

## THE 13th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF



ISSEI

**International Society for the Study of European Ideas**  
in cooperation with the University of Cyprus



### **Consummatory Experience and Cosmopolitanism: A Theoretical Framework for Teacher Education Programs**

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In the context of contemporary global interconnectivity and interdependence, notwithstanding its negative connotations,<sup>1</sup> I imagine cosmopolitanism to be a positive force and define the cosmopolitan outlook as *an attitude of openness to the world*. Despite its customary connotations, the world is not merely spatial. For the purposes of this paper, the temporal aspect of the world is brought to the fore in connection with John Dewey's concept of consummatory experience, which can be characterized as the refined and intensified form of experience whereby the doings and undergoings that constitute ordinary everyday experience attain a heightened sense of meaning and value and compose themselves into an experience of enriched meaning of the unfolding drama of life. There is a certain rhythm to this process. As Dewey explains,

life itself consists of phases in which the organism falls out of step with the march of surrounding things and then recovers unison with it. . . . in a growing life, the recovery is never mere return to a prior state, for it is enriched by the state of disparity and resistance through which it has successfully passed. . . . Life grows when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives.<sup>2</sup>

Openness to the world is being fully open to the rhythm of experience with all its ups and downs and becoming conscious of how the phases of the process of integration-disruption-reintegration at a more encompassing horizon of meaning are conjoined. The rhythm consists of a loss of integration with environment and eventual recovery of union with it so that one can go through a phase of disruption and conflict and come out having a sense of the meaning of the whole experience in such a way that when one looks back one feels a sense of fulfillment, a sense of consummation, a sense of growth. Being open to the world reveals the world to be a dynamic scene of the rhythm of experience.

The world needs to be understood temporally, and not spatially for the ensuing analysis to work. Therefore, I would like to define the world not as a place that houses the inhabitants and all the myriad things upon it but as the temporality of the present, which is always pregnant with possibilities of consummation. In order to unpack this cryptic statement and discuss how it is related to teacher education programs, I would like to start with Dewey's understanding of the relationship between education and human experience for it is through educative experience as Dewey understands it that a cosmopolitan attitude—an attitude of openness to the world—can provide a unifying vision and ground for teacher education

programs to formulate novel curriculum principles to transform teacher education with an eye towards a more integral and dynamic understanding of the world we live in.

Dewey locates the problem of education *within* human experience and not as an aspect of human knowledge. For Dewey, educative experience cannot be reduced to a form of cognition, or to the merely cognitive phase of experience. In fact, exactly the opposite is true. The pursuit of knowledge ought to be contextualized within the larger issues of human meaning and value that unfold in an aleatory and dramatic world, where life is always a shifting balance of the precarious and the stable.<sup>3</sup> Alexander remarks that “knowledge is only possible because we can respond to the world as a dramatically enacted project in which meanings and values can be won, lost, and shared.”<sup>4</sup> In parallel with Alexander’s remarks, I argue that cosmopolitanism is about the ability to respond to genuine encounters with others in a world that is experienced as a locus of meaning, and this meaning dramatically unfolds undergoing the rhythm of experience and is always open to new possibilities of fulfillment.

By connecting education with a more expansive and temporal notion of experience Dewey attempts to overcome the primary delusion of Western philosophy, which he terms “the intellectualist’s fallacy” that treats all types of experience as ultimately a form of cognition. Experience on Dewey’s account denotes a richly textured context of life within which individuals are dramatically engaged with the precarious conditions they face that are always open to disruption. Some of these conditions favor the flourishing of educative experiences, hence growth, whereas others obstruct it. For Dewey, the distinction between educative and mis-educative experiences is based on the *quality* of the experience which is had. Educative experiences are those “that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, any experience that is educative creates conditions for growth in the present that also makes further growth in the future possible (without seeking a terminal

point that culminates in atemporal bliss).<sup>6</sup> Put differently, consummation rather than cessation is the goal of educative experience.

Education as growth is an ever-present and ever-expanding process; it does not culminate in a terminal point, where the precarious nature of the world is finally overcome and a state of unchanging equilibrium obtains. Educative experience creates conditions for further growth. Yet it does have a *telos*. The *telos* of educative experience, as Dewey particularly exposed in his mature phase, is *the aesthetic*.<sup>7</sup> Aesthetic in this context denotes “the fundamental ‘impulsion’ (as Dewey calls it) of human beings to engage the world with a heightened sense of meaning and the realization of value.”<sup>8</sup> That is, educative experience constitutes a field where “the full meaning of each present experience” is extracted at each present time. This extraction process is not an exclusively cognitive process. Rather, it is pervaded by what I would like to call *the quality of openness to the temporality of the present*. The aesthetic dimension of experience, which, for Dewey, is the primary level of experience for it is experience in its unified wholeness, is disclosed when the quality of openness is at work. Educative experience, then, is experience when the aesthetic dimension is fully engaged based on the quality of openness to the temporality of the present.

Education as growth, in Dewey’s view, is about wisdom as the project of human meaning. As is customarily done, it cannot be reduced to the project of human knowledge. The project of human knowledge does only make sense when it is situated within the project of human meaning. The project of human meaning is grounded in human experience. Human experience can be understood best as a temporal process. A temporal understanding of human experience is revealed when the aesthetic/consummatory dimension of human experience is engaged. The aesthetic/consummatory dimension of human experience is pervaded by quality, which is a temporal process and cannot be reduced to a form of cognition. Attuning to quality in its temporality, and, in particular, to what I would like to term the quality of openness—

attuning to the temporality of the present—is how we engage the aesthetic dimension of experience. Authentic teaching begins and ends within this mode of engagement.

In *Experience and Education*, Dewey states that

we always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future. . . . All this means that attentive care must be devoted to the conditions which give each present experience a worthwhile meaning.<sup>9</sup>

I would like to bring out distinctly that “*extracting* at each present time the full meaning of each present experience” is not primarily a cognitive process. Dewey, especially in his later works, argues that it is an aesthetic and artistic process—a creative undertaking whereby worthwhile meanings are called into existence. The creative teacher opens up an environment where her students’ “best possibilities” can be called into existence. Calling meanings into existence requires wisdom beyond knowledge—a wisdom that includes but transcends the explicitly cognitive phase of experience for the good we teachers passionately desire for our students cannot be seen as an accomplished fact. Rather, it is a possibility of human meaning and value. In other words, “extracting” is not exclusively a cognitive process that involves establishing relationships among actualized objects of knowledge. It is not about knowing per se. Rather, it is about attending (attuning) to the *quality* of present experience, which is always pregnant with novel possibilities and cannot be predetermined. This attunement is largely non-cognitive. Quality by virtue of its pervasiveness precedes and encompasses and situates cognition. It gives direction and purpose to the cognitive value of

experience. Being open to the temporality of the present is not a matter of knowing; rather, it is a matter of *feeling*. Rather than merely concentrating on the cognitive value of experience, we ought to concentrate on the unity and wholeness of experience, which is first and foremost disclosed in quality, feeling, experience as art, experience as openness to the temporality of the present. Experience is not a matter of knowing; it is a matter of meaning. Knowing is “instrumental” to meaning. Knowing is part of meaning, and not the other way around. Meaning is not given once and for all. It is not something spatial. Meaning is temporal. It unfolds over time going through disruptions and tense moments, and if enough care is given has the possibility of being composed into a consummatory experience.

The topic of wisdom in today’s conversation on education has come to be largely forgotten and at best trivialized and therefore needs to be reintroduced for it is the desire for a heightened sense of meaning by and for which education exists. The main purpose of education does not simply consist in transmitting organized “bodies of information and of skills that have been worked out in the past”<sup>10</sup> to the new generation. This conception of education leads essentially to a *static* understanding of that which is taught. In our late modern world where “change is the rule, not the exception,”<sup>11</sup> a sense of radical meaninglessness and spiritual desiccation is increasingly felt since we are unable to orient ourselves in the flux of events. A society where ultimate reality is conceived of as fixed and where a correlative effort is made to comprehend that fixed reality as an object of knowledge no longer corresponds to the reality of the historical period we find ourselves in. An education system where “[that which is taught] is taught as a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will surely occur in the future”<sup>12</sup> is no longer capable of calling into existence worthwhile meanings through the cultivation and deployment of which the desire for meaning in each individual’s case is opened up and fulfilled.

Consummatory experience for Dewey takes place when worthwhile meanings are called into existence in a world which is a confounding mixture of the ambiguous and uncertain together with the uniform and regular. You cannot call worthwhile meanings into existence in a world that is either completely serene, transparent, and still, or completely out of whack. Meaningful experience materializes only in a world that is at once stable and precarious. When that happens, when meaning emerges through the rhythm of experience, I feel at home in the world despite its madness and complexities, or rather because of them. There is the feeling that I belong to the world and the world belongs to me. There is a sense of harmony and equilibrium for I respond to the world in such a way that I come to realize the organic connection between what I do and what happens to me. This is fulfilling.

The world is not constituted merely by spatial forms and therefore cannot be restricted to any form of provincial or cosmopolitan environment. It is this immense and immensely complex community of relationships that dramatically unfolds over time. To the extent that I can relate to this tensive drama, I am an integral part of it. I am witnessing it. I am participating in its madness and glory. And I am doing something about it. I am not indifferent to it. I respond to it. Education as wisdom is about experiencing the world in a consummatory fashion by being open to the possibilities in the present residing in the unfolding tensive drama, that is, life. It is about understanding the world in ever deeper and wider contexts and feeling at home in this crazy and sane world and having an ownership of it despite the pain and suffering.

A cosmopolitan outlook necessitates a sense of at-home-ness in the world understood temporally. Being at home in the world is not about being contented. Rather it is being open to the possibilities of the unfolding events in the present and having the courage to embrace the inevitable disruptions that are bound to happen as we open ourselves to the unpredictability of new encounters. Cosmopolitanism is about genuine encounters with others

in the present, which trigger a dramatic unfolding flow of events that might culminate in consummation, that is, growth, provided that we are open to the possibilities in the present. Cosmopolitanism is not pitting the local against the global. Cosmopolitanism is about experiencing the world as a temporal dramatic unfolding of meaning that holds the promise of consummation. It is not possible to have a sense of at-home-ness in the world unless the world is experienced in a consummatory fashion.

Education as growth, education as wisdom, education as consummatory experience, and education as attuning to the temporality of the present are different ways of pointing to the same ideal: the ideal of openness to the world whereby we are led to engage in critical, creative, and caring thinking<sup>13</sup>—consummation, in short—by exercising our ability to become more conscious of and make judgments about the aspects of our experience that have ethical, aesthetic, political, moral, and metaphysical meaning. Only through such engagement does the cosmopolitan pedagogical ideal of cultivating resistant, critical and reflective subjectivities become possible.<sup>14</sup>

The implication for teacher education programs is that we should not focus too much on transmitting pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge for ultimately we cannot know—that is, we cannot know the Ultimate (even if we assume that it can be posited), for human experience is finite and existence is temporal. However, we can be ultimately open. We can be ultimately open to the present. This, I take to be the meaning of Dewey’s “consummatory experience,” being open to the experience of the world as a fulfillment of meaning and value. Education, and, in particular, teacher education is never merely about transmitting certain knowledge to students to be applied in real life. It is about creating conditions so that they can be ultimately open all throughout life.

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<sup>1</sup>FazalRizvi, "Education and Its Cosmopolitan Possibilities" in "*Transforming learning in schools and communities: The remaking of education for a cosmopolitan society,*" ed. Bob Lingard, Jon Nixon, and Stewart Ranson (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2009), 101-116.

Klas Roth and Nicolas C. Burbules, "Introduction: Cosmopolitan Identity and Education," *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 43 (2011): 205-208.

<sup>2</sup>JohnDewey, *The Later Works, 1925-1953: Vol. 10. Art as Experienced*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 22-23.

<sup>3</sup>JohnDewey, *The Later Works, 1925-1953: Vol. 1. Experience and Nature*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 18.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas M. Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), xvii.

<sup>5</sup>John Dewey, *The Later Works, 1925-1953: Vol. 13. Experience and Education*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 13.

<sup>6</sup>In general, Deweyan pragmatism is averse to notions of the absolute. A state of non-temporal bliss such as experienced in altered states of consciousness or states of mystical union is not within the purview of the pragmatist analysis of the human condition.

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<sup>7</sup> Sevket Benhur Oral, “Can Deweyan Pragmatist Aesthetics Provide a Robust Framework for the Philosophy for Children Programme?” *Studies in Philosophy and Education* (2012), doi: 10.1007/s11217-012-9332-5

<sup>8</sup> Alexander, *John Dewey’s Theory of Art*, xvii.

<sup>9</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 29-30.

<sup>10</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003)

<sup>14</sup> Marianna Papastephanou, “Globalisation, Globalism and Cosmopolitanism as an Educational Ideal,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 37 (2005): 533-551.