements that would have to be pruned away. In particular, it retained the view that experience was a patchwork of atomized 'sense data', which operated like a mechanical sequence of causes and effects. Dewey's Hegelian perspective allowed him to realize that such assumptions about experience would prevent psychology from ever developing accounts that made contact with the world in which we actually live: a world of experienced meanings. Addressing this wider world meant that a much wider arena than that considered by physiological psychology would have to be considered germane to investigation. For Dewey, this

Experience 13

arena had to relate the individual's mental life to that of other individuals, and to the collective, social environment.

The idea of environment is a necessity to the idea of organism, and with the conception of environment comes the impossibility of considering psychical life as an individual, isolated thing developing in a vacuum . . . I refer to the growth of those vast and as yet undefined topics of inquiry which may be vaguely designated as the social and historical sciences,—the sciences of the origin and development of the various spheres of man's activity.

(EW1:56–7)

This critical point is simple, while also entailing an enormous undertaking. To understand experience, psychology must begin to account for how organisms function in environments. However, any single function can be related to multiple environments, some remote; psychology must expand its method so that it can incorporate data beyond immediate biological or mechanical actions. This would mean it must draw from those sciences charged with studying more complex contexts: anthropology, sociology, ethnology, and linguistics, for example. No longer allowed to wall itself off as a study of 'the mind', psychology could only progress by accepting into its studies those very facts already evident in every psychologist's daily, practical life: that individual mental life is necessarily filled with social dimensions (more on this in a while). In other words, if psychology meant to become *truly* empirical, its method would have to search farther and wider for more data. Let us turn now to Dewey's reconstruction of psychology.

Dewey's challenge was to develop a conception of experience which took account both of experimental limits and the pervasive influence of culture. His new approach would have to temper the excesses of the physiological approach (its atomistic

14 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

materialism) while also tempering excesses in the Hegelian philosophies which first inspired him (especially the assumption of an Absolute reality which was essentially unified and perfect).² It was likely that William James's tour de force, *Principles of Psychology* (1890), showed Dewey how a unified consciousness and intelligent self could be explained without appealing to a transcendental Absolute. Infinite absolutes do not instruct us about what to do next; such practical guidance comes, rather, from 'study of the deficiencies, irregularities and possibilities of the actual situation' (MW14:199). Thus, content to leave deterministic materialism and quietistic idealism behind,

Dewey's 'new psychology' would start with lived experience and attempt to understand it in terms of its organic movement and wholeness. Abstractions, in other words, were to be understood in terms of *it* rather than vice versa . . . By starting with experience as it is lived, the method of psychology can come to understand how the various phases or elements arise within it and so be understood in terms of their functional origins.

(Alexander 1987, 19, 23)

This holistic or functionalist approach to psychology is powerfully represented in his 1896 critique of the reflex arc concept, which he wrote during his tenure at the University of Chicago, a period of deepening engagement with educational theory and practice. To understand Dewey's functionalism, it is best if we begin with his critique of the 'reflex arc' and then summarize how this critique amounted to a statement of his new psychology.

Toward functionalism and instrumentalism

A contemporary trend in psychology offered Dewey the opportunity to create a new synthesis from the opposition between

Experience 15

physiological and introspective psychology. 'The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology' (1896) stands today as a major step forward for his view of experience as well as a seminal contribution to the field of psychology.

At the time, growing numbers of psychologists looked toward the reflex arc concept to help explain human behavior in experimental and empirical ways. The hope was that this new model of behavior, built using pairings of cause (stimulus) and effect (response), could replace explanations which relied on 'psychic entities' or 'mental substance' and so rescue psychology from entities that were mysterious, unobservable, and untestable. The reflex arc model works as follows: a passive organism encounters an external stimulus; this engenders a sensory and motor response; in some cases, this is a conscious response. In a typical example, a child sees a candle flame (stimulus), reaches toward it (response), burns his hand (stimulus), and quickly wrenches his hand away (response). This model argues that these plainly observable elements are *the* basic stimuli and responses in the event; in time, all their connections could be satisfactorily described with mechanistic and physiological terms; no recourse to the unobservable was necessary.

Dewey criticizes the reflex arc framework for several inadequacies. First, it artificially separates events in order to make them discrete (and analyzable). Sensory stimulus, central response, and act are all separate events on this description. 'As a result', Dewey writes, 'the reflex arc is not a comprehensive, or organic unity, but a patchwork of disjointed parts, a mechanical conjunction of unallied processes' (EW5:97). Second, it misdescribes how we interact with our surroundings. It is simply untrue that organisms *passively* receive a stimulus and then become active responders. The nature of organisms is to *interact continuously* with their environment in a manner that is cumulative and mutually modifying. No child is a passive spectator when he first encounters a candle; he is already actively engaged

16 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

with his environment – exploring the room, anticipating that he will find something, for example. The child's notice of the candlelight *modifies* these ongoing activities. 'The real beginning', Dewey writes, 'is with *the act* of seeing; it is looking, and not a sensation of light' (EW5:97). Third, this model too rigidly identifies events as *the* starting point (stimulus) or *the* ending point. Both stimulus and response are enmeshed in an ongoing matrix of sensory and motor activities. A stimulus comes from somewhere and a response leads elsewhere – to further coordination and integration of both sensory and motor responses. Depending on how the wider range of events are framed, a stimulus can be a response, and a response a stimulus.

In effect, Dewey is criticizing the metaphysical assumptions behind the reflex arc concept. But rather than trying to parse whether there is an underlying reality we may designate as *pure* 'stimulus' or 'response' we should see that problem as one of pragmatic consequences. We are seeking to discover 'what stimulus or sensation, what movement and response *mean*' and we are finding that 'they mean distinctions of flexible *function* only, not of fixed *existence*' (EW5:102; emphasis mine). We need not abandon terms like 'stimulus' and 'response', so long as we remember that they are attached to events based upon their function in a wider dynamic context, one that includes interests and aims.

Instead of the reflex arc model's patchwork of stimuli and various responses, Dewey suggests one that understands organism–environment interactions as 'sensori-motor coordinations', circuits in continual reconstitution and adjustment. Instead of starting with a narrow 'seeing' or sensory stimulus, he recommends we start from the *act*: a *seeing-for-reaching*. 'What precedes the "stimulus"', Dewey writes, 'is a whole act, a sensori-motor co-ordination . . . [T]he "stimulus" emerges out of this co-ordination; it is born from it as its matrix; it represents as it were an escape from it' (EW5:100). The response that follows, too, is

Experience 17

an act. It is not just a 'reaching' but a *reaching-guided-by-seeing*. These acts take place in and because of an *environment*, which contains the problems and surprises that spur us to grow.

As every non-specialist knows, once burned, the child never *sees* the candlelight the same way again. He is changed by the experience and therefore never experiences the exact same stimulus again. In fact, the disruptive and painful nature of the first burning event makes him pay special attention to future encounters with candlelight – it makes him treat it *as* a stimulus and investigate what *kind* of stimulus it is. A newfound unease makes him attend to how candles appear – the color of their flame, the reach of their heat. Separated by conscious reflection from the stream of experience, the candlelight-as-stimulus gains detail and nuance. Experience is transformed and there is growth.

Through his proposal of a coordinated circuit, Dewey sets the stage for several important developments in his later philosophy. First, on psychological and metaphysical grounds, he shows why neither nature nor experience are ultimately categorizable as 'stimulus' or 'response' and how psychology's reflex arc concept is merely disguising philosophy's old psychophysical dualism.³ His coordinated circuit represents a new, more nuanced and holistic approach which can oppose physiological psychology's narrowly analytical method without thereby embracing its opposite, introspectionism. Second, Dewey's critique and reconstruction of the reflex arc in psychology has implications for later work in logic and the philosophy of science. The specific insistence that psychology's scientific method must be more attentive to function and context lays the groundwork for similar and universal claims for all the sciences. Scientific distinctions are *not* meaningful by reference to something essential or 'real' in a world beyond our experience; rather, their meaning can *only* be determined by relating them to specific situations, histories, and future experimental and

18 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

practical consequences. Because human beings *make* meaning – rather than just discover it – it must be seen that even the most regal scientific and philosophical terms arise humbly: in a historical, socio-cultural matrix where organisms are trying to adapt, survive, and flourish. The final and perhaps most important consequence of Dewey's reconstruction of the reflex arc is that it provides an innovative way of understanding (and changing) how we learn. If experience is an ongoing-and-cumulative coordination, then learning, too, proceeds as a living rhythm – not by a series of truncated arcs, fits and starts. Learning is movement from an initial disequilibrium (confusion, doubt) toward equilibrium (satisfaction, knowledge). The learner is not an empty vessel or a wax tablet, 'impressed' by discrete and external stimuli, but an agent actively engaged with her environment and growing insofar as she *frames* and *uses* events in experience.

Dewey's functional critique and reconstruction of the reflex arc is simultaneously a new *paradigm* for interpreting psychological phenomena and a *warning* about the traditional logical methods used to describe and interpret such phenomena. The *paradigm* starts, as Alexander put it earlier, 'with the idea of the organism already dynamically involved with the world and aiming toward unified activity' (Alexander 1987, 129). The *warning* is against taking the *eventual* outcomes of analysis and then supposing that these outcomes were *already present* from the very beginning. With these points in mind, let us move on to examine a number of other psychological phenomena traditionally thought to exist in some self-complete fashion: instincts, impulses, perceptions, sensations, habits, emotions, consciousness, and mind, to name a few. The challenge for Dewey's reconstruction of these psychological phenomena is to both heed the warning and live up to the paradigm.

How do infants grow into complicated adults? What kind of explanation can we derive from the obvious presence of instincts

and impulses in the young? Dewey's reconstruction of the concepts of instinct (or 'impulse' – he uses these terms interchangeably) starts by criticizing his contemporaries' methods of answering these difficult questions. Psychology, he complains, begins with a descriptive list of instinctive activities (e.g., the sex drive, egoism, altruism) and then attempts to explain complicated human conduct (e.g., courtship) by directly referring to these instincts as if they were unchanging, self-complete things ('native powers'). Such explanations are always inadequate, he argues, because impulses are actually *pliable*. If one observes a variety of individuals or cultures, it's clear that the basic instincts we share actually develop into so many different habits and customs. 'Any impulse', Dewey writes, 'may become organized into almost any disposition according to the way it interacts with surroundings. Fear may become abject cowardice, prudent caution, reverence for superiors or respect for equals' (MW14:69). Thus, the organization of instincts by environments is necessarily diverse, and this fact offers a strong clue that *no* primordial meaning for instincts should be sought by psychology. As with 'stimulus' in the previous discussion, the crucial aspect to determine about instincts are their *meaning*, and meaning can only be determined contextually – that is, by observing how instincts are built into personal habits and, more generally, how they are valued by the social and cultural contexts in which they function. Just as the word 'turbine' only has a meaning if one already knows both a specific language and set of activities, an instinct only means something *along with* its social context. Therefore, there is no psychology without social psychology. There is no 'pure, biological' account of instinct, impulse, or any other 'natural' power without some inquiry into environmental and social contexts.

For Dewey, then, an instinct/impulse must be understood transactionally, as an interactive phenomenon-in-environment. He likens them to pivots, which enable one to change direction

20 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

or reform a habit. Sometimes these pivots channel activity down familiar paths, as an impulse for aggression becomes the habit of competition in sports. But sometimes a pivot leads to something new, overturning those customs which would color it, and so leading to innovation. For example, an impulsive outburst ('These meetings never accomplish anything!') might shatter the bovine complacency of a staff meeting and spark a revision in how the group deliberates. Regardless of whether an instinct perpetuates or revolutionizes custom, Dewey's point is that they should not be assigned a single, immediate, unchangeable meaning. As 'pivots', they must be understood transitively, in relation to their dynamic environment: a small child's 'anger' toward a bully is qualitatively different from the anger he displays toward the family cat. 'The notion that anger still remains a single force', Dewey writes, 'is a lazy mythology' (MW14:106).

The general lesson illustrated in Dewey's account of impulse and instinct is one of method. It is that strictly analytical methods – trying to build complex behavior out of simple elements – are inadequate for determining the meaning of psychological phenomena. We can now see how this lesson applies to traditional accounts of perception and sensation. In Dewey's day, it was typical for philosophers to describe perception as an event where (1) simple, external causes (2) completely pervade the mental state of (3) an empty, passive recipient mind. In many ways, this kind of model still permeates our commonsense notions about how perception works. Dewey argues that all three elements of the model misdescribe perception. They are rooted in an erroneous and radical separation of the perceiver from the world – what is called 'psychophysical dualism'. Now, let us see why each element of the model is mistaken.

First, regarding simple, external causes, the traditional picture starts with a self or mind that is fundamentally different and separate from its world. The world is 'out there' and the mind

Experience 21

is 'in here'. Perception is the process that is supposed to explain how we come to know what is 'out there'. In perception, the story goes, the simple 'ideas' (or 'impressions' or 'perceptions') impinge upon the senses and make their way into our thoughts. Dewey's model rejects this 'inner/outer' model from the start. His is an *ecological* model – mind, body, and world are mutually created by their ongoing interaction. (A mind is like a friendship: it only *exists* through ongoing conversation and activity.) As an ecological model, it does not assume that perception starts with a radical gap between a subject and object (perceiver and perceived); therefore, it must also reject traditional accounts which, for example, describe a simple perception (like 'red' or 'sweet') impinging upon a waiting perceiver. Surely we have experiences involving red qualities; but the label 'perception' is simply a convenient shorthand for a more complicated process of interacting events. It is worth noting that just because the perceiver-side of the situation is active one should *not* infer that all events can now be defined *from* this side. A flash of light that catches me off guard is not *my* doing; nevertheless, its specific character *as this perception* depends upon how it is taken up and responded to by me, and that in turn depends on a long-term history of past experiences.

This redescription of perception along ecological/transactional lines has a metaphysical upshot, that is, it tells us something about Dewey's view of how reality is structured. By rejecting philosophies which describe perception's 'objective' causes and 'subjective' effects – identifying, for example, a lemon's tartness as a subjective perception *in* a perceiver – Dewey is proposing a new view of quality. Qualities cannot be simply identified or located this way; they are not 'in' anything because they arise out of our interaction with the world. A quality is a transactional event.⁴ What is more, it is mistaken to think that perceptual experiences are involved with something as singular as 'red' or 'tart'. As a label, 'red' is simple; we typically

22 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

do not see just red. The child sees most immediately a *red dress* – not an isolated color patch. Perhaps there is an occasion where she finds herself searching for the dress; in that case, a glimpse of ‘red’ might catch her eye, discriminating itself, so to speak. But in this situation, notice that red is discriminated because it is functioning *as a sign* that what is being sought may have been found. Too often, psychology and philosophy accept such signs as ontologically basic – fundamentally real – rather than seeing that they are abstractions which arose for pragmatic reasons.⁵

Second, Dewey rejects the idea that perception completely pervades (or takes hold of) one’s mental states. Every perception we might single out to talk about exists, Dewey says, with an attendant ‘fringe’. This fringe supplies a contrast, which imbues the focal perception – and indeed the entire situation – with its ‘underlying qualitative character’. In a vivid perception (e.g., a bitter taste), *this bitterness exists as it exists* only given a slew of ‘fringe’ conditions: what I have just been eating, what I expected to taste, etc. Such fringes of feeling are indispensable guides to how we characterize our more prominent perceptions and even how to act.

Third, perception is never simply the mind’s instantaneous, passive apprehension of stimulus. Perceiving is an activity undertaken by an organism *already* functioning with sensory-motor coordination. A new sight (sound, taste) is encountered by a living creature involved in the give-and-take of life; therefore, when it directs attention to this new portion of its sensory field, it acts not merely to receive, but to adjust. It reacts *selectively*. The process of perception, as adjustment, is thus never immediate; it evolves through interaction. While some perceptions happen quickly (blinding flash) and others take considerably longer (slow appreciation of a curry’s spice), they always take *some* time. Perception is never naïve, never an encounter with ‘raw’ data; all seeing is seeing *as* – an adjustment set within larger acts of adjustment. If we think back to the case of the

curious child and the candle, we find someone starting out with a variety of habits in place for coping with stimuli: habits of searching, screening, and selecting for focal engagement. The child may approach the candlelight *as potential amusement*, but respond to its burning heat *as disappointingly injurious*. Habits modify, and over time responses to a perception adjust, influencing the subsequent selection and interpretation of sensations.⁶

Acts, habits, and emotions

Having examined Dewey's criticisms and reconstructions of instinct and perception, let us move on to examine the somewhat 'thicker' psychological constituent, the act, along with two formations of the act, habit and emotion. Throughout this chapter, we have heard Dewey insist that psychological explanations of complex human experience cannot be built up analytically using simple parts – using instinct or perception, for example. The *act* is a more helpful unit for understanding complex human behaviors because it concerns the whole organism participating in a wider environment, which it inhabits (see MW14:105). Like instincts and perceptions, acts are transactional: we act *on* and *with* things. The environment with which we act both sets conditions and provides a stage for action: As I place a reassuring hand on the shoulder of another – my hand touches and is touched in the very same 'act'. In short, we can list three basic reasons for making acts fundamental to an analysis of meaningful human behavior. First, acts are inherently *selective* because they operate as a stimulus to liberate action and unify situations. Second, the selectivity of acts is manifest in experience as *interest*. Finally, it is the presence of both selectivity and interest that 'create the basis for an *organized context of meanings* and activities' (Alexander 1987, 133; emphasis mine).⁷

24 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

Like any other process of adaptation and coordination, acts unfold in time. As discussed previously, the earliest phase of the act is impulse (instinct). Impulse springs from need and gropes toward reintegration and satisfaction; it can function as the reorganizing 'pivot' of conduct, sometimes providing a needed opportunity for imagination, invention, and intelligent redirection (see MW14:117–18). The later phases or formations of the act include habits and emotions, to which I now turn.

Drawing upon various uses of 'habit' in the pragmatisms of William James and Charles S. Peirce, Dewey integrates habit into his philosophy much more broadly than earlier philosophers, such as David Hume, employing it to comprehend a wide range of human experiences: biological, ethical, political, and aesthetic.⁸ Without habits, the large behavioral structures of our experience – walking, talking, cooking, conversing – would be impossible.

What is habit? Habits are not simple things; they are composed of acts. The process of a child learning to walk involves a thousand minor acts – grasping, rising, balancing, initiating movement, etc. For these to amount to something – the structured experience called walking – there must be a gradual and cumulative change in the act-series. That change comes about because the series of acts become so well associated that one leads naturally (or unconsciously) to the next. In short, when there is a cumulative linking of acts that structures experience, there is a 'habit'.

'Ah yes', one may object, 'but aren't habits automatic? Consider the habit of repeated overeating or smoking, which seem beyond control simply because there is no longer a space for willpower.' This objection is certainly part of our contemporary view of habit; that is, we think of habit as an 'automatic mechanism' because such conduct appears to be insulated from conscious intervention.

However, this view carries several connotations that Dewey takes pains to correct. First, it is mistaken to over-identify habits

Experience 25

with repetitious acts. Habit, Dewey writes, 'is an acquired predisposition to *ways* or modes of response, not to particular acts' (MW14:32). Each new situation always slightly different, and so the exact same act is never repeated. What we acquire are 'tendencies' or 'dispositions'. Habits are also misconceived to be largely unchangeable. But unlike a machine's routine, our organic habits are plastic, capable of redirection and change. My habit to act in predictable ways (eating sweets when hungry) is subject to contingencies (a sharp toothache) and subsequent modification (restraint, substitution), typically beginning when conscious reflection on the habit is operative. Communication is the key to the evolution of habits.

Moving beyond our example, there is a third misconception, namely that habits are predominantly dormant – tools or reserves to call up on demand. Dewey views habits as not dormant but 'energetic and dominating ways of acting' that can determine what we do and who we are: 'All habits are demands for certain kinds of activity; and they constitute the self' (MW14:22, 21). One final misconception about habits is that they are individual possessions – 'my bad habit of smoking', for example – held with the same subjective privacy we saw attributed earlier to sensations and feelings. Dewey argues that this likening of habits to property is wrongheaded. Unlike property, habits are dynamic functions which have the power to shape both the individual and the environment through their transactions: 'Habits enter into the *constitution* of the situation; they are in and of it, not, so far as it is concerned, something outside of it' (MW6:120). They are the ability of organisms to reconstruct their environment, not inner forces.⁹

Finally, like language, habits have an ineliminable social dimension. While it may be right for me to take personal responsibility for 'my' habits, they are not completely my inventions. Many 'individual' habits actually come about *through* the social environment created by family, friends, media, home,

26 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

playground, etc. Once they exist, habits inform the cultural and natural sources that helped create them. For these reasons, it is better to conceive of habits as 'situational *structures* rather than individual reflexes, psychic associations, or repeated actions' (Alexander 1987, 142).

The importance of habits in Dewey cannot be underestimated. Habits connect the biological and the cultural, enabling us to do simple things like *walking* and sophisticated things like *interpreting* a particular action *as* walking. As we mature, we make sense of the world because of the habits we use to 'frame or establish a temporal *context*, a referential basis of interpretation and action' (Alexander 1987, 145). Without increased creativity and variety in our habits of interpretation, there can be no increasingly meaningful sense of life, no growth in wisdom.

Emotion is a complicated subject, and while I must treat it briefly here, it is an important component of Dewey's psychology, not least because his view of emotion (and feeling) is central to his accounts of mind and consciousness. Here again, Dewey bucked tradition. Philosophers, going back to ancient Greece, elevated cognition over emotion. Due to the importance of cognitive functions like clarification and discrimination (especially for aiding observation, understanding, and choice), philosophy developed an exaggerated respect for cognition as *the* way to access 'reality' and determine what is truly good. At the same time, they developed an exaggerated disrespect for emotion. (In fact, moderns such as Descartes and Spinoza go so far as to argue that emotion is merely a species of confused thought, which, once clarified, can reach the status of cognition.) Dewey sharply opposes the traditional denigration of emotion. He labors to redescribe the function and role of emotion in human experience. Emotion, he believes, is central to human experience and has an indispensable role to play in endeavors such as logic, ethics, art, and religion.

What is emotion? Recall that as our 'coordinated circuit' acts in the world, involvement takes two basic forms: habit and

Experience 27

emotion. Habits are ‘energy organized in certain channels’ that develop as controlled responses to problematic situations. Emotion, in contrast, is not predominantly an organized or controlled response, but rather the organism’s vibration *in sympathy with* the situation; it is ‘a perturbation from clash or failure of habit’ (MW14:54).¹⁰ As with the other constituents of mental life, Dewey is reconstructing emotion along transactional lines and opposing the longstanding prejudice against the ‘subjectivity’ of emotions.

Dewey’s view of emotion grew from his attempt to connect the accounts of Charles Darwin and William James. Darwin argued that internal emotional states give rise to organic expressions, which may in turn be subject to natural selection based on survival value. For example, I perceive something, feel sad, emote with tears, and garner sympathy which aids survival. James, on the other hand, thought it incorrect to consider emotion as a separate phase from its accompanying bodily expressions. What actually happens in emotion, James says, is that a perception excites a pre-organized bodily mechanism, and it is recognition of *that* change that is the experience of emotion: ‘we feel sorry *because* we cry, angry *because* we strike’ (James 1890, 450).

In ‘The Theory of Emotion’ (1895) Dewey mitigates the differences between James and Darwin, and emphasizes the integrated whole of both feeling and expression. *Being sad*, for Dewey, is not just *feeling sad* or *acting sad*. Being sad is my experience of *all* aspects of my condition as a purposive organism. In this way, Dewey gently corrects James’s model’s unfortunate reiteration of the traditional mind–body dualism, suggesting instead that to understand emotion we need to recognize that ‘the mode of behavior is the primary thing’ (EW4:174). Dewey’s account of emotion, then, diverges sharply from those where a subject ‘has’ this incredibly private, subjective mental event called ‘emotion’. For Dewey, emotion emerges from the

28 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

fluid boundary connecting organism and event, 'called out by objects, physical and personal' as an intentional 'response to an objective situation' (LW1:292).¹¹ Frequently, that response is one that inhibits what one was previously undergoing.

To lighten this somewhat dense account, let me offer this example:

As I stride confidently across the street, my eye catches sight of a strange dog in my way. My predictable situation is suddenly precarious and the emotion seizing me indicates that my habit (striding quickly) must be inhibited so a readjustment (avoidance, perhaps) can follow.

Note that it is *the inhibition of habit* – rooted in my perplexity over how to adjust to this event – *that excites emotion*. Were I to encounter a familiar and friendly dog, I might pause and pet him, but that would not excite great emotion because my usual habits would lead frictionlessly to response. Again, in the case of a strange dog, it is the flood of *incompatible* responses (should I run? call for the owner? walk slowly?) that creates the tension that interrupts and inhibits habits, and thus is experienced as emotion.¹²

In Dewey's rendering, emotion arises within the field of action. There is no subject-object dualism, and no reason to devalue the reality of emotion. In contrast to many in the tradition, Dewey does not view emotion as an 'intrusion' into an otherwise harmonious and rational order, but as arising naturally 'in experience because experience is in a rhythmic alteration from stable to precarious and back' (Alexander 1987, 139).

The emergence of sentiency, mind, and consciousness

What does it mean to be a sentient being? What is mind or consciousness? How do these infamously mysterious mental

Experience 29

abilities come to exist within Dewey's naturalistic model of psychology? So far, our discussion has been traveling up the behavioral ladder, toward greater cognitive sophistication. The foregoing accounts of impulse, perception, act, habit, and emotion now enable us to understand how sentiency, consciousness, and mind emerge organically from an environment of interacting organisms. In addition, we will also briefly consider how we reason and create aesthetically (since both are functions of conscious experience), and this will be built upon later in chapters two and six.

Consider an animal running through a maze whose progress is stopped by a dead end with two doors, red and green. The red door leads to a shock, the green door to food. After repeated lunges through both doors, the animal pauses a moment – he inhibits the habit of blind lunging. He notices the *color* of the doors; 'red' and 'green' are no longer mere physical stimuli. They become *noticed* qualities, and the creature noticing them has acquired 'senticence'.

What is happening in the above example? Consider this type of evolutionary step taking place over a much longer period. Creatures strive to achieve comfort and stability in their everyday life. When stable situations become precarious, comfort gives way to anxiety – and a struggle begins to reestablish balance by adjusting one's self, one's environment, or both. Of course there are various ways a creature can 'adjust' to a problem. Methods which are tried and true, or pre-organized responses, are often effective ways to adjust. But when problems are new, old responses may not work. In those cases, it becomes advantageous to *inhibit* pre-organized responses to events – to prevent an automatic response. Through inhibition, a 'pause' is implemented against the flow of immediate action, and a space is created. Within this space, a new qualitative experience emerges which Dewey calls 'senticency' or 'feeling'.

To put it slightly differently, sentience (feeling) develops in

30 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

just those creatures who, faced with obstacles, become divided within themselves – ambivalent – over *how* to respond. What happens is that in the ambivalent pause, ‘there is a “moment” of hesitation; there are scruples, reservations, in complete overt action. . . . We have to “stop and think”, and we do not stop unless there is interference. . . . [Our] division introduces mental confusion, but also, in need for redirection, opportunity for observation, recollection, anticipation’ (LW1:237). Inhibition enables ambivalence, and ambivalence makes possible the consideration of alternatives. With practice, maturity in techniques of choosing alternatives is, for all intents and purposes, intelligence.

Let us return to the creature in the maze. By pausing and discovering how to experience the door colors in a new way, he develops a new (we could say ‘higher’) capacity; and suddenly a crude, physical situation has taken on complexity and meaning. Thus, Dewey writes, sentiency or “‘feeling” is in general a name for the newly actualized quality acquired by events previously occurring upon a physical level, when these events come into more extensive and delicate relationships of interaction’ (LW1:204).¹³ These newly extensive and delicate relationships are not *known*, then and there. Rather they provide the means for the development of intelligence when creatures develop the further ability to symbolize the relationships and manipulate the symbols, all for the purpose of more effectively managing future experience. In other words, were our maze dweller to become intelligent, he would move beyond the awareness that the doors have different colors with different consequences by transforming these meanings into ideas, perhaps naming items as ‘red’, ‘green’, ‘shock’, and ‘food’, and then interrelating all these words in a way that solves ‘the problem of the maze’. Now *that* would be *smart*.

We are used to thinking of our ‘mind’ as we think of our ‘body’, that is, like a thing or substance that is separate and

Experience 31

essentially different from everything else around it. Philosophers have traditionally categorized mind as a separate kind of substance, place, thing, or container. (This has led to various attempts to reduce the mind to the brain, or vice versa.)¹⁴ Instead Dewey argues that these are not accurate ways of picturing mind. As with instinct, perception, emotion, and all the other mental abilities discussed so far, mind more closely resembles a range of dynamic processes – various ways we interact with the world. Think of how we use the word ‘mind’ to signify various functions: *memory* (I am reminded of something); *attention* (I keep you in *mind*, or *mind* my place in line); *purpose* (I have a goal in *mind*); *care* and *solicitude* (I *mind* my child, my step); paying *heed*, *obeying* (the driver *minds* the stop sign). In short, ‘mind’ comprises many activities: intellectual, affectional, volitional, and purposeful. Viewing them comprehensively, as a single psychological characterization, we see that,

Mind is primarily a verb. It denotes all the ways in which we deal consciously and expressly with the situations in which we find ourselves. [In] its non-technical use, ‘mind’ denotes every mode and variety of interest in, and concern for, things: practical, intellectual, and emotional. It *never denotes anything self-contained, isolated* from the world of persons and things, but is *always* used with respect to *situations, events, objects, persons and groups*.

(LW10:268, 267; emphasis mine)

How is mind an advance over sentience, for Dewey? How does mind emerge from those capacities? It is true that complex and active animals have a variety of different feelings. They are sentient in elaborate ways because they maintain a multitude of distinctive connections with their environment. But, Dewey argues, the reason we say certain animals cannot ‘know’ their feelings – that is, the difference between mere sentience and

32 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

'mentality' (or mindfulness) – derives from an animal's ability to recognize and use meanings and signs. Consider a bull charging a red flag. He is stimulated by the flag, but does not see the red quality *as a sign*. He cannot detach his charging from the stimulus 'red' the way a human driver can ignore a broken red light at an intersection. (Given what happens to bulls, he would treat the flag as a sign if he could!)

In other words, *mind* emerges once a merely sentient awareness of qualities can be 'taken up into a system of signs' through language (LW1:199). Language enables creatures to signify *what* is felt and how it might fit with a 'past' and 'future'. (Time, too, enlarges with language.) Language allows, in other words, the existence of objects *as* objects (as well as places, events, relations, etc.) because there is now a way to identify and differentiate them. '*Without language*', Dewey writes, 'the qualities of organic action that are feelings are pains, pleasures, odors, colors, noises, tones, only potentially and proleptically. *With language* they are discriminated and identified. They are then "objectified"; they are immediate traits of things.' (LW1:198; emphasis mine.)¹⁵

Mind is not a spark of divinity, as ancients thought, nor an illusory ghost in the machine of material bodies. Rather, mind is at least the ability to adapt and adjust to problems using language, and even more, the ability to create, plan, and project one's vision of the future. Mind is 'an agency', Dewey writes, 'of novel reconstruction of a pre-existing order' (LW1:168). To further develop our understanding of mental agency, we should move ahead and understand how it makes consciousness a living reality.

Though he was greatly influenced by William James's metaphor of consciousness as a constantly moving 'stream of thought', Dewey came to believe that no fully adequate account of consciousness could ever be captured in words.¹⁶ We speak indirectly about consciousness – calling it 'apparent' or 'conspicuous' or 'vivid' – without ever satisfactorily striking our

Experience 33

target. The reason, in part, is that consciousness is evanescent; being neither thing, power, nor cause, we should not demand of language the impossible. Instead, we should recognize the limits of language and content ourselves to point to or evoke instances of consciousness.

Dewey points to and evokes consciousness in several creative ways. First, Dewey points at consciousness by contrasting it to minds-with-language. I summarize these contrasts in Figure 1 (derived from LW1:230).

I hope that Figure 1 evokes the reader's own associations with consciousness: that flash of emotion or idea that sparkles with vivid immediacy; a surprisingly lucid transition between moments. Dewey intended the contrasts to highlight how consciousness's bright moments are made possible *because* of their context; due, that is, to the persistent and pervasive system of meaning that is *mind*.

Mind is	Consciousness is
A whole system of meanings as embodied in organic life	Awareness or perception of meanings (of actual events in their meaning)
Contextual and persistent: a constant background	Focal and transitive
Structural and substantial: a constant foreground	A punctuated series of heres and nows
Enduring luminosity	Intermittent flashes of varying intensities
A continuous transmission of messages	The occasional interception and singling out of a message that makes it audible

Figure 1

34 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

Besides pointing out contrasts, Dewey also tries to evince the meaning of consciousness by engaging the reader in reflecting upon the experience of reading a book. Try it yourself: as you read this book, meanings appear and you are immediately conscious of them; as you forge ahead, they disappear. Those ideas before you at any one instant make sense because of mind ('an organized system of meanings of which we are not at any one time completely aware', LW1:231). Notice, though, that your mind does not supply sense the way a dictionary does. Rather, between the focal meaning ('consciousness') and the context of meanings ('mind') there is a spectrum or fringe that determines 'the habitual direction of our conscious thoughts and [supplies] the organs for their formation' (LW1:231). Much as your physical sense of balance controls walking, mind constantly adjusts and directs your interpretations of meanings before you. Your vivid consciousness of each successive idea is empowered to move smoothly ahead due to mind.

As with other mental elements, Dewey can only attempt to describe consciousness using a new vocabulary of dynamic, organic adaptation. Consciousness is thinking-in-flight, an ever-reconfiguring series of events that are qualitatively felt as they transform experience at its most urgent. If mind is the 'stock' of meanings on hand, then consciousness is the realizing and reconstructing of those meanings so that experience can be redirected, readapted, and reorganized. It is 'that phase of a system of meanings which at a given time is undergoing redirection, transitive transformation' (LW1:233). Consciousness is the dramatic aspect of mental life, with mind providing the indispensable 'back-story' or narrative. No part of this narrative, moreover, is radically private; it is a social narrative, woven by communities present and past.¹⁷

This concludes our review of Dewey's more specifically 'psychological' accounts of human experience. With the foregoing

psychology as our basis, we shift now to consider how his concept of 'experience' served his further philosophical goals.

Experience

Analysis of the concept of experience has an incredibly long provenance in the history of philosophy and occupied Dewey throughout his career. His explanations of experience are complicated and nuanced, and served Dewey in various ways for many different philosophical inquiries. Because a comprehensive rehearsal of experience lies beyond this chapter's compass, I aim instead to explain its core meanings for Dewey by showing how he rejects traditional assumptions attached to this term.

Historically, many philosophers have construed *experience* narrowly, as a sensation or perception privately had by a subject. Because an overriding goal for philosophy has been to achieve knowledge, philosophers have followed a strong inclination to view experience through the prism of this objective. This has led some (for example, Plato, Descartes) to view experience as a remorseless flux, untrustworthy for the purpose of scientific or metaphysical knowledge. Others (for example, Locke, Hume) celebrate the sensory flux of experience, because it at least provides *something* observable and measurable. Despite the apparent opposition of the approaches, both schools generated a large number of intractable philosophical puzzles (e.g., whether we can assume there to be an external world, other minds, or free will). Dewey sees these puzzles as founded on a mistaken view of experience, and unproductive for helping solve practical problems.

In Dewey's view, an organism's experience cannot be reduced to the contents of consciousness. If philosophers could set aside their predetermined, theoretical objectives, they could

36 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

appreciate that scrutiny of experience can reveal much more than sensation or intellectual thought. Beyond these contents of experience – which, no doubt, are present – it is clear that experience is ‘double-barrelled’, including not only *what* is experienced, but *how*: ‘Like its congeners, life and history, [experience] includes *what* men do and suffer, *what* they strive for, love, believe and endure, and also *how* men act and are acted upon, the ways in which they do and suffer, desire and enjoy, see, believe, imagine – in short, processes of *experiencing*’ (LW1:18). Just as a piece of music contains both notes and harmony, experience is both a process and a field. It is a ‘field-process’ (Alexander 1987, 128). The process is not random; it unfolds and has *order*. The field of action has *structure*. And it all transpires for a concrete individual with a particular perspective (that includes emotions, a culture, and a history).

The tradition is also mistaken in seeing experience as exclusively ‘mine’ or ‘yours’. Of course, it is accurate to describe some experiences as predominantly private; but the tradition has so exaggerated this subjectivistic side of experiencing that the result has been to separate subjects from the physical and social world that sustains and even constitutes them. If we follow James and pay ‘radically empirical’ attention to experience, we find that while there are private aspects to experience (a secret thought one entertains about another), many other experiences are not private. After all, we are earnestly social beings. Indeed, if one considers the (previously described) symbolic advance creatures must take to evolve from sentience to cognition, it becomes clear that *mind itself is a social achievement* because the signs which make thought possible have meanings in virtue of social life. Dewey writes that the ‘character of everyday experience . . . is saturated with the results of social intercourse and communication’ because ‘language . . . is . . . the instrument of social cooperation and mutual participation’ (LW1:6).¹⁸

Experience 37

The traditional emphases of experience as both (a) privately owned and (b) the contents of consciousness have caused it to be identified with reflective thought, that is, knowing. Much experience, however, is *not* reflective; it is felt or had. Dewey describes these two kinds of experience at many points in his writings, and his names for these two kinds of experience vary. The first kind he calls: 'had', 'direct', 'immediate', 'undergone', and 'primary'. It is minimally regulated or reflected upon; it is felt, qualitative. The second kind he calls: 'known', 'indirect', 'mediated', 'reflective', and 'secondary'. It abstracts away from immediate feeling due to its abiding interest in relations and connections.¹⁹

The fact that there *are* two kinds or dimensions of experience is important, since the assumption of a merely one-sided kind of experience (reflective: the clear, distinct, and cognitive) makes any inquiry focusing on experience (psychology, epistemology, metaphysics) myopic and incomplete. The results of such inquiries are often puzzles, dead ends, and esoteric descriptions at odds with common sense. Given the primary focus of this chapter, psychology, what is important is that Dewey's approach to the psychology and phenomenology of experience insists that both 'had' and 'known' experiencing are equally valid objects of inquiry. In effect, he dares psychologists to stop treating reflective thought as the paradigm so that they might then reintegrate reflective experience into a more expansive and connected theory of experience, culture, and nature.

This chapter's focus on psychology has necessarily related experience to the creature's side of things. Nature (or environment) has been mentioned largely as the complement to organisms. It is important to realize, however, that experience and nature do not merely exist, side by side, however compatibly. Rather, experience and physical events exist on a continuum, and it is our own categorizing activity that sets some events apart as 'nature'.

38 Dewey: A Beginner's Guide

Experience emerges from interaction . . . There is . . . an inherent rhythm or shape to life as it oscillates between phases of stability and of instability . . . When sensation and conscious experience occur, they may be seen as a broadening and deepening of this character . . . Growth is the establishment of continuity . . . There is, in short, a dynamic rhythmic and growing nature to all interaction; experience exemplifies this in a heightened degree.

(Alexander 1987, 127)

In short, our typical experiences – of feeling, habit, imagination – do not simply arise, *deus ex machina*, in dumb and lifeless creatures. Rather, these qualities emerge as they sum up the accumulations of increasingly organized interactions.²⁰ In Dewey's post-Darwinian and ecological account, 'nature' can no longer be simply thought of as strictly 'external' to experiencing subjects. Nature is an affair of affairs, the dynamic and changing arena of organismic change and adaptation.

Conclusion

The answers sought by philosophy and psychology are meaningful because they relate to tensions over how we are living – and who we might become. We question what it means, for example, to have a sexual orientation, a disposition toward alcohol, or a high IQ because we are seeking insight into ourselves and guidance for future action. In contrast to analytic approaches that rely upon physically-based causes (for example, neurological brain states) for explanations of conduct's meaning, Dewey's theories of mind, body, and behavior *start* from an expanded and meaningful standpoint, a practical starting point. Human experience is what it is because it *already* consists of shared meanings, produced with language in acts of social

Experience 39

participation. This does not mean psychology should not study the biological component of psychic experience, but it should be sanguine about the limits imposed by that approach. As Alexander puts it, 'an analysis of the body alone will not give us the mind' (Alexander 1987, 151).

Human experience, in other words, is tied up with meaning, and meaning is by its nature social and pragmatic. Thus, the human psychological phenomena most important to us cannot be satisfactorily expressed only with mechanisms, no matter how finely modeled. 'Personality, selfhood, subjectivity', Dewey writes, 'are eventual functions that emerge with complexly organized interactions, organic and social' (LW1:162). What psychology and indeed any philosophical theory must keep in mind is that every classification made is rooted in factors extrinsic to the thing or event studied itself. We study things for reasons, and those reasons are extrinsic to the thing itself. Every classification is an interpretation of one kind or another; what remains to be determined is how well an interpretation performs in satisfying the original requirements of the inquiry.

The upshot here is particularly troubling for those in psychology who press for it the tribute of 'hard science'. For the answers psychology offers can, by Dewey's lights, never be fixed; not only is it a changing discipline in a changing world, but the questions posed will come from different groups with different concerns – with different 'bodies of fact that are remote and extraneous' (LW1:256). With shift of need comes shift of interpretation. But instead of despairing that truth is a moving target never to be struck, we can reimagine psychology as a philosophy of experience, which can, with constant effort, become increasingly effective at addressing what is problematic about contemporary living.

Notes

Introduction

1. Dewey was president of the Eastern Division of the APA in 1905; he gave the Carus Lectures, Gifford Lectures, William James Lectures, and Terry Lectures.
2. As a product of the culture of New England, Dewey writes that he felt 'an inward laceration' from its intellectual bequests; in particular the 'divisions by way of isolation of self from the world, of soul from body, of nature from God, brought [him] a painful oppression' (LW5:153). Study of Hegelianism with George Sylvester Morris afforded Dewey personal and intellectual healing.
3. While in Michigan, Dewey developed long-term professional relationships with James Hayden Tufts and George Herbert Mead. In 1886, he married Harriet Alice Chipman; they had six children and adopted another. Two of the boys died tragically young (at the ages of two and eight).
4. See the careful historical work by Ryan 1995 and Westbrook 1991.
5. 'There are', Dewey writes, 'two kinds of demonstration: that of logical reasoning from premises assumed to possess logical completeness, and that of showing, pointing, coming upon a thing' (LW1:372).

Chapter 1

1. Was Dewey a 'behaviorist'? I think not. While supportive of behaviorist criticisms of introspectionism, Dewey strenuously rejected behaviorist attempts to explain complex, situated actions in terms of simple elements such as stimuli. Such reductionistic explanations oversimplify behavior, isolating it from its more comprehensive cultural, linguistic, and pragmatic contexts. See MW11:13.

214 Notes

2. Dewey's dissatisfaction stemmed from idealism's presumption that reality is essentially unified and perfect. The upshot of such a presumption poses a practical obstacle to our ability to make moral judgments empirically, experimentally, and thus, with real conviction. The pragmatic consequence of idealism, for Dewey, is an unacceptable pessimism. See Alexander 1987, 51.
3. Dewey writes, 'The older dualism between sensation and idea is repeated in the current dualism of peripheral and central structures and functions; the older dualism of body and soul finds a distinct echo in the current dualism of stimulus and response' (EW5:96). What replaces that dualism – experience – is most fully stated in his 1925 masterpiece, *Experience and Nature*.
4. We should say, instead, that the 'qualities never were "in" the organism; they always were qualities of interactions in which both extra-organic things and organisms partake' (LW1:198–9).
5. Such labels, erroneously treated as evidence for realities existing antecedent to the activity of perception, are in fact the intellectual signs of cognitive discrimination and abstraction, which we undertake for pragmatic purposes. See 'A Naturalistic Theory of Sense Perception' (LW2:51) and *Experience and Nature* (LW1:198–9).
6. About this process of reciprocal adjustment see MW9:346.
7. For example, primitive man acted *selectively* in choosing how to satisfy his instinctive hunger; this selectivity created the conditions necessary for a more elaborate *interest* in how food tasted; eventually customs of dining and arts of cuisine with complex *meanings* evolved.
8. Even a philosopher like Hume, who wisely reinvigorated discussions of habit to help explain how our 'impressions' of sensation could somehow add up to enduring things and events, still referred to habit as a 'mysterious tie' largely possessed at the narrow level of the individual. However, Dewey writes, 'The development of biological knowledge has now done away with the "mysterious" quality of the tie' (LW12:244).
9. About this, Alexander writes, '[Habits] are general paths of integration and interpretation. As such they . . . become the basis for the

Notes 215

- continuity between the biological and social worlds' (Alexander 1987, 142).
10. Reflection, on this picture, is a response to disturbance: 'the painful effort of disturbed habits to readjust themselves' (MW14:54).
 11. Emotions are intentional in the sense that they are '*to or from or about* something objective, whether in fact or in idea' and not just reactions 'in the head' (LW10:72).
 12. See 'The Theory of Emotion' on this point (EW4:182).
 13. Dewey underscores the fact that sentient beings are not 'adding' feeling to a world of objects. Rather, the ability to feel develops out of a being's interaction with the world. The result is a wholly changed being and world.
 14. Dewey decried the attempts of his day to reduce accounts of mind to brain function. While more sophisticated than earlier attempts to explain the connection between mind and body, he saw contemporary efforts as repeating the erroneous attempt to place mind *in* body as marbles are *in* a box. See LW1:224–5.
 15. The idea that language can create 'objects as objects' may tempt some to conclude that Dewey was an idealist or relativist, believing that mind makes world. This interpretation would be mistaken. It is better, I believe, to see Dewey as a realist insofar as he believes that beings with language frame a 'world' outside their experience, where 'world' simply means 'sources of experience yet independent of us'.
 16. James's substitution of a 'stream of consciousness' for a series of discrete elementary states was, Dewey says, an enormous advance, which over the years 'worked its way more and more into all my ideas and acted as a ferment to transform old beliefs' (LW5:157).
 17. No private language is possible for Dewey. While a mind's meanings might be privately entertained, they are not therefore invented by a private, subjective consciousness; meanings are social, emerging from symbol systems developed through communication and collective action. See LW1:147.
 18. In Dewey's view, human sociality is primordial and mental interiority is a much later development. See LW1:178–9.

216 Notes

19. Here is one very cogent and important statement Dewey makes of the two kinds of experience: '[E]xperienced situations come about in two ways and are of two distinct types. Some take place with only a minimum of regulation, with little foresight, preparation and intent. Others occur because, in part, of the prior occurrence of intelligent action. Both kinds are had; they are undergone, enjoyed or suffered. The first are not known; they are not understood; they are dispensations of fortune or providence. The second have, as they are experienced, meanings that present the funded outcome of operations that substitute definite continuity for experienced discontinuity and for the fragmentary quality due to isolation' (LW4:194).
20. Dewey's continuity narrative uses the language of process: events, interaction, organization, function. This language helps explain the emergence of live feelings from dead events. For the differences between things which are inanimate, animate, and feeling, see LW1: 197.

Chapter 2

1. Such as the metaphysical assumption that epistemology's questions are rooted in two-tiered reality consisting of a realm of changing appearances and another of permanent, unchanging ideas. Though his shift away from traditional epistemology strikes at the heart of philosophy's sentimental appeal, Dewey argues that philosophy must relinquish the idea that knowledge springs from simple 'human wonder' and instead we should try to understand knowing as an activity that permits us to cope with those actual problems which stop us in our tracks.
2. See *Reconstruction in Philosophy*: 'When experience is aligned with the life-process and sensations are seen to be points of readjustment, the alleged atomism of sensations totally disappears. With this disappearance is abolished the need for a synthetic faculty of super-empirical reason to connect them'(MW12:131–2).
3. *The Quest for Certainty* (LW4) lays out Dewey's extensive account of how Western epistemologies grew out of Western history and culture.