John Dewey's Experience and Nature
A Centennial Celebration

Abstracts

Randall Auxier (Southern Illinois University Carbondale), "Culture and Nature: Dewey's Late Cultural Turn in a Disordered World" (Session 1A)

Dewey said near the end of his life that if he had it to do over again, he would call *Experience and Nature* (1925, 1929) by a different title, *Culture and Nature* (LW 1:361). Indeed, he was never satisfied with *Experience and Nature* or with his attempt to re-interpret the philosophical idea of experience. He did allow that he "was not convinced that the task I undertook was totally misguided." (LW 1:361) His idea to resituate his entire philosophical position under the label "cultural naturalism" is telling. Phillip Deen, in his extensive introduction to Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy, describes Dewey's mature position as a philosophy of culture, and he sees this view as a fair answer to the critics of pragmatism that Dewey (and pragmatism) is not capable of producing a critical social philosophy—it is too naive, too optimistic, not suited for the brutal conditions of the looming Cold War and post-modernity. Deen treats Dewey's final book as a philosophy of culture, and indeed the discussion goes place it alongside the efforts of Cassirer and other philosophers of culture who take symbolic forms of culture (religion, economics, politics, education, etc.) in their wholeness and interactivity, as opposed to seeing them as breakaway fragments, each trying to dominate the whole world of cultural meaning. In this essay, I will examine the relative success of Dewey's late cultural turn, looking at "The Cultural Matrix of Inquiry" (from *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* 1938), *Freedom and Culture* (1939), and *Unmodern and Modern Philosophy*, along with correspondence and other sources (including the unfinished Introduction in 1949 to the edition of *Experience and Nature* being edited by Joseph Ratner (LW 1:329-361), which is really the final word of the destiny of *E&N*. But my purpose is not historical. I want to assess the prospects for a Deweyan philosophy of culture and appraise its capacity to contribute to our needs in the present and for the future, with particular attention to the future of education.

David Beisecker (University of Nevada, Las Vegas), "Neo-Pragmatist Themes in *Experience and Nature*" (Session 7B)

In the introductory remarks to his 1973-4 John Dewey Lectures, Wilfrid Sellars denies ever "getting into pragmatism," although he admits that after having read Dewey, he was "astonished" at how like-minded they were. While Sellars doesn't disclose what work(s) of Dewey he had in mind, it is likely he was referring to *Experience and Nature*. When read through (homogeneously pink!) Sellarsian lenses, it is remarkable how many familiar themes leap off the pages. Not only can one spot several passages expressing anti-empiricist and anti-Cartesian rejections of experiential and logical givens, including an understanding of sensa as not intrinsically representational, one also finds: (1) A penchant for telling evolutionary, genealogical stories (or anthropological myths) about the use of certain vocabularies as a means of elucidating and naturalizing otherwise puzzling philosophical concepts, (2) A picture of a scientific image growing organically out of, and ultimately seeking to displace, earlier manifest or original images of how we understand our place in nature, (3) A story of how our talk about sensory qualities is derived from our understanding of external things exhibiting those qualities (or how "looks red" presupposes "is red"), (4) A functionalist (and largely normative) understanding of meaning and intentionality, and even (5) An expressivist (and again, normative) account of

belief, which calls to mind Sellars famous claim in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (EPM: 63) that in characterizing someone as a knower, one is not merely describing the subject, but also locating them in the space of reasons.

As some recent commentators have pointed out, even more striking are some of the characteristically linguistically-centered "neo-pragmatist" themes to be found in *Experience and Nature*. These include: (1) Blunt expressions of what Sellars would eventually call "psychological nominalism": the idea that (human) thinking is fundamentally linguistic; (2) Equally blunt expressions of linguistic exceptionalism: Humans are on a cognitive plane dramatically higher than the rest of creation, and while we might think of non-linguistic animals as having some sort of primitive or proto-thought, the conception of such thought makes sense only against the backdrop of our understanding a primary, more full-blooded concept of thought that is linguistic; and (3) Acknowledgement that language, and thus our very capacity for full-blooded thought, is essentially a social practice. [A remarkable encapsulation of these thoughts can be found on p. xvii of Dewey's Preface to the second edition.]

Despite these points of convergence, it's unclear that Dewey had much direct influence upon Sellars' actual writings. Still, when one makes a side-by-side comparison of Chapter V of *Experience and Nature*, entitled (in the original Open Court edition) "Nature as Communication and as Meaning," with Sellars' 1969 article "Language as Thought and as Communication", it's abundantly clear that Sellars has Dewey in mind. Not only are the unusual form of these titles tantalyzingly similar, LTC is one of those infrequent places where Sellars speaks approvingly of the pragmatists. It is also significant for working out a sense of how language may be thought to "express" thought without our having to think of thought as antecedent to language. These cornerstones of Sellars' neo-pragmatism are, of course, also prevalent in chapter V of *Experience and Nature*.

This paper explores these connections (as well as a few others, space permitting). In the end, I suggest that *Experience and Nature* – with its own lingering "Meditations Hegeliènnes" – deserves a place in the neo-pragmatist canon and hence should be regarded as a prime point of contact between contemporary neo-pragmatists and their classical forebears.

Justin Bell (Texas A&M University–Victoria), "Burnout, Experience, and Nature: Deweyan Criticism as Restorative" (Session 3A)

Dewey's *Experience and Nature* gives us significant tools to understand the phenomenon of burnout as an existential problem distinct from depression, exhaustion, or boredom. To this end, I will first survey some theories of burnout from Ayala Pines and Byung-Chul Han. In doing so, I will differentiate burnout from exhaustion and depression as a lack of meaning from once otherwise meaningful pursuits. Second, I will investigate how Dewey's work in *Experience and Nature* shows that the artificial bifurcation of our beliefs about inquiry and activity from immediate experience lead to meaninglessness and degraded enjoyment of experience overall—that is a lack of meaning. When we consider what Dewey says about technology and art, Dewey's account becomes not just an analysis of the problems of philosophical inquiry but an indictment of how we construct our worlds—such that the objects of our inquiry become meaningless. When we are forced to make the world we live in into a series of mere objects without meaning, which we erroneously consider ourselves wholly separate from, it results in burnout. This is most apparent, I will argue, when the emotionally charged projects that drive many of us become commodified—creative works merely to sell, thoughts merely had to publish, teaching reduced to marketable learning outcomes, etc. Dewey's work, more than simply diagnosing the problem, will supply us with, I will argue, a friendly criticism of both Pines and Han. Additionally, his work on criticism and cultivation will give us a theoretical sketch of how to work out of burnout.

Matthew J Brown (Southern Illinois University Carbondale) and Andrii Leonov (Southern Illinois University Carbondale), "Reintroducing Dewey's Re-Introduction to *Experience and Nature*" (Session 2A)

After writing a new Introduction for a reissue of *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, John Dewey began writing a similar re-introduction for a new edition of *Experience and Nature*. This "Unfinished Introduction" was edited from notes for inclusion in volume 1 of *The Later Works of John Dewey* (LW 1: 229-364), and since then it has proved of outmost importance and significance to the scholarship on Dewey's naturalistic philosophy. Not only is *Experience and Nature* widely considered to be Dewey's philosophical magnum opus, but also in this Re-Introduction, Dewey aims at rethinking and further clarifying the very philosophical project laid out in the book. As such, Dewey's "Unfinished Introduction" is often regarded by Dewey scholars as Dewey's "final word" on matters of experience and naturalism.

Dewey's re-introduction is unfinished because Dewey was physically unable to finish it due to his old age and sudden death in 1952. This text was edited by Dewey's close assistant Joseph Ratner. It is Ratner's version of the story behind Dewey's re-introduction that we all know, and it is under his editorial effort this significant text of the late Dewey was recovered, published, and became widely known. Does Ratner's story of Dewey's unfinished introduction correspond to the available archival evidence? We will argue that it does not, and that there are philosophically significant differences between Dewey's drafts and Ratner's reconstruction. Despite Ratner's claim that there are only two drafts of Dewey's unfinished introduction, we claim that, in fact, there are five of them. We provide evidence that Ratner's editorial effort did not keep "Dewey's meaning intact" (LW 1: 330).

Irie Browning (University of Oregon), "Plumwood, Dewey, and the Poetic Practices of Environmental Dialogue" (Session 5A)

Despite increasing awareness and education on ecological matters, the earth continues to be divided into economically-driven boxes. For an example, on April 17th, 2025, the New York Times reported that President Trump issued an executive order to open up a large marine protected zone to commercial fishing. Though on one hand there are fishers in the Pacific Islands who could profit from commercial fishing in an area closer to where they live, on the other, it is suggested that by giving the fish this safe zone, fishing in surrounding areas increase for commercial fishing. The problem, I suggest, is one of conversation. Val Plumwood advocates that our world is overwhelmed with a monological view of nature. She suggests instead a dialogical view—where instead of humans being the only ones talking and nature is an object—we are part of an ecological conversation between subjects. John Dewey, also, deconstructs dualisms and classical empiricism while proposing that poetics and art are equal part of what it is to be human. It is one thing to conceive of this mentally; another to know and understand it in a way which changes deeply enforced dualistic norms. This paper uses the writings of both Plumwood and Dewey alongside more literary works to propose the artistic as an actionable pathway to inspire one to their own increasingly dialogical relation between humans and non-human others.

John Dewey's *Experience and Nature* raises the question of the split between metaphysics/epistemology/logic and ethics/aesthetics in the study of philosophy and reality. Emotion and art are as real as logic and science—in fact, it would be of ecological benefit in gaining a full body of experience by embracing these aspects without labeling them as mystic and esoteric. Plumwood, after decades of focusing on the environmental from a perspective of logic, turns towards the creative as a method of change in her final writings. Dewey's inquiry and Plumwood's dialogical experience are examined through the works of writers who blend the creative with the philosophical—Leopold's Sand County Almanac, Dillard's Pilgrim at

Tinker Creek, Solnit's A Field Guide to Getting Lost, and Kimmerer's Braiding Sweetgrass are used as examples here. These works use literary methods to share first-hand experience of dialogical views toward the other, thus give the reader both the empathetic experience of reading of the authors' experiences and the inspiration to follow such dialogical practices in their own lives. It is through living life, both in its instability and stability, in experiences both first-hand and second-hand, that one's world expands from a singular, monological, dominating position grounded in desire for control to the dialogical understanding that one cannot and should not force all others under their command; that one should listen and know with one foot in the curiosity of study and understanding and another in the vast and violent reality of interconnections and relationships. The practical application of this sort of dialogical knowing of oneself in relation to all the other selves of the world is vital and requires further study.

Thomas Burke (University of South Carolina), "On Dewey's Plateaus of Existences of Various Kinds" (Session 7A)

A brief review is given of Dewey's conception of metaphysics, beginning with a discussion of the enigmatic passage in *Experience and Nature* referring to the study of "generic features manifested by existences of all kinds" (etc.; what does he mean by 'existences'? 'generic features'? 'kinds'?). This is followed by a review of Dewey's earlier discussion in that book of three "plateaus" of existence that concretely frame the sorts of things Dewey was addressing in E&N. I then discuss two issues that this view gives rise to. (1) Dewey's characterization of metaphysics may seem viciously circular, but it is not. It is virtuously circular. (2) Especially in light of Dewey's few tentative listings of some alleged "generic features manifested by existences of all kinds," I surmise whether Peirce's "guess at the riddle" (1887–1888) might provide something like a "zeroeth" plateau that helps to better frame Dewey's three.

Kristen Cameron (Southern Illinois University Carbondale) and Rosalba Alvarado Acevedo (Southern Illinois University Carbondale), "Dewey's Four Impulses, the Pedagogical Role of Wonder, and the Use of Technology in Early Childhood Classrooms" (Session 7C)

This paper explores the philosophical and pedagogical dimensions of wonder in early childhood education, particularly in relation to digital technology. Drawing on John Dewey's educational philosophy—specifically his theory of the four impulses of the child (inquiry, construction, communication, and expression)—the paper critically examines how contemporary technological tools either cultivate or constrain the natural disposition toward wonder in young learners. Using Schinkel's (2020) concept of "deep wonder" as a key analytical lens, the paper addresses the epistemological and ethical implications of how adults respond to children's wonder in a digital age.

The central concern of the paper is to understand what is gained and lost when children's natural expressions of wonder, such as "I wonder why the leaves turn yellow," are met with immediate digital answers through smartphones or tablets. Rather than theorizing or engaging in speculative, imaginative reasoning, today's classroom practices often model a "quest for certainty" that may unintentionally short-circuit the educative potential of not-knowing. This impulse to resolve wonder quickly, while enabled by technology, may undermine the very intellectual and emotional capacities that nurture lifelong learning, creativity, and critical thinking.

At the same time, digital tools are not inherently antithetical to wonder. When used thoughtfully, technologies such as tablets, digital microscopes, cameras, and multimedia applications can amplify children's sense of awe and curiosity by expanding what can be seen, heard, and imagined. The paper

explores this dual potential of technology: to diminish wonder by collapsing the space between questioning and answering, or to deepen wonder by supporting open-ended exploration and imaginative play.

Methodologically, the paper uses a hybrid approach that combines philosophical inquiry with informal case study analysis. Philosophical reasoning is employed to analyze normative questions surrounding the use of technology in early childhood education, especially regarding the values educators impart through their pedagogical choices. Informal case studies drawn from a variety of early learning environments provide concrete illustrations of how technology is deployed in practice—either to encourage epistemic inquiry or to reinforce outcome-oriented approaches. These cases serve as conceptual exemplars that illuminate broader philosophical questions about knowledge, pedagogy, and the nature of childhood.

The paper begins by situating wonder in the educational philosophy of Dewey, who famously declared that "wonder is the mother of all science" (2019, p. 16). It then outlines Dewey's four impulses as a framework for understanding how young children engage with their world, and how these impulses are either nurtured or hindered by the presence of digital technologies. The paper also reviews literature on digital play and play-based learning (Bird & Edwards, 2015; Edwards, 2016) and technology in early childhood education, highlighting both the benefits and drawbacks of current practices (Mupalla et al., 2022, Edwards et al., 2017).

The paper argues for a pedagogical approach that preserves space for deep wondering and recognizes wonder not as a problem to be solved, but as a foundational condition for meaningful education. It offers practical suggestions for pedagogical practice, as well as philosophical insights, for educators seeking to create classrooms where wonder is not only allowed but celebrated—even in the age of Google.

Matteo Cherubini (Università di Pisa), "Imagination and Philosophical Method in Dewey's Aesthetics: Certainty or Stability?" (Session 4A)

In my talk, I intend to explore John Dewey's evolution of aesthetic perspective in *Experience and Nature*, transitioning from an earlier idealist 'aesthetic of certainty' to an 'aesthetic of instability'. To achieve this, I will analyze Dewey's shift from early idealism to experimentalism and how this transformation shapes his theory of imagination, as articulated in two of his seminal works: *Psychology and Experience and Nature*.

Vincent Colapietro (University of Rhode Island), "Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics: Description, Cartography, and Therapy" (Session 3C)

One of the most frequently quoted passages in *Experience and Nature* is, appropriately, his characterization of metaphysics as an endeavor to provide "a ground-map for the province of criticism." Recall the context in which he makes this claim: in the concluding chapter ("Existence, Value and Criticism") he connects philosophy, in its traditional sense (the love of wisdom), to metaphysics, in his reconstructed sense of a largely descriptive account of the natural world as the matrix and arena of human endeavor. It is striking how often the passage is quoted in an unfortunately abridged manner. In his judgment, any theory that identifies and defines the generic or ubiquitous traits of natural existence in effect provides such "a ground-map" but, in turn, such a map provides the means by which to establish base lines in more intricate triangulations." As a result, one of the most central passages in Dewey's magnus opus has been left largely unexplored. Just what are these "base lines of more intricate triangulation"? Indeed, what are those of the more rough-and-ready triangulations provided by identifying the ubiquitous traits of natural existence? In terms of the pragmatics of the text, I am inclined to argue description is pressed in the service of cartography (the endeavor to provide maps of our world, sketched from various loci within that world) and, ultimately, cartography is pressed in the service of "therapy." Central to Dewey's undertaking, there is once again his attempt to offer a better account of experience. This however means not principally a better theoretical account; rather it signifies, above all else, a more experientially enriching and rewarding understanding of our engagements with nature. Dewey

aims at nothing less than the experiential recovery of quotidian experience (see especially the concluding paragraphs of Chapter 1). Given the historical distortions, disfigurations, and negations of everyday experience, especially at the hands of professed "empiricists," such a recovery must be to some extent "therapeutic" or remedial. My proposal is that the more intricate triangulations made possible by Dewey's predominantly descriptive approach to naturalistic metaphysics provide more experientially significant, because more intrinsically enriching and rewarding, engagements, in the everyday contexts of these seemingly disparate but in fact intricately interwoven engagements. But, for Dewey, description is itself undertaken in the context of those dramas in and through which our identities are forged. In brief, he ties it to narrative (or narration): "exposition and argument are always subordinate to descriptive narration, and exist for the sake of making the latter clearer, more coherent and more significant" (emphasis added). The therapeutic facets of his naturalistic metaphysics thus can be neither understood or appreciated apart from the diverse forms of descriptive narration making up such a large part of *Experience and Nature*. So these forms merit our attention, to some extent.

Roberta Dreon (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), "Dewey's Layered Conception of Experience: Hegelianizing James, Jamesianizing Hegel" (Keynote Address #2)

In what follows, I argue that Dewey's conception of experience in *Experience and Nature*, while explicitly engaging with James, also involves an original appropriation of radical empiricism through the lens of Hegel's legacy. The cultural climate of the 1920s, however, prevented him from making any overt reference to the German philosopher. Both thinkers' contributions converged in Dewey's development of a notion rooted in the primacy of relations over relata. Hegel's influence enabled Dewey to avoid the subjectivistic tendencies in James's early account of experience, while James's emphasis on the genuine plurality of experience and his profound anti-intellectualism allowed Dewey to resist reducing experience to cognition and nature to Spirit.

In combining these two legacies, Dewey certainly run risks, but at the same time found within them resources to mitigate those risks. One Jamesian threat lay in envisaging the distinction between qualitative experience and reflective experience in the human world as a linear grounding of the latter in the former. Dewey's early preference for *The Phenomenology of Spirit* may have helped him frame their relationship in dialectical or circular terms – namely, as mutually conditioning and reconfiguring each other. A Hegelian danger, by contrast, was the persistence of a teleological, though thoroughly immanentist, interpretation of human mental experience as emerging from organic-environmental interactions. James' efforts to provide a naturalistic but non-deterministic account of human consciousness, together with his sincere pluralistic and contingentist attitude, supported Dewey in resisting the idea of a scala naturae.

Steven Fesmire (Radford University), "The Moving Unbalanced Balance of Things: Dewey's Ecological Imagination and the Denotative Method" (Keynote Address #3)

Johnathan Flowers (California State University Northridge), "Experience, Nature, and The Erotic: Audre Lorde's Pragmatic Philosophy of Experience" (Session 3A)

However powerful her account, the explanation of the erotic that Aurdre Lorde supplies in her essay "Uses of the Erotic," is treated as an ambiguous signifier within engagements with her work. This treatment of Lorde's erotic as ambiguous, I argue, is due to a failure to recognize the ways in which the erotic functions as a pragmatist account of experience similar to Dewey's account of experience as supplied in *Experience and Nature* and developed in *Art as Experience*.

For Lorde, the erotic supplies as sense of integrity to our experiences which, at the level of the personal, enables their integration into our life projects. As integrative principle, the erotic establishes continuity in and among our experiences and enables an awareness of how experience comes together in a qualitative whole. Further, as an "internal sense of satisfaction," (Lorde, 1984, 64) the erotic emphasizes the aesthetic, qualitative dimension of experience as primary, there by recasting experience as erotic as "not a question only of what we do; it is a question of how acutely and fully we can feel in the doing." (Lorde, 1984, 62).

Like Dewey, Lorde's erotic as experience finds its maximum expression in art, poetry in specific, insofar as "poetry is also a roadmap, a way of putting together, in a new way, the pieces that we carry around within us," (Lorde, 1982, 2) which mirrors the organizing work of art in experience for Dewey. For Lorde, art serves to clarify and organize our emotions, to structure experience such that it can be had and communicated across difference. Finally, Like Dewey, Lorde's erotic is always bound in a social and cultural context which shapes how and what we experience.

In light of the above, this paper aims to place Audre Lorde in conversation with John Dewey's aesthetics of experience to demonstrate the ways in which Lorde's erotic is a pragmatist account of experience. In treating the erotic as experience, this paper will clarify the ways in which Lorde's different applications of the integrative principles of the erotic, in our personal lives, in our experiences of pain, in our mundane experiences, and in our political activities, are relevant not simply as an alternative understanding of experience, but a means whereby we can deepen our understanding of pragmatist accounts of experience.

Steve Gariepy (Southern Illinois University, STEM Education Research Center), "Dewey, Outdoor Education, and Southern Illinois' Giant City State Park" (Excursion to Giant City State Park)

Drawing a line from Dewey, into Outdoor Education, and the many faceted endeavor it has grown into over the decades at SIU and across the nation. L.B. Sharp, Cliff Knapp, Harold Hungerford and Trudy Volk, Curt Carter, up to today! A legacy of developing and applying the work of Dewey and the rest on the ground, through combining *Experiences and Nature*.

An interpretive nature experience with Steve Gariepy at beautiful and fascinating Giant City State Park, for us to "have the experience" as a group in the landscape. Where hundreds of thousands of visitors including those through SIUC programs and with other outdoor/environmental education organizations, have done so. Come experience the "Streets of a Giant City" with us.

Steve Gariepy is the Outreach Coordinator and Experiential Education specialist for the SIU STEM Education Research Center, with twenty years of educating outdoors in southern Illinois, a major focus of this work has been Connecting Learners to Landscapes through positive, meaningful, educational, and sometimes challenging experiences. Helping connect groups of humans to the land, to each other, to themselves, and to things greater, (and smaller) than themselves.

Louis Guichard (Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University), "Habit as precarious and as stable: Dewey on metaphysics, cultural criticism and the ambivalence of habit" (Session 3C)

The 'denotative method' put forward by Dewey implies drawing empirical consequences from his metaphysics of the 'generic traits of existence', in particular in order to fulfill its function as a 'ground-map of the province of criticism'. This critical function can be conceived of as making generic traits an irrevocable ontological 'ground' for ethics and democratic values [Cherlin 2023]. The alternative, to which I subscribe, is to recognize the pragmatic dimension of both the denotative method and the critical function of Dewey's metaphysics [Boisvert 1998, Myers 2004, Garrison 2005]. My goal is to suggest that generic traits such as

precariousness and stability can be considered as conceptual tools used and tested by Dewey in order to illuminate the ambivalent nature of habit as well as its ambivalent political consequences in light of the cultural challenges Dewey faced in his day. From 1922 to 1927, a pragmatic use of the denotative method takes shape, moving from experience to existence only to better resolve the problems of the former.

I therefore begin with *Human Nature and Conduct*, by arguing that Dewey's analysis of habit as impulses made more rigid or less flexible leads to a distinction that is both: (1) non-reductionist and non-dualistic; (2) functional, this difference in degree being enough to differentiate their functions; (3) reversible and (4) comparative, since rigidity and flexibility apply to both habit and impulse, without these ever being absolutely rigid or flexible; (5) requiring a balance in its functioning.

I then show how these five points are reflected in the 'mixture' of precariousness and stability described in *Experience and Nature*. This mixture appears as an existential generalization and a clarification of features of human experience such as habit and impulse. In particular, the distinction, once again functional, between process and structure helps shed light on the fact that habit is both a structure given to impulse and a process of re-channeling an impulsive 'human nature'.

Finally, I examine how these generic traits of precariousness and stability are used and tested in *The Public and Its Problems* at an experiential level to problematize the politically ambivalent character of habit and stability. Habit and stability can be obstacles to adapting to a rapidly changing 'technological' world, but also a necessary source of control and of 'attachments' that require a relatively stable environment [Stiegler 2022].

Casey Haskins (Purchase College SUNY), "What Would Dewey Think About Artistic AI?" (Session 5C)

If the Dewey of *Art as Experience* were to join today's rapidly evolving debate about whether generative AI models can create genuine art, he would have good reason to be at least initially sceptical about this possibility. And he would not be alone among contemporary philosophers. Indeed, *Art as Experience's* leitmotif that all arts, music included, are forms of human experience, implying also that they are products of human agency, is easily read as anticipating more recent arguments, from writers who champion phenomenological, enactivist, and what I call experientialist accounts of mind and embodied agency, that AI cannot experience anything and is thus altogether incapable of artistic agency and creativity. Such "hard experientialist" artistic-AI sceptics tend also to embrace a traditional humanist image of the normative specialness of what humans do and make.

Dewey would certainly embrace some mixture of experientialism, phenomenology, and enactivism. But his time-traveling take on AI and artmaking, I suggest, might well stop short of hard experientialism. To that extent it would exemplify a kind of neohumanist perspective that all parties to the artistic-AI debate do well to consider now. My argument for this interpretive answer to my title question draws on two key premises. First, Dewey was, of course, not a traditional humanist. As an experimental pragmatist, he rejected many traditional humanist tenets about the supposedly fixed characteristics of human nature. Second, he took the evolving interdependency between humans and their technology seriously. While stopping short of affirming (with some contemporary posthumanists) that there is no principled ontological difference at all between humans and our artifacts, he did effectively hold that human experience cannot exist without, and can take no form that is not profoundly shaped by, the technology of some particular time and place.

Given such facts, it is easy to imagine Dewey sympathetically considering contemporary arguments that significantly "co-intelligent" creation in the fine arts, which did not yet exist when *Art as Experience* appeared nearly a century ago, is an emerging reality in our culture at a time when generative AI gets more autonomously "agentic" every year. (That Dewey would think this way seems particularly likely given his remark, in "What I Believe," that " In the face of [technology's] possibilities, the traditional conception of

experience is obsolete" and also his remark in the 1948 "Re-Introduction" to *Experience and Nature* that if he were to rewrite the book he would drop "experience" in favor of "culture" as a label for the myriad ways that human intelligence engages in mutually dependent interactions with its surrounding environments.)
If we interpret *Art as Experience's* core argument in light of the above considerations, Dewey emerges as a welcome further canonical resource for a neohumanist, "soft" experientialist approach to AI artmaking which holds that nonhuman agents can play a collaborative but normatively secondary role in cultural production, including in the arts.

Aleksandra Hernandez (University of Miami), "Emotions, Symbolic Thought, and The Animal-Human Divide: Thinking With and Beyond *Experience and Nature*" (Session 8B)

In *Experience and Nature*, Dewey defines thinking as inner speech achieved by means of the 'privatization' of language and imaginative story-telling. This implies – and indeed Dewey claims as much – that animals are sentient machines that do not think because they do not have language or inner speech. Here I draw on insights from the epistemology of emotions – especially the work of Patricia Greenspan and Catherine Elgin — and from Cathy Legg's pragmatist epistemology to argue that: (1) Dewey's characterization of symbolic systems as linguistic and of thought as arising from our capacity to use language imaginatively in story-telling excludes animals from the domain of experience and implies an untenable difference in kind between ourselves and other creatures; (2) yet, if emotions express forms of thinking that, while not propositional nor linguistic in nature, are nevertheless symbolic, thought is not achieved merely by means of the privatization of language. This is because there is another type of symbol that Dewey neglects that is publicly accessible and can also be privatized – the iconic image – which, as Legg compellingly argues, is built up from existential encounters with objects that are classed under iconic representations; (3) these icons, which can be visual and sonic (and perhaps even olfactory and tactile), essentially function as symbols, allowing all kinds of creatures – including ourselves – to identify and alert each other to common threats, potential sources of food, and the availability of other valuable goods by means of emotions. It also allows creatures to anticipate rewards, and look forward to future activities, which, as we will see, critically depends on the 'privatization' of iconic representations; (4) this suggests that if it is true that other animals experience emotions, then they have the capacity to think.

David L. Hildebrand (University of Colorado Denver), "What Gives Dewey's Philosophy the Right to be a "Criticism of Criticisms?" (Session 3C)

Dewey's final chapter of *Experience and Nature* proposes that philosophy take a more active and practical role in human affairs but without losing its general character. It should, Dewey argues, see itself as a "criticism of criticisms." What did Dewey mean by this? What more might be said about it? Is it defensible

Since publication, Dewey's proposal garnered various responses. Many failed to see how philosophy – historically assumed to be abstract and necessarily aloof from practical affairs – could instead assume an experiential and practical standpoint. For what is a philosophical perspective that does not transcend, somehow, the slog of everyday affairs? Others suspected Dewey's motives, suggesting that his "criticism of criticisms" was actually an attempt to occupy the familiar philosophical perch of omniscience. Still others, such as Richard Rorty, accepted his critique of traditional systems but balked at his requirement of a metaphysics; given his antifoundational critiques, they asked, what kind of metaphysics is plausible, let alone necessary, for this pragmatism? This was an acute worry for some sympathizers because, if valid, it could weaken the force of his broader metaphilosophical objectives.

This paper aims to stress-test Dewey's proposal, raising pointed questions concerning its coherence, salience, and practicality. Can philosophy as Dewey proposed it actually be practiced? If the answer is "yes," his revision of philosophy survives; if "no," we are forced to reconsider the viability of a central contribution of EN, philosophy reconceived as criticism. And if it fails, we must ask what else falls with it?

Patrick Hoburg (University of Nebraska at Omaha), "Imagining John Dewey's *Culture and Nature*"
(Session 1A)

Nearly a quarter-century after its publication, John Dewey set out to write a new introduction to *Experience and Nature*, especially keen to clarify his key concept of 'experience,' which some if not most of his readership struggled to grasp due to its uniqueness. Frustrated with three years of fragmentary revisions and additions, Dewey decided to write a new draft, a meagre yet powerful six pages in length, with a conclusion still perplexing to scholars: "Were I to write (or rewrite) *Experience and Nature* today, I would entitle the book *Culture and Nature* and the treatment of specific subject-matters would be correspondingly modified." To celebrate the centennial of its publication, I argue that while Dewey's closing statement concerning a hypothetical rewrite, with a title replacing 'experience' with 'culture,' may indeed provoke perplexion, it proves prescient in light of advances in 21st Century philosophy of nature, evolutionary biology, the social sciences, cultural studies, the physics and philosophy of time, in collaboration with an array of other distinctive disciplines, all attempting to mend the mistaken dualisms between nature and culture, evolution and development, ultimate and proximate causation, and so on.

Leading interdisciplinary currents of evolutionary thought strive to move beyond these mistaken yet deeply entrenched dualisms by including non-traditional, non-trivial, extra-genetic causal factors in their explanatory frameworks. New concepts challenging the Modern Synthesis (Mayr and Provine 1982) function as 'problem agendas' (Love 2010) orienting theoretical efforts and research programs aiming to revise and expand evolutionary syntheses. Cultural evolution (Henrich 2016), gene-culture coevolution (Boyd and Richerson 2001), reciprocal causation (Laland et al. 2011), niche construction (Olding-Snee, Laland, and Feldman 2003), developmental plasticity (West-Eberhard 2003), developmental bias (Sterelny 2003), and epigenetic inheritance (Jablonka and Lamb 2020) are examples of concepts contributing to the construction of a new synthesis of the most powerful causal evolutionary processes, dissolving nature-culture dualisms (Laland et al. 2015). While such efforts emerged in fits and starts following Stephen Jay Gould's call for a "New and Extended Synthesis" in the middle 1980s (Gould 1985), advancement has accelerated at a compelling pace in the last two decades.

I suggest that by situating Dewey's work of 1925 in conversation with the discourse communities involved in extending evolutionary understanding and explanation, scholars are enabled to imagine the likely lineaments and broad contours of the intimated 'rewrite,' *Culture and Nature*. This paper presentation argues (1) that *Experience and Nature*, combined with other evolution-related writings, fit productively into these discourse communities and that (2) this work can play a major meta-role in synthesizing the pertinent problem agendas or conceptual catchalls constitutive of explanatory frameworks extending evolutionary causalities and contingencies to culture. The components of evolutionary syntheses and the differential connections between them will remain weak and diffuse until a dynamic evolutionary worldview brings them into focus. Evolutionary theory has relinquished the problem of time in acquiescence to antiquated assumptions concerning the static nature of time. I appeal and augment Dewey's mature philosophy of time as one key to assembling a more tightly connected evolutionary synthesis.

LeAnn Holland (St. Lawrence University), "Embodied Metaphor and Experiential Education: Relating Dewey, Lakoff and Johnson to Outdoor Learning Theory" (Session 1B)

This paper investigates how metaphor-rich pedagogies used in outdoor education—particularly those common in Outward Bound-style expeditionary programs—can be reinterpreted and refined through the lens of Dewey's experiential theory and Mark Johnson's embodied account of meaning-making. Educational programs in the tradition of philosopher Kurt Hahn have long employed physically demanding activities as symbolic stand-ins, aimed at learning outcomes like leadership, perseverance, or community-building. Manuals by Michael Gass and Stephen Bacon explicitly frame outdoor challenges as metaphors for life, intentionally transferring insights from embodied group tasks to real-world skills and self-awareness. Yet these methods often suffer from reductionist or corporate-speak patterns: they risk flattening experience into mantras rather than deep learning. In the spirit of Dewey, I argue that a critical philosophical inquiry, grounded in Johnson and Lakoff's complex conceptual metaphor theory and Dewey's experiential continuum—can both challenge and support backcountry praxis by clarifying the conditions under which metaphor becomes genuinely educative.

Johnson's well-documented claim that our capacity for conceptual thought is rooted in bodily action and sensory interaction lends powerful justification for why outdoor learning is cognitively meaningful, but only when such metaphors arise from participants' perceptual and relational experience (rather than being superimposed as interpretive templates). Dewey's criteria for educative experience, namely continuity, social interaction, and intelligent and intentional environmental contact, allow us to evaluate whether metaphor-based activities are meaningful extensions of prior experience or merely contrived representations. As an illustrative example, research on weather metaphors in aesthetic environments (e.g., Holland 2018, Żołnowska 2011) support the idea that complex conceptual metaphor emerges most powerfully through immersive, elemental engagement—wind, terrain, and temperature serving as nonverbal structures for broader meaning-making.

By bridging these frameworks, this paper advocates for more philosophically grounded outdoor pedagogies that do not rely on pre-packaged interpretations of experience but instead cultivate the embodied and affective dimensions of learning through metaphor. I conclude by proposing pathways for interdisciplinary dialogue between outdoor educators and philosophers of education that center experience not as a delivery system for content, but as a generative site for reflective, embodied, and transformative learning.

Stephen Houchins (Southern Illinois University Carbondale), "Helios Duo-Megistus: Neutral Monism and John Dewey's Metaphysics in *Experience and Nature*" (Session 6B)

The precise nature of John Dewey's metaphysics have been difficult to pin down. Hildebrand has noted that his metaphysics have been branded with a menagerie of labels over the years, including as an idealist and subjectivist. Dewey has also been influentially labeled as a neutral monist by Bertrand Russell, Godfrey-Smith, and Stubenberg & Wishon. In this paper, I will argue that Dewey cannot be considered a traditional monist, but is a neutralist; that is, he believes mind and matter are derived from something more primordial, namely, organism-environment interaction. Dewey's mature metaphysical views are formulated chiefly in *Experience and Nature*, and it is in this work that Dewey most clearly expresses neutralism, though this view persists into his final years, as evidenced by "Importance, Significance, and Meaning" from 1950 and his 1951 "Communication and Culture." Dewey is disqualified from traditional monism because he repudiates substance-based metaphysics. Natural events are precisely events, not a type of substance. It is only from natural events that the notions of mind and matter arise, as instrumentalities, and only for natural events that

they are useful. I argue this relationship is a process-based neutralism. From this account we gain more accurate insight into the workings of Dewey's metaphysics, which helps clarify debates on whether Dewey was an idealist, a materialist, panpsychist, etc. We also gain an opportunity to reconceive neutral monism and evaluate whether neutralism might be a preferable term, as many process metaphysics do not square neatly with monism.

Gioia Laura Iannilli (Università di Bologna), "What Dewey Doesn't Say" (Session 2A)

This paper examines some crucial elements and formulations from Dewey's Notes and Outlines for the Carus Lectures that were not carried over into *Experience and Nature* at least not in such a prominent or explicit form. Beyond offering insight into Dewey's writing process and ideas he left unpublished, the analysis of this remarkable material corroborates the thesis that his theory of perception – viewed from an aesthetic perspective – emerges as a complex, dynamic process of familiarization with the environment.

Harrison Jackson (Southern Illinois University Carbondale), "The (Dis)Continuity of Meaning in John Dewey's *Experience and Nature*" (Session 8B)

In *Experience and Nature*, John Dewey offers a continuous account of experience that seeks to mediate between many historical philosophical dualisms. However, as many scholars have noted, this account suffers from anthropocentrism, which can result in a problematic worldview that neglects the stability and well-being of nature and non-human life. I will argue that this anthropocentrism has its origin in his account of meaning. While Dewey emphasizes the importance of embodiment (by merging mind and body into body-mind), intersubjective (social) experience, and the ability to adopt another's standpoint, it is also a feature exclusive to humans, necessary for a wide spectrum of traits and abilities, and insufficiently connected with naturalistic evolutionary principles. Dewey readily accepts the behaviorist interpretation of animal signaling but provides humans with the unique ability to possess meaningful experience, use language as the "tool of tools," (LW 1: 134) and to truly perceive reality rather than merely "feel" it or "have" it. First, I will elucidate Dewey's goal in *Experience of Nature* and the account of meaning he advances therein. Then, I will consider the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the contemporary neuroscientific theory of enactivism as supplements to Dewey's thought. Finally, I will examine two contemporary naturalistic applications of Dewey's philosophy: Phillip McReynold's pragmatist argument for the moral status of animals, and Mark Johnson and Jay Schulkin's modernization of Dewey's naturalism. Both are forced to modify Dewey's account of meaning in the face of contemporary insights in biology, especially animal communication. I conclude by advocating for the inclusion of Merleau-Ponty's concept of sense as a more radically experiential alternative or enactivist neuroscience as a more grounded scientific perspective in Dewey's naturalism, since in the spirit of his denotative method any contemporary application of his philosophy should be modified in consideration of new scientific research.

Danica Jenck (Southern Illinois University Carbondale), "The Performative Self: A Critique of Religious Experience and Meaning in John Dewey" (Poster Session)

In *Experience and Nature*, John Dewey asserts the existence of the philosophic fallacy. Dewey describes the philosophic fallacy as a tendency within philosophy to attempt to understand Being by separating and categorizing various aspects of existence into arbitrary dualisms. The philosophic fallacy is not the existence of selective emphasis—which Dewey claims to be "inevitable whenever reflection occurs" and that it is "not an evil"—but instead as "only when the presence and operation of choice is concealed, disguised, denied" which can occur on "behalf of mathematical subsistences, esthetic essences, the purely physical order of

nature, or God" (LW 1:34). Dewey supports his understanding of the philosophic fallacy by examining how this understanding has helped to shape culture in all its forms, including labor, class, language, art, and meaning.

While what Dewey has said about language and meaning has been criticized for being anthropocentric—especially as it concerns whether animals have language and meaning, much of the discussion that has been informed by his perspectives on art, religion, and the supernatural have not typically seen these three in relation to each other. The few works that have focused on art, religion, and the supernatural are made complicated by Dewey's notion of experience. While Micheal Eldridge in Transforming Experience does a good job at nuancing Dewey's argument of religious experience without religious institution, yet Eldridge makes it clear that it is a mistake to call Dewey religious in the traditional understanding. I wish to expand the ideas that Eldridge establishes and take the intersections one step further. The reason that religion, religiosity, and the supernatural are complex sticking points within Dewey's philosophy is due to him having a limited understanding as to the ontological nature of subjectivity.

In this paper, I will examine how Dewey's naturalism and perspective of religious experience is complicated with what I call the ontology of performativity. I argue that performativity is the concretization and actualization of the self and the self's subjectivity where performativity operates in a triadic relationship with reflection and perception. While Dewey has his own conception of reflection and perception that are not incompatible with my own perspective, he fails to understand the relationship that performativity has with reflection and perception.

Mark Johnson (University of Oregon), "The Greatest (Philosophical) Story Ever Told" (Keynote Address #1)

Experience and Nature weaves together science, philosophy, and art to create a non-dualistic, non-reductive, account of our human condition. Contemporary biology, cognitive science, and neuroscience expand and support his legendary exploration of the fundamental processes of meaning, experience, thought, and action. The result is a philosophy fit for humans, insofar as it re-invents itself in response to ongoing changes in our bodily interactions with our physical, interpersonal, and cultural environments. This was Dewey's great gift to humanity.

Joel Katzav (University of Queensland), "Grace Andrus de Laguna's 1909 Idealist Critique of Pragmatism and its Impact on *Experience and Nature*" (Session 5B)

Grace Andrus de Laguna (1878-1978) was an American speculative philosopher who was educated within the absolute idealist tradition and who, despite being well known during the first half of the twentieth century, has been forgotten. The present paper will present the critique of pragmatism that she offers in her 1909 paper, "The Practical Character of Reality," outline the idealist theses that she defends alongside this critique, and situate it in relation to earlier work by her teacher, James Edwin Creighton, and responses to it by the pragmatists Boyd Henry Bode and John Dewey. The paper will also evaluate these responses. My goals are to help revive de Laguna's work, to trace some of the ways in which idealism was developing in novel, non-pragmatist directions, and to improve our understanding of the development of pragmatism.

I will start by outlining de Laguna's criticism of two core pragmatist theses. The first of these is instrumentalism, which includes the view that "all distinctions and terms of thought, that is to say, all meanings, are relative to the specific conditions which have called them forth and to the functions which they perform." The second thesis is immediatism, the view that "reality is, or things really are, what they are experienced as." De Laguna, we will see, argues that these theses come with a shared commitment to the claim that reality has a practical character but that the methodology it implies undermines itself and leads to the idealist view that the real is the ideal not the practical.

I will then present the theories of thought and philosophical methodology that fit de Laguna's idealist position. According to these, thought's relativity to the conditions in which it occurs decreases radically as it evolves, partly as a result of the activity of philosophy. Moreover, philosophy proceeds by undermining the theses of science, common sense, and philosophy through a form of immanent critique.

Finally, I will turn to situating de Laguna's theses about thought and philosophy and to evaluating her critique of pragmatism. I will show that her position departs from Creighton's absolute idealism but develops his philosophical methodology. I will also show that, although Bode alone offers an explicit response to de Laguna, Dewey knew her work and plausibly made substantial revisions to his conception of reality in response to her 1909 arguments. He modifies the view of reality he offers in his 1905 paper, "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism" and develops a new one after 1909. The new view is most extensively found in his book *Experience and Nature*. It supplements the immediatist notion of the real with a second, functionalist one. Regarding the responses that Bode and Dewey offer to de Laguna's critique, I will suggest that they are unsuccessful.

Oliver Kauffmann (Aarhus University), "Vintage Dewey: Reading *Experience and Nature* through Phenomenological Spectacles" (Session 8A)

Dewey was not associated with (Husserlian) phenomenology, but much good Deweyan wine might be distilled by reading *Experience and Nature* through phenomenological glasses.

By taking advantage of key-concepts such as 'the life-world', 'natural attitude', and 'epoché' from the Husserlian phenomenological tradition we add to the interpretation of Dewey's difficult notions of experience and denotative method, particularly in chapter 1 of the 1925 edition (LW1, 365-392). We discuss how some initial insights become obscured in chapter 1 of the 1929 edition (LW1, 10-41), partly because Dewey mixes up his specific denotative-empirical method with standard empirical explanatory scientific methods (see e.g. the examples with Darwin and Einstein, LW1, 15-16). Thomas Alexander (2004) mentions this problem, without invoking phenomenological concepts.

Like Husserlian phenomenologists, Dewey was in opposition to a 'thin' empiricist notion of experience, to rationalism and to Kantian intuitionism. And to avoid yet another epistemic stance 'cutting down the world in size', he, like Husserl, needed a peculiar method fitting 'the events of the world', fitting experience. This is why he writes "experience for philosophy is method" (LW1, 371). We must let experience speak for itself. "Denotation comes first and last"; it is a specific kind of demonstration, one of "showing, pointing, coming upon a thing" (372). This phrase is vague – we shall discuss whether it is about intentionality, the experiential phenomenon itself and/or about a principled ineffability. Minimally though, it is in line with two basic phenomenological ideas: Avoiding premature categorizations through suspension of judgment ('epoché machen') and letting the phenomena of experience speak for themselves: "back to the things themselves", as the rallying call of the phenomenological movement sounded. This humble attitude is also expressed in Dewey's methodological realism: "Because empirical method is denotative, it is realistic in the unsophisticated sense of the word" (380). "The experiential or denotative method tells us that we must go behind the refinements and elaborations of reflective experience to the gross and compulsory things of our doings, enjoyments and sufferings – to the things that force us to labor, that satisfy needs, that surprise us with beauty, that compel obedience under penalty." (LW1, 375-376). Again, Dewey's concern for and elaborative account of an epistemically fundamental conception of experience has close affinities with the phenomenologists' 'discovery' of the cultural, meaningful, historical life-world, the world of everyday experience, where human subjects live in what Husserl called 'a natural attitude', absorbed, living along in everyday life, driven by their various interests and habitualities (Husserl, 1913/1983, 54). However, the importance of this 'life-world approach', emphasized in the 1925-edition, is not consistently expressed in the

1929 edition. On the contrary, in line with Dewey's much later dissatisfaction with his notion of 'experience' (LW1, 361): "If the empirical method were universally or even generally adopted in philosophizing, there would be no need of referring to experience." (LW1, 14). Finally, our presentation points at surprising similarities between the metaphysical stance of *Experience and Nature* and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *The Structure of Behavior* (Merleau-Ponty, 1942/1963).

Emily LaRosa (Michigan State University), "Agricultural AI: A Deweyan Approach" (Session 6C)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) pervades our daily lives, as well as our natural and developed environments. This includes the agricultural sphere. Dewey argued in *Experience and Nature* that experience is an active and transactional process in which humans and nature co-evolve (Dewey, 1925). Following Dewey, Hickman (1990) emphasizes that technology, when properly integrated, can enhance rather than replace human intelligence. AI as a tool for enhancing agricultural practice can deepen experiential engagement by providing farmers with real-time, interactive feedback that refines their understanding of ecosystems, and improving farmers' techniques based on evolving environmental conditions, aligning with Dewey's vision of intelligence as an active, problem-solving force. However, critical voices like Kloppenburg (2004) and Van Der Ploeg et al. (2008) caution that technologies can also centralize knowledge and control, reducing farmers' agency. When AI becomes an abstract decision-maker, it undermines the embodied knowledge that Dewey saw as vital for learning and adaptation.

Consider the example of an autonomous apple picker. Designed to efficiently harvest fruit, it replaces human pickers whose decisions are shaped by a deep sensory familiarity with their environment. This removes a labor role and erodes a form of knowledge rooted in lived, adaptive engagement with nature. When such experiential knowledge is supplanted by AI, what is lost is a unique epistemology: farming as a relational, situated practice. Per Bronson (2022), this marks a broader tension in the trajectory of AI in agriculture between democratizing access to problem-solving tools and reinforcing technocratic control. Farming is a way of life and a way of knowing that integrates ecological rhythms, community values, and historical continuity. Autonomous systems may sever that relational thread, standardizing and scaling processes in ways that often ignore local nuances and non-quantifiable knowledge. Such systems can contribute to epistemic loss, where what is deemed "knowledge" becomes restricted to what can be digitized, rather than what can be sensed or stewarded through care.

Experience and Nature argues that human intelligence is at its best when integrated with the rhythms of the natural world, rather than imposed upon it as an external force (Dewey, 1925). If agricultural AI is to support democratic problem-solving, it should emerge from inclusive, iterative inquiry involving farmers, laborers, technologists, and local communities (Mallinger et al. 2024). To do this, I propose the use of the Curated Information Framework (CIF), a novel approach to disseminating knowledge about an AI system amongst those who are affected by the use of said system, in a collaborative way that respects the autonomy and education levels of those affected by the deployment of an agricultural AI (LaRosa n.p.). The CIF embodies Deweyan democratic ideals through fostering environments where knowledge is co-created through shared experience, rather than delivered top-down, thereby aligning technological development with the lived realities and insights of those most affected. It operationalizes Dewey's vision of democracy as a mode of associated living, one where inclusive, participatory dialogue shapes the meaning and application of agricultural AI, ensuring it remains rooted in the ecological and social contexts from which it emerges.

Andrii Leonov (Southern Illinois University Carbondale), "Is Dewey's Qualitative Naturalism a Kind of Neutral Monism or Panpsychism?" (Session 6B)

Does Dewey's solution to the mind-body problem commit him to some kind of neutral monism or panpsychism? This paper will attempt to answer this question. I argue that Dewey's qualitative naturalism must be understood as his ultimate solution to the mind-body-problem. As such it is metametaphysical move that consists in questioning the very metaphysical or ontological status of Galileo's primary-secondary qualities distinction and that ends up with the reversal of Galileo's qualities' order and making the "secondary qualities" ontologically primary and the "primary qualities" instrumental and thus secondary. The result is what can be termed as "quality/feeling ontology," or in a maxim, "Quality first, quantity second!" This seems to imply ontology and ontological naturalism of a non-physicalist (i.e., qualitative) kind.

But one may wonder if Dewey's qualitative naturalism is genuinely metametaphysical or second order solution to the mind-body problem or still a first order one. Thus, it is possible to imagine that some philosophers might disagree and still see it as not the second order but as the first-order solution instead. In other words, some could argue a la Rorty (1982) that although maybe Dewey did intend to overcome traditional or classical metaphysics, in fact he did not. Thus, Dewey's qualitative naturalism still ends up being a kind of classical first-order metaphysical solution and not that of second order. In literature, one can find two major possible candidates for the latter. These are neutral monism (Godfrey-Smith 2010; 2013 Gale 2002; Richards 1972; Russell 1927) and panpsychism (Gale 2002; Rorty 1998).

Here, I will attempt to defend Dewey's qualitative naturalism as indeed metametaphysical or second order solution to the mind-body problem and thus will argue that it should not be seen as that of the first order (e.g., either a kind of neutral monism or panpsychism and related views).

This paper consists of two parts. In Part I, I will inquire into the relationship between Dewey's qualitative naturalism and a theory of neutral monism. Part II will focus on whether qualitative naturalism can be counted as a kind of panpsychism. Every part has that structure that reflects the dialectical "objection-reply" or "attack-defense" manner. In the end, the paper will attempt to further clarify Dewey's idea of "qualitative natural event," as well as shed some more light as to what Dewey meant when he said that qualities or feelings "never were 'in' the organism" (LW 1: 199).

Steven Levine (UMass Boston), "Hegel's Place in Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics" (Session 8A)

In this paper, I examine Hegel's influence on Dewey's naturalist metaphysics, specifically on what is perhaps its central concept, the concept of a history. I argue that this concept, outlined in *Experience and Nature* and "Time and Individuality," has its origin in Hegel's account of causality given in the Encyclopedia Logic. I do not claim that Dewey's naturalistic metaphysics is ultimately Hegelian. Indeed, I aim to isolate the precise place where Dewey diverges from Hegel. But I do insist that the nature of this divergence can only be grasped if one discerns the permanent deposit of Hegel's Logic in Dewey's metaphysics.

Samantha Ooley (Purdue University), "Experience, Community, and Moral Development: Games based Pedagogy as a Deweyan Model" (Session 7C)

John Dewey's works on education emphasize the importance of at least these three elements: experience, community, and moral development. Education, to be truly effective for Dewey, must be based in experience where the student has the opportunity for active, authentic inquiry. This process should be rooted in the community where students are able to identify a role in the community, see themselves as a fit for that role, and fulfill specific needs of that community. Both of these elements then contribute to the moral development of the student's character, which is a primary aim of education for Dewey.

While Dewey focuses on childhood education, it is not too far a stretch to see why these attributes would still be valued in higher education and be important for teachers to include in their pedagogical approaches in the college and university classroom. There are many ways of incorporating one or another of these three attributes, however, there may not be as many easy ways to incorporate all three attributes at the same time and through one singular method. One way to do this, which we will explore, is through games-based pedagogy.

Games-based pedagogy, distinct from gamification, provides experiential learning opportunities through the process of playing games, including in environments where you are playing in-person, online, and even in virtual environments. When taking the approach of incorporating social gaming into the classroom, where the games are designed to encourage discussion and interaction, it enables cooperation and strong community building. Studies have also shown that one of the consistent areas of improvement of people who play these social games comes in their moral development, where they are more likely to improve their skills of empathy, compassion, civil discourse, and more. In this paper, I will consider the current literature and research at the foundation of games-based learning, connecting those positive attributes to Dewey's framework of experience, community, and moral development, as the foundation for good pedagogy. If I am successful, educators at the college and university levels will be encouraged to consider ways they can incorporate more games-based learning opportunities for their students.

Jasper Price (George Washington University), "Experience, Nature, and the Spectre of Subject Naturalism" (Poster Session)

Philosophical naturalism is broadly the view that the natural sciences exercise some kind of priority over the account of what we are and that philosophy ought to respect this priority. In the naturalist camp, the conundrum that ensues after this pertains to whether this priority concerns what we are as humans/life-forms or what we are as physical entities. The former position is called 'subject naturalism' and tends to take the form of a linguistic account of the development of humans into intelligent beings; the latter is called 'object naturalism' and tends to take the form of a physicalist metaphysics. This paper argues that John Dewey was not only a subject naturalist, but he laid the groundwork for a very promising subject naturalist programme. That programme had within it the beginnings of a critique of object naturalism and leveraged a prototypical form of Wilfrid Sellars' "Myth of the Given" to articulate that critique. Focusing on Dewey's subject naturalism about knowledge-affairs, I describe the various manners in which Dewey articulates a reconstructive philosophical account of thought and delineate where this project may receive further development.

Jeffrey Punske (Southern Illinois University Carbondale), "Linguistic Meaning—Convergence and Divergence in Dewey and Chomsky" (Session 1B)

My goal is to examine two views on linguistic meaning naturalism generally considered oppositional: John Dewey's and Noam Chomsky's (see discussion in Midtgarden 2008). I argue that much of Dewey's conception of language is largely compatible with Chomsky's, contrary to prevailing views. In particular, Dewey's and Chomsky's accounts of language are best understood as compatible elements in a larger, more complex model of linguistic meaning. This exploration seeks to bridge the gap between these two influential thinkers and uncover the nuances in their approaches. Dewey did not provide "a systematic account of his views about language" (Black 1962); however, both *Experience and Nature* (1925) and *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938) provide thorough accounts of Dewey's views on language (see Midtgarden 2008). Dewey's views may be described as behaviorist, cooperative, and externalist. For Dewey, linguistic meaning exists in

its social purpose and he rejects internalist views of meaning or views that draw on ephemeral Lockean/Platonic objects.

Chomsky provided multiple and varied systematic accounts of language (see Chomsky 1959, 1966, 2005, among others). While Chomsky's views of language change over time, they may be consistently described as anti-behaviorist (innate), individual, and internalist. For Chomsky, the primary purpose of language is the internal organization of thought, not for cooperation or other social purposes.

Thus, it appears that these views of language are mutually incompatible. However, by locating Dewey's approach to language in a more developed framework of linguistic structure and meaning, the compatibility of these views can be found. Marantz (1997), working in a Chomskyan perspective, argues for a tiered system of linguistic forms and meanings composed of multiple lists. For our purposes, the relevant discussion is found in the difference between list 1 and list 3 elements. List 1 elements are abstract meanings manipulated by the linguistic system, while list 3 elements are contextually determined and the locus of special meanings.

While this separation may seem inconsistent with Dewey's views—it actually answers critiques of Dewey's perspective. As Black (1962) notes, though Dewey argues against an internalist view of meaning, he seems to have unknowingly accepted elements of the basic assumptions of this view. By placing Dewey's perspective as an account of list 3, this critique becomes an asset: internalist meanings are part of the linguistic system but background to the empirical ground of Dewey's approach to language.

Similarly, another common critique of Dewey's approach to language is his inability to meaningfully distinguish between words and sentences (see Black 1962 and Midtgarden 2008). Here again, such clean distinctions are rejected in tiered frameworks of meaning (like Marantz 1997). Words are not the locus of meaning in such views—compatible with Dewey and not his critics.

For both Dewey and Chomsky, language is fundamentally composed of three elements: human nature (i.e., genetic endowment), natural constraints, and social interactions that shape meaning. Dewey's views of language provide key insights into the understanding of list 3 elements, while Chomskyan approaches to language are concerned with other aspects of a model of linguistic meaning.

Nicola Ramazzotto (University of Pisa), "The Legend of Dewey's Metaphysics" (Session 7A)

The aim of my paper is to examine Dewey's idea of the "generic traits of existence" as presented in *Experience and Nature*, especially Chapter 2. As a guiding thread, I will follow the polysemy of the term "legend" in speaking of a "legend of Dewey's metaphysics."

First, I will consider the "legend" of Dewey's metaphysics as the (in)famous scholarly debate that has absorbed, and continues to absorb, much of Deweyan research, outlining the main interpretative positions.

Second, I will turn to the "legend" of metaphysics as the grand narrative that Dewey inherited and sought to dismantle. Referring to Chapter 2 of *Experience and Nature*, I will show how Dewey's critique of traditional metaphysics takes him both inside and outside philosophy, in search of new possibilities for an empirical metaphysics of the generic traits of existence.

Third, I will address the "legend" of Dewey's metaphysics in relation to the idea of the generic traits as maps. Using the "precarious–stable" pair as a key reference, I will develop three arguments for the inseparability of stability and contingency. I will then emphasize the heuristic value of this trait for understanding the generic traits not simply as maps, but as "legends" that guide the drawing of maps—tools that both refer to things and events *in* existence and are meant *for* experience.

In conclusion, I will argue that reconceiving the generic traits not as maps but as legends clarifies how, for Dewey, philosophy and metaphysics—once freed from the traditional, "legendary" search for

ultimate ends, certainties, and absolute foundations—can become instruments for the human enterprise of both safeguarding novelty and creativity and stabilizing meaningful consummations.

Davide Rizza (University of East Anglia), "Scientific realism and the theory of enquiry" (Session 3B)

My main aim in this paper is to show how certain key ideas from *Experience and Nature* – i.e. the distinction between primary and secondary experience and the critique of persisting pre-scientific conception of knowledge in modern philosophy – can help illuminate the theoretical limitations that have marked classic discussions of scientific realism and anti-realism, since at least the 1970's, and eventually enable us to transcend them.

Prominent realist and anti-realist views (e.g. structural realism or constructive empiricism) refrain from drawing a distinction between the evidential materials of enquiry, as given at any one point in time, and the cognitive elaboration that promotes their reconstruction. They in fact adopt a descriptivist formulation of realism, whereby scientific theories are qualified as 'aiming at truth', i.e. at a final representation of antecedently given reality. An essential problem for the realist is to isolate fixed elements of a final representation in current science, lest the scientific enterprise be reduced to a play with ephemeral figments. The anti-realists seek to overcome this problem by variously extenuating the realist's claims (e.g. calling for empirical adequacy or for a revamped form of instrumentalism): their goal is to mitigate a philosophical outlook they reject, without questioning its intelligibility.

Dewey's reflections throw into relief the fact that, in order to adopt various realist and anti-realist stances, the context of enquiry is to be largely suppressed, or at least marginalised. Its suppression sets the realist a specific goal, namely that of showing how scientific work fixates its results beyond all possibility of change: such goal is not only countered by scientific change through history, but neglects the fact that enquiry does not exhaust all possible experience at any point in time, but articulates and enriches primary experience in secondary directions dictated by specific problems and situations. That this kind of novelty should be perceived as a problem by the realist is a revealing instance of philosophical prepossession at odds with scientific practice.

By contrast, the anti-realist somehow moderates the realist's claims by resurrecting equivalents of the idea of things in themselves, which must escape enquiries that merely attain empirical adequacy or explicate purely instrumental activity. Viewed through the lens of Dewey's conception of enquiry, such qualifications appear specious in that they inadequately refer to the mutual adaptation between methods and problems: instrumentalism deforms their interdependence into a logically untenable conception of instrument (for, if instruments are intermediary and conducive to ends, then they are simply the means of enquiry) while constructive empiricism draws a fictitious contrast between an impossible condition of scientific omniscience and the constrained state of enquiry in its historical existence.

Dewey's reflection on the study of nature does not only enable us to detect which philosophical excesses distract us from a straightforward and realistic analysis of the concrete conditions and unfolding of scientific work. It also enables us to emancipate philosophy of science from those ultimately pre-scientific conceptions of knowledge that *Experience and Nature* lucidly detects and criticises on account of the long shadow the cast on the later efforts of philosophers.

Teed Rockwell (Sonoma State), "Dewey, Kuhn and Lived Experience" (Session 3B)

The theory Dewey called Sensationalistic Empiricism (which usually called itself Sense Datum Theory), allegedly provided a justification for the superiority of scientific knowledge. This paper will discuss the problems that arose from the assumptions of Sense Datum Theory, and how Dewey's *Experience and Nature*

presented a revolutionary view of the relationship between knowledge and reality, which arguably solved those problems. Sense Datum theory invalidated several important aspects of human experience by claiming that they were subjective. Dewey's was to reclaim these aspects of experience which sense datum theory dismissed, and thus put experience back together again. Dewey claimed that we could accomplish this by recognizing that knowledge is grounded in problem-solving activity, rather than passive observation. His critics responded by saying that there is a difference between "practical" activities like engineering or business, and the "pure" research of science which revealed objective truths of science which are independent of any of our goals and activities.

However, a half century later, developments in both popular and academic thought are remarkably in line with Dewey's view of knowledge. Thomas Kuhn provided compelling evidence that even "pure" research is constituted by the activity he calls puzzle solving, and the idea of purely passive observation is a dangerously misleading myth. Modern writers on identity politics use terms like "Lived Experience" to show that they were not talking about only the allegedly objective aspects of experience admired by the Empiricists. They are in effect asking for a rejection of Sensationalistic Empiricism and the acceptance of something like Dewey's view of experience.

David Rojas Lizama (University of Edinburgh), "Dewey's philosophy of science and technology: Rethinking the pure and applied science distinction in Dewey's Later Works" (Session 3B)

While there is broad agreement that the concept of science plays a central role in John Dewey's work, the significance of his contribution to the field of philosophy of science was highly contested in his own time, resulting in a mixed reception (Hickman, 2022). Dewey's thought was met with scepticism, mainly because he explicitly rejected articulating his philosophy of science within the "epistemological industry" of the time (Brown, 2012; Gronda, 2020; Hickman, 2003; Hildebrand, 2024). For example, he refused to engage with issues such as the existence of unobservable entities or the logical reconstruction of science into a formal language. Instead, Dewey proposed an understanding of scientific research grounded in minimal realism, natural empiricism and an unconventional form of instrumentalism. These elements constitute a philosophy of science that can be reconstructed from his Later Works, especially *Experience and Nature* (Godfrey-Smith, 2014; Pihlström, 2008) and Logic (Brown, 2012; Gronda, 2020; Levi, 2012).

Nowadays, Dewey's contribution to the philosophy of science has been more broadly recognised (Brown, 2020; Chang, 2022). Within this context, this presentation explores the alternative of interpreting Dewey's philosophy of science as a philosophy of technology, following the path opened by Hickman (2003). According to Hickman, such a reading allows for (i) understanding scientific activities as adaptive, (ii) analysing scientific concepts genetically, (iii) avoiding foundationalism, and (iv) facilitating aim-oriented discussions about science. To this framework, the presentation adds insights from Dewey's Later Works, particularly concerning the distinction between science as the study of how things are and technology as the study of how things ought to be (Franssen et al., 2022; Simon, 2019).

Dewey's philosophy is not committed to science as a system grounded in positivist-like propositions (cf. LW12, part 3), which he regarded as tools. Instead, he emphasised judgments of practices, stating that they are "not a particular kind of judgment in the sense that they can be put over against other kinds, but are an inherent phase of judgment itself" (LW12, 180). Furthermore, Dewey viewed science as a complex process of inquiry embedded within a concrete "situation" or "contextual whole" (LW12, 72), that constituted a purposeful process of determination exhibiting specific patterns (LW12, chapter 6). In such contexts, the formal sciences can function as operational templates for epistemic activities.

This perspective supports a view of science as a mode of practical engagement with the human world, rather than an abstract effort to justify belief systems. While Dewey's claim in *Experience and Nature*

that all science should be seen as applied science does not deny the existence of "pure" science, he questions the validity of the pure/applied distinction—a dichotomy inherited and rejected by Dewey. His frequent references to industry, practice, and the humanisation of science suggest that his philosophy of science may be legitimately interpreted as a philosophy of technology, being its "pure" stage a means for "broadening the idea of application to include all phases of liberation and enrichment of human experience" (LW1, 131).

Austin Rooney (Rutgers-Camden), "The 'Fluxive' Dewey: Joe Margolis Reads John Dewey" (Poster Session)

Anyone familiar with the work of Joseph Margolis will be aware of the important role that John Dewey's later thought plays in Margolis's master argument for the metaphysical primacy of "flux" over "fixity." As a first step in a larger project that tracks the uses of Dewey in Margolis's thought, I propose to perform a systematic study of the marginalia of Margolis's copies of Dewey's *Experience and Nature*, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry,* and the posthumous *Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy* now available for the first time in the newly established Joseph Z. Margolis Collection with the American Institute for Philosophical and Cultural Thought. Initial examinations of these relatively recent copies--all were purchased during the last two decades of Margolis's life--have revealed extensive markups, notes, and commentaries. My proposal for the poster session is to provide an account of this survey of the Margolis marginalia with commentary on the corresponding quotations from Margolis's publications. Mostly exploratory at this stage, but very promising.

Richard Rubin (George Santayana Society), "The Nature of Naturalism: Dewey vs. Santayana" (Session 5B)

One of the most widely discussed American philosophical debates from the first half of the twentieth century is that between John Dewey and George Santayana. It became pronounced with Santayana's review of *Experience and Nature*, to which Dewey replied as if he'd been stabbed in the back by a trusted friend. Santayana called Dewey's naturalism half-hearted and short-winded. Dewey answered that if his naturalism was short-winded, then Santayana's was broken-backed. Santayana's letters show that his review was meant to be an ironic tease and that he hoped Dewey would appreciate it. After Dewey's perplexed reply appeared, Santayana referred to it as "Dewey's explosion."

The Dewey-Santayana controversy reveals radically different conceptions of naturalism. Their different philosophic methods and vocabulary caused them each to read past the other. Nevertheless, both managed to grasp something important about the nature of their controversy. Looking back on the rupture, it becomes clear that it was fundamentally a debate about morals and politics.

Inklings of their rivalry can be seen in their earlier writings, especially when they each reviewed the other's book on German philosophy during World War I. In 1923, while Dewey was working on *Experience and Nature*, he reviewed Santayana's *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, the introduction to his later ontology. Dewey's book, published two years later, contains several criticisms of Santayana, both implicit and explicit. In later years, the rivalry continued in Santayana's letters and in Dewey's subsequent reviews of many of Santayana's later works.

Dewey and Santayana were the subjects of the first two volumes in the Library of Living Philosophers. Santayana included his 1925 review of *Experience and Nature* in the 1939 Dewey volume without acknowledging that Dewey had replied to it in 1927, twelve years earlier. Dewey was not one of the critics in the 1940 Santayana volume, but he did publish a review of it.

The Santayana-Dewey controversy illustrates some things that both would agree upon about philosophic disagreement: First, the natural, social, and political context and the moral and political outlook of the philosopher shape the way a philosophic system is constructed. Second, the system's structure is expressed in the choice of terms a philosopher uses, so that two philosophers can use the same term to mean quite different things. Third, differences in meanings of terms, questions asked, and problems confronted tell us more about philosophic differences than quarrels over logic or facts.

A philosopher working in a naturalistic framework should be aware that these considerations have profound effects on the kind of naturalism that emerges. Mark Johnson and Jay Shulkin's book *Mind in Nature* is an update of the ideas in *Experience and Nature* with an eye toward recent developments in cognitive science. In it, they adopt much of Dewey's vocabulary. An examination of their work in light of Santayana's philosophy shows how much their terms and the philosophic edifice they support are choices and that Dewey's framework is not the only one that makes naturalistic sense out of cognitive science.

Frank X. Ryan (Kent State), "Fixing the 'Deep Crack' in *Experience and Nature*" (Session 5C)

In the early 1960s, Richard Bernstein lamented that Dewey's legacy was tarnished by an unresolved "deep crack, a discontinuity, that cuts through his naturalism." Though ostensibly a naturalist and realist, Dewey skews toward idealism in making experience so pervasive that it's "difficult to see what was not experience." I hope to close this deep crack with a transactional account of the reciprocity of "empirical" and "philosophical" in *Experience and Nature*. Dewey's critical methodology is both idealist and realist—idealist in insisting that objects are uniformly objectives of inquiry; realist in asserting that while many of these are independent of our affairs, those that concern us frame many of our most important philosophical questions.

Carl B. Sachs (Marymount University), "Ecological Psychology and Pragmatist Realism: Is Gibson Vulnerable to Dewey's Critique of Holt?" (Session 4B)

In *Experience and Nature*, as elsewhere, Dewey criticizes what he calls 'epistemological realism'. On Dewey's view, epistemological realism – his term for what is also called 'neo-realism' or 'the new realism' – shares a basic commitment with the idealism that it attempts to overcome. Both idealism and epistemological realism make the knowledge relation – the relation between knower and known – identical with the organism-environment relation in general. One prominent neorealist who was arguably vulnerable to this criticism was Edwin Holt, whose *The Concept of Consciousness* (1914) is cited in *Experience and Nature*. Holt's neo-realism is interesting in part because of Holt's influence on James J. Gibson. Gibson's theory of direct realism in perception was deeply influenced by and indebted to Holt's purposive behaviorism and ecological approach to consciousness. For this reason, one might ask whether Gibson inherits the features of Holt's view that Dewey found objectionable? I shall argue that the answer is no, because direct perception is not an epistemic relation. According to ecological psychology, animals directly perceive the invariants in structured energy gradients that specify their relations to their environments. But these invariants lack propositional structure. In other words, Gibson has 'de-epistemologized' direct realism. This is perhaps ironic, since Holt and the other new realists were committed to direct realism as an epistemological thesis in their campaign against idealism. But by de-epistemologizing direct realism, Gibson is thereby able to retain what is philosophically valuable in Holtian direct realism while evading Dewey's critique of neo-realism.

John R. Shook (Bowie State University), "Experience's Home in Quality Naturalism" (Session 5C)

John Dewey situated experience inherently within nature, neither spectrally hovering near nature nor engulfing all nature. Everything real shares something with experience, but most of reality won't be

experiential. Factors permitting experience are not themselves experiential, conscious, psychical, and so on, so Dewey cannot be classed with any idealism, phenomenalism, panpsychism, pansemiotics, or mentality-oriented worldview. The arena of the organic (electro-chemistry) yields conditions fostering experience, so the experiential constitutes a tiny portion of the universe. All the same, anything real can potentially get experienced in some proximal or distal manner. Philosophy usually takes that principle to be implying that all reality is already and inherently mental in some fashion, an implication ready for inflating into panpsychism or idealism. Dewey denied that implication. Practicalities frustrate the possibility of experiencing most of reality, but reality is always experienceable at least in principle. Natural matters are appreciable for experience because experiencing is always actively and acquisitively natural too. The essential continuity permitting that interactivity and approachability lies with Quality. Mind and matter find each other, not because one fundamentally has the character of the other, but because both are manifestations of the activity of Quality. *Experience and nature* are more than externally and accidentally related; an intrinsic commonality dictates how neither could be what it can be without the other. Experience has always been grounded in a cosmic home. Dewey's interpreters have overlooked his Quality Naturalism because he sometimes depicts qualitied experiences as simple immediacies to aesthetic effect, but that is not his final answer about quality's fuller relationality and potency. Nor is Dewey beholden to quality as "given" (an epistemological fiction) or as content for sense-data (which he ridiculed). Unlike the thin qualities of epistemology's dreams, Dewey's "thick" qualities in their manifestations are interactive and transitive [LW1:224]. Qualities are dimensional occasions of natural processes, with no deeper physical or metaphysical foundation. Dewey labels the qualitative as "absolute" [LW1:378]. Reality is not "qualitied" as a feature among many: only Quality completely and comprehensively counts as Reality.

Jessica Soester (Southern Illinois University Carbondale), "Sedimented Selves: Identity, Experience, and Philosophy in Delta Pragmatism" (Poster Session)

"Delta" (Δ) in the ancient Greek alphabet, and in scientific and mathematical formula, symbolizes change. "Delta Pragmatism" is aimed at change, to working out solutions to problems given to us and to our cultures through experience, and to rework the old in light of the new.

River deltas are created through sedimentation over time. The identities of the delta/river basin area, this flyover river zone, are arrived at through sedimentation over time. The river moves and even appears to flow backwards (such as during the New Madrid earthquake). Like the river flood plains, the soil of delta pragmatism is rich, with history, with unique cultures and philosophies, saturated with meaning from the river's ebbing and flowing, reaching out in its tributaries to other regional pragmatisms that constitute the Americas.

Delta pragmatism has as major themes—democracy, justice, freedom, journalism, aesthetic demonstration, non-violence, public philosophy, education, and ecology. It is a concern for, philosophic orientation towards, and method aimed at, problems which present themselves through the experiences of delta culture.

Delta pragmatism is intelligent engagement with creative tension characterized by the precarious and the stable. Such engagement is ecological and aesthetic, employing non-violent direct action. It insists on public accessibility and journalism. Delta pragmatism is informed by John Dewey's conceptual focus on democracy and education, as well Jane Addams' philosophy and work on non-violence and social inequity. Delta pragmatism is informed by Ida B. Wells' accountability [and investigative] journalism, and the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. [including his non-violent direct action]. Delta pragmatism is informed by bell hooks' representative conception of feminism, as well as her works on love, race, and gender, and Gloria Anzaldúa's focus on the inherent ambiguity and overlapping complexity of linguistic identities and her Inter-American

"spiritual activism" which pairs creative tensions with knowledge building as bridge building. Such figures are constitutive of these major focuses of delta pragmatism.

This project sees the ongoing sedimentation of identities involved in the cultural identity and philosophy of the delta area — thus extolling the existence of such cultures and philosophies, calling for formal engagement with this Delta Pragmatism. It is also a call for further development, for the addition of many more philosophies and philosophers of this wide but distinct cultural effluvial.

Lastly, this project on delta pragmatism suggests establishing a group, starting with the dialogue and contributions that arise from this poster project, leading to workshops and ideally an edited volume on Delta Pragmatism.

Tibor Solymosi (Villanova University), "The Problems that Haunt Philosophy: A Neuropragmatic Reconstruction of Artificial Intelligence" (Session 4B)

A thread through most of Dewey's *Experience and Nature* ties together how varieties of dualism haunt philosophy by generating irresolvable problems. From the unmoved movers to a priori dialectics to the fact/value dichotomy, Dewey excoriates philosophers for failing to reconstruct dualisms into continuities. Other inquirers may well be implicitly experimental, but all too often neglect the whole. When they do consider, they fail to be experimental and to reconstruct. Today, no greater illustration of this failure can be found than in artificial intelligence. As the ghastly ghostly thinking thing or transcendental self continues to haunt philosophy, so does AI haunt humanity. This haunting comes from the ongoing mass delusion of creeping Cartesianism (Solymosi & Shook 2013b). It keeps people from seeing the neurotransmitter in the synapse in the neuron in the cortex in the brain in the nervous system in the organism in the environment in nature.

Dewey's nested ecology appears now and again within his corpus. In *Experience and Nature*, its appearance is the culmination of his use of hauntings. The first five are articulations of the problem (LW1: 44, 65, 68, 149). But the last is Dewey's solution. In chapter 7, "Nature, Life and Body-Mind," Dewey brings to dramatic conclusion his discussion of the evolution of mind by framing it within cultural politics. Earlier in the chapter, Dewey reviews earlier views on the relationship between mind and body that are couched in and have effects upon the cultural politics of their time. He raises the alarm over growing insanity of a perceived disconnectedness of the myriad problems people face in 1925. As the chapter closes, Dewey offers a sign of light and hope amid the haunting darkness and insanity: "To see the organism innature, the nervous system in the organism, the brain in the nervous system, the cortex in the brain is the answer to the problems which haunt philosophy. And when thus seen they will be seen to be in, not as marbles are in a box but as events are in history, in a moving, growing never finished process" (LW1: 224).

I have referred to this declaration as the neuropragmatist motto (Solymosi 2011, 2025; Solymosi & Shook 2013a). Neuropragmatism is well-suited to engage in the cultural criticism of AI, from its underlying value presumptions to its strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, the ecological unity Dewey develops in *Experience and Nature* affords neuropragmatism a platform from which to constructively assess AI. I contend that AI is a form of creeping Cartesianism that succumbs to Cartesian gravity, generates Cartesian anxiety, and deepens the Cartesian wound (Solymosi and Shook 2013b; Dennett 2017; Bernstein 1983; Deacon 2012; Solymosi 2024). AI in its current manifestation haunts and will continue to haunt civilization so long as we treat it as a false god, disembodied and ethereal, black-boxed and infallible, as we ignore the realities of exploitation of life and earth required to construct, operate, maintain, and develop the delusion. This insanity haunts civilization as it blocks the road to inquiry, cripples democracy, and eliminates agency.

George Stickel, "Neurophilosophical implications from *Experience and Nature*" (Session 4B)

Today, Dewey's seminal work, *Experience and Nature*, still addresses major issues apropos to neurophilosophy and our understanding the details of our interaction within the environment and our complex neurological responses. Specifically, in Experience and nature Dewey provides clarity and a comprehensive view to the integral relationship of the continuum from immediate experience in the environment to the mediation of thought entwined with inferential processes of syntheses and analyses which are the complexity of neuronal reaction (1925 LW 1:251-ff).

This presentation will explore the essence of the representational interface between the organism and the environment using Dewey's *Experience and Nature*, and the antecedents from Charles S. Peirce, and the expansion by Madalena's "going beyond the classical pragmatists" (2015) to understand the processes of experience within the environment. The intent is to go beyond the haptic realism perspective of Chrimuuta (2024), or even scientific realism, to the pragmatic naturalism of Dewey and others to show a more united and continuous understanding of the neurophilosophy of experience.

The problem with haptic realism or even scientific realism is that the immediate object of interest, of the problematic situation, is always separated from the individual—it is never integral with and defined by the sensory and neurological responses as it is for the pragmatists. For example, Dewey wrote in Human nature and conduct: "Breathing is an affair of the air as truly as of the lungs; digesting an affair of food as truly as the tissues of stomach." (1922 MW14:15) Further, Dewey wrote in *Experience and Nature* (1925 LW1:235):

Empirical evidence in support of the proposition that consciousness of meanings denotes redirection of meanings (which are always ultimately meanings of events) is supplied by obvious facts of attention and interest on the one side, and the working of established and assured habits on the other. It will be shown that those "established and assured habits" include, not only those that identify learned details of the objects within the environment, but also those images, words, deductive and inductive habits of association, analyses, and syntheses of information that provide the dialog of problem solving within the brain. In his Logic (1938 LW 12:415-436) Dewey discusses the integration of the processes, the back and forth of deduction, induction, and hypothesizing (abduction for Peirce), for the scientist, or common person to solve problems. It is this whole integrated process that is of the special interest and need for understanding in neurophilosophy. Dewey and pragmatic naturalism have an important role in the furtherance of the theoretical work in neurophilosophy.

Scott Stroud (University of Texas at Austin), "*Experience and Nature*, Bhimrao Ambedkar, and the Fate of Democracy in India" (Session 6A)

Experience and Nature is one of John Dewey's most important works, but it is also one of his most complex and cryptic. But in this hermeneutic richness lies its potentials for applications in different contexts and times. One of those arenas of significance is one we have not heretofore explored: the important role the reception of *Experience and Nature* played in the founding of the world's largest democracy in India.

More light is being shed on one of the chief architects of the Indian constitution, Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891-1956), and his relationship to John Dewey. Dewey was Ambedkar's teacher in three influential classes at Columbia University while the young Indian reformer was there 1913-1916; Ambedkar would continue to amass books by or about Dewey in a sustained attempt to follow the development of his pragmatism from afar. Even though they did not meet after Ambedkar left New York in 1916, the reformer intensely focused on Indian civil rights and the fight against untouchability always saw the value in Dewey's philosophy. Indeed, through his selective engagement with Dewey's pragmatism, Ambedkar would form his own vision of

pragmatism, one fixated on democracy as a way of life and as one predicated on resisting divisive customs such as that of caste.

While more is being unearthed on Ambedkar's education and his specific engagement with pragmatism, not much has been said on a pragmatist book he acquired before much of his activism and political activity: the 1929 edition of *Experience and Nature* that he owned. Heavily annotated, this book is preserved in the archives at Ambedkar's own Siddharth College. What can we learn about Ambedkar's activism and his role in bringing democracy into Indian life and politics from his copy of *Experience and Nature*? Given its annotations in his own hand, we have some clues as to what he saw as important in the work; given his propensity for echoing specific passages of Dewey's and reworking them into his own, novel, arguments against the caste system, we can also track spaces where *Experience and Nature* matter for the form of Ambedkar's argument.

This paper will track the constellations of annotations in his copy of *Experience and Nature* with the aim of identifying what themes and positions Ambedkar found of interest in Dewey's book. It will also bring to prominence the themes of reflective thinking, communication as communion, and criticism from *Experience and Nature* as they appear in Ambedkar's central works on political philosophy in the 1930s. All of this not only sheds light on the reception of *Experience and Nature* by Ambedkar, but it also helps us expand the story of global pragmatism into the Indian sphere.

Experience and Nature, like pragmatism in general, changes and adapts as thinkers find useful themes in it to extend or resist. Ambedkar is revealed as an important player in that global evolution of pragmatism as well as in the global travels of *Experience and Nature*.

Jeremy Swartz (University of Oregon), "Towards Philosophy as Curation" (Session 4A)

This presentation engages an expanded notion of pragmatist curation, not merely as preservation and presentation of artifacts, but a problem-solving, reparative engagement relative to the values that are operative in a given context. Curation, then, is not merely a warehousing of objects, a repository or store-housing of collective memory. Curation should be reconceptualized as a melioristic remaking of experience for the better, a transformation that embodies care and repair, as a curative mode supported by a pragmatist notion of experience, meaning, and values.

This notion of curation also includes an expansive notion of technology, not merely as practical arts and tools, techniques and processes, and moral knowledge, but additionally as intelligent inquiry and moral imagination. According to Dewey, language can be understood as a meta-tool when he states: "As to be a tool, or to be used as means for consequences, is to have and to endow with meaning, language, being the tool of tools…" (EN, LW1: 146). This helps us to understand philosophy as a "criticism of criticisms" (EN, LW1: 298) in the application of intelligence.

What I postulate from recent pragmatism and cybernetics research is how a meta-language orientation offers common ground for the analysis and valuation of value systems. Philosophy seen as meta-language works at a level of generalizability that can bring to bear critical systems (ethics and aesthetics) on layers of valuations, where it may be possible to investigate their limits and opportunities related to curation. Also, computing is understood as a metalanguage (e.g., a programming language), especially in machine learning, as well as emerging approaches for the validating of validations, such as in reproducibility.

Dewey anticipated these types of developments and it is our responsibility to carry it further based on tools/value systems emerging for a plurality of futures.

John Sweeney (Duke University), "Dewey and the Consummatory Experience of Immersive Desiring" (Session 3A)

This paper considers the implications of Dewey's theory of natural ends for contemporary desire theories of well-being. Dewey's instrumentalist theory of inquiry depicts intelligence as a tool to "forecast what is desirable" (Dewey 1917, 215) Yet one does not acquire knowledge until a forecast "fructifies in the individual's own life." (Dewey 1916, 231). Deweyan acquisition of knowledge through experience—based on forecasting and fructifying what is desirable—reflects the same structure as desire-satisfaction theories of well-being.

In Sumner's definition, traditional desire theory holds that desires are prospective: "always directed on the future, never on the past or present" (Sumner 1999, 129). An agent derives positive value only when the object of her prior desire occurs. Viewed through a Deweyan lens, however, prospective desires do not intrinsically benefit us by satisfying fixed prior goals. Rather, their value is instrumental, providing us with "ends-in-view" that are "intellectual and regulative means" (Dewey 1925, 102) for the emergence of a different kind of desire: immersive desire.

Immersive desires follow Heathwood's concurrence condition, which holds that a state of affairs benefits us only if we desire it while it obtains (Heathwood 2005). Yet immersive desires are toward ideas about possibilities rather than toward material states of affairs. As Dewey emphasizes, "consciousness so far as it is not dull ache and torpid comfort is a thing of imagination" (Dewey 1925, 81). Drawn into immersive ideas, our imaginative impulses are awakened, "giving habits pertinence and freshness" (Dewey 1922, 100).

It is the simultaneous emergence of noncognitive attitudes alongside present ideas that constitutes Deweyan consummatory experiences —those "immediate and terminal qualities" of felt aesthetic significance (Dewey 1925, 104). Such "appreciative enjoyment," Dewey stresses, can be positively or negatively valenced—that is, it may involve positive or negative attitudes, consisting in qualities such as poignancy, tragedy, or humor (Dewey 1925, 84). Dewey writes that such "consummations have first to be hit upon spontaneously and accidentally" before they can be objects of symbolic reference or ends-in-view (Dewey 1925, 81) This entails that traditional prospective desire theory cannot ground the value of our more immediate immersive desires; rather immersive consummatory experience that gives rise to prospective desire.

Immersive desires feature directly felt noncognitive positive attitudes toward ideas. These particular consummations draw us into "self-realization," whereby we "find the self in the highest and fullest activity possible at the time," engaged in "complete interest" (Dewey 1893, 662). These consummatory experiences feature our full affective support as our sense of possibility expands and the self becomes ever more "open for instruction" (Dewey 1893, 661).

Deweyan desire theory holds that, contrary to traditional desire theory, the intrinsic value of desire does not lie in the prospective identification and eventual satisfaction of what we want from the future. Rather, such value lies in consummatory aesthetic experiences that capture our complete attraction. The value of such immersive desiring is affective, motivational, and mantric—pulling us into ideas that invigorate and propel us forward.

Scott Taylor (Teachers College, Columbia University), "The Concept of Event in Whitehead and Dewey and its Place in Contemporary Debates in Event Ontologies" (Session 6B)

In his early works, Alfred North Whitehead's theory of events served as the metaphysical building-block of his cosmology. By the time he published his magnum opus *Process and Reality*, he removed the event from his lexicon. In contrast, John Dewey's notion of event emerges in his later works, beginning with, and most

notably described in, his magnum opus *Experience and Nature*. Though seldom interrogated by Dewey scholars, the event arguably serves the same metaphysical grounding as it does for Whitehead. So much so that in his review of *Experience and Nature*, George Santayana referred to Dewey's events as his "metaphysical elements." Acknowledging the importance of the event in Whitehead, and Dewey in particular, no doubt evokes a great uneasiness amongst proponents of an anti-foundationalist tradition. For instance, Rorty and Seigfried argue that pragmatists are better off ridding themselves of the term metaphysics altogether. Still, such commentators as Boisvert, Myers, Pihlström, and Benjamin-Cherlin convincingly defend versions of Deweyan metaphysics. In agreement, I argue that it is high time that pragmatist scholars grapple with its inherited ontology. The most effective way to do so, I contend, is by reexamining the concept of event from the vantage point of pragmatist naturalism.

In this paper I provide a comparative analysis of the concept of event in Dewey's *Experience and Nature* and Whitehead's *The Concept of Nature*. In examining the similarities and differences of the concept of event in both processual thinkers, I put forward a reformulation of the event that becomes a formidable, though not incorrigibly foundational, ontology for the pragmatic tradition as a whole. To advance this claim, the interrelationship between events and such important notions as pragmatic naturalism, meaning-making, emergence, objectivity, and temporality will demand our attention. I conclude by situating a specific pragmatic notion of event within contemporary debates on eventual ontologies inspired by Heidegger and Deleuze.

Vishal Thakare (University of Texas Austin), "Buddhist Reading of Dewey's *Experience and Nature*"
(Session 6A)

This paper is a proposal in progress and wish to undertake a comparative philosophical exploration of John Dewey's *Experience and Nature* (1925) through the lens of Buddhist thought and approach, particularly the doctrine of impermanence (anicca) and Dewey's pragmatist naturalism. Though Dewey and Buddhists ideas emerge from completely different historical and cultural contexts, both seem to articulate a vision of reality as processual, contingent, and interdependent thereby rejecting metaphysical notions of fixed essences, dualisms, and permanence. In this paper I aim to draw connections between Dewey's pragmatist naturalism reading through Buddhist philosophy and explore potential cross-cultural framework for understanding experience as inherently unstable yet generative—shaped by relational transactions rather than isolated substances. Dewey's critique of traditional Western metaphysics emphasizes its failure to account for the continuity between human experience and nature. He disassembles entrenched dualisms such as mind/body, subject/object, and permanence/change, insisting instead on a view of nature as dynamic and precarious. Dewey's distinction between the "precarious" and the "stable" aspects of existence finds a clear parallel in the Buddhist insight that all phenomena are transient, subject to arising and cessation. In both frameworks, clinging to permanence is revealed as imperfect lived reality and results from limited enquiry. Moreover, Dewey's instrumental theory of knowledge—wherein inquiry functions as a tool for navigating and transforming uncertain experience resonates with Buddhist practices of mindfulness which aim to directly apprehend the impermanent and conditioned nature of all phenomena. Both traditions emphasize experience as an active engagement rather than passive observation, rejecting representationalist models of mind. For Dewey, consciousness arises not as an inner realm but as a function of embodied interaction with the environment while for Buddhism, the mind is a flow of dependently arisen events, devoid of an enduring self (anattā).

Dewey's orientation is primarily ameliorative, focused on reconstructing experience through inquiry to promote democratic growth and social intelligence. While Buddhism often reduced to individualistic aims of liberation from the cycles of craving and attachment through ethical discipline and contemplative practice.

Nevertheless, both share experiential emphasis, rejecting supernaturalism while affirming the potential for transformative understanding through sustained engagement with impermanence. By doing this I aim to offer Buddhist reading of Dewey's *Experience and Nature* tracing its anti-essentialist and processual commitments in pursuing knowledge and at the same time highlighting contrasts and limitations. It invites a dialogical turn in Deweyan scholarship, one that takes seriously the resources of Buddhist thought for articulating a relational, impermanent, and ethical understanding of experience. In doing so, it aims to put Dewey in conversation with Buddhist thought than just simply isolating and deprovincializing western thought and imagine pragmatism in pluralistic ways.

Seth Vannatta (Morgan State University) & Bethany Henning (College of St. Scholastica), "The Importance of Dewey's Metaphysics for the Liberal Arts" (Session 4A)

The premise of our paper is that metaphysics, communicated explicitly or tacitly implied, dictates one's understanding of liberal arts education and one's conception of art. The virtues of Dewey's process metaphysics featured in *Experience and Nature* - a radically empirical method, a critique of the fallacies found in dualistic metaphysics, the hypothesis of continuity in experience, nature, and mind, and fallibilism as a norm of inquiry–are significant for Dewey's philosophy of liberal arts education and philosophy of art. Dewey's conception of liberal arts education resists the canonical rigidity of the reactionary, (tethered to dualistic metaphysics), responds to the ever-evolving social demands and practices that help frame the perennial questions of liberal learning, and values the poetry of conversation and the disengagement demanded by such a conversation, even if social problems or student interests initiate the reflective inquiry. Further, Dewey's process metaphysics informs his philosophy of art, as a philosophy of aesthetic experience. Dewey's aesthetics draws continuity between the dichotomies erected by conservative approaches to art, (tethered to a dualistic metaphysics), including the fine and the useful. Dewey maintains the continuity between various binaries by focusing on the triadic relationship between artist, art object, and the work of art in the experience of its audience. Dewey returns art to the essential traits of lived experience, the precarious and stable, featured in *Experience and Nature*. We discuss continuity (a process metaphysical concept) as a condition for the possibility of art. We also highlight the function of quality, (a process metaphysical concept), in consummatory experience and the implications of his aesthetics on the open canon of liberal education.

Sarah Warren (Siena College), "Cultivating the Wondrous Experience of John Dewey" (Session 5A)

Environmental ethics captures a broad domain of thought spanning the human and more-than-human worlds, and this domain is rife with theoretical differences: from holistic biocentrists who would have us recognize the intrinsic value of the entire moral community of living beings taken in sum, to weak anthropocentrists who believe that values must be anthropogenic to be coherent yet who staunchly believe that wilderness, landscapes, and unique ecosystems may represent what is richest and most precious about living life as a human. One thing that they tend to share, however, is a concern with historical modes of conceptualizing self-world relations. The persistent legacy of human exceptionalism—the view of "Man" as rational, autonomous, and discrete—haunts philosophy as a spectral, disembodied Weltanschauung whose lingering presence compromises efforts to think Earthly life differently in a time of environmental crisis. For some, the answer is to mine intellectual history for better alternatives—for instance, Jane Bennett's return to vitalism in order to channel material agency as a potent metaphysical force. For others, unprecedented times require radically new ways of thinking. Scholars like Martha Nussbaum, Jeremy Bendik-Keymer, and Brian Onishi have carved out a compelling space to rethink the concept of wonder as a lever to multispecies virtue: in pressing us into a receptive comportment of awe, perhaps even facilitating a productive wounding that

renders us more porous to the world, wonder provides a foundation for recognizing the need for imagination, humility, and vulnerability in negotiating complex self-world relations.

My paper will put contemporary accounts of wonder into conversation with Dewey's so-called "low-rise metaphysics," as articulated in *Experience and Nature*, in order to demonstrate how wonder is bound up with Dewey's understanding of the double-barreled quality of experience and the qualitative immediacy of the aesthetic encounter. While proponents of wonder often stress its utility in re-establishing healthier relationships with even non-charismatic species (e.g., Onishi's analysis of the tick), there is less said about how wonder might help us connect differently with silent species of flora and fungi—yet, from the trickster antics of orchids impersonating bees to the fungi that seize control of insect hosts, flora and fungi are as wondrous as they are ubiquitous and essential to a robust, biodiverse, and value-rich Earth. This paper will ultimately demonstrate that the "seeds" of an account of wonder can be located in the fundamentals of Dewey's metaphysical work, in which experience can never be ontologically hewn into act and material, or subject and object, but expresses them both in totality: the germinal state of wonder might be posited as the trait of qualitative immediacy in which things (including naturalistic entities) are "just had," which might then develop into the aesthetic through a certain structuration of encounter that emerges through the human organism in its always-more-than-human situational context. The takeaway? That wonder helps us understand that Deweyan democracy takes shape not only at the level of human politics, but political ontology—with significant takeaways for biodiversity protections.

Aaron Wilson (South Texas College), "How Different are Dewey's and Peirce's Views on the Nature of Experience?" (Session 7B)

On the surface, it seems that Dewey would accuse Peirce of "intellectualism": "the theory that all experiencing is a mode of knowing, and that all subject-matter, all nature, is, in principle, to be [identified with the] refined objects of science as such" (LW1:21). On Peirce's account, not only is the real understood as the object of the would-be final result of (intellectual, reflective) inquiry, but the objects of sense perception seem to be objects of judgment employing "intellectual concepts". At the least, from the Deweyan perspective, Peirce might seem to pay too much attention to the "refined" objects of experience and not enough to the objects of our primary, immediate experience.

However, this impression oversimplifies both Peirce's and Dewey's views and overlooks the ground they share in treating experience as fundamentally interactive, temporal, and situated within a natural context. This common ground runs as deep as their respective approaches to doing philosophy. Both pursue methods by which we set out with our everyday or common experience and, as Peirce says, "all the prejudices we actually have when we enter upon the study of philosophy" (W2:212). This includes treating "manifest objects" such as meanings, values, and esthetic qualities as real objects of experience. Although the reality of such manifest objects might be more transparent in Dewey than it is in Peirce (at least, as objects of experience), several claims that Peirce makes about experience and perception justify attributing the same commitment to him.

Recent authors have emphasized how, on Peirce's account, sense perception involves far more than cognition of particular sensible qualities (color, size, shape, etc.) of individual objects. Peirce directly holds that we can perceive certain modal properties, such as necessities (e.g. Legg 2014), as well as general types and relations (e.g. Wilson 2012, Sorrell 2015). Also, Wilson (2016) reconstructs Peirce's account of perception to show how, on that account, causal, semiotic, and normative or value properties are perceivable.

In this talk, after establishing the relevant historical and philosophical context, I will draw out and defend the connections between Peirce's accounts of experience and perception to Dewey's "immediate

empiricism," which holds that "things are as they are experienced to be," which forms part of what he calls "empirical naturalism" in his *Experience and Nature*. As scholars have argued, Dewey's immediate empiricism is not the claim that everything we experience is real, such that merely dreamt or hallucinated objects are real (e.g. Shook 2000). Rather, there is a temporal dimension to experience whereby "[i]llusions are illusions, but the occurrence of illusions is not an illusion, but a genuine reality. What is really 'in' experience extends much further than that which at any time is known." (LW1:20) This echoes Peirce's own position on the reality of dreams and illusions, as well as a point that his writings strongly suggest, that there is more to a given experience than we know at the time of it.

Overall, the talk will intertwine Peirce's and Dewey's views on the nature of experience to demonstrate their convergence on most key ideas. I argue that the differences between them are mostly stylistic, although there do remain some substantial differences. I will elaborate on these in the talk.

Dylan Wittkower (Old Dominion University), "Experience and Place (場所): Recovering connections between James, Dewey, Nishida, Heidegger, and Zen practice" (Session 6A)

There are numerous moments of striking similarity between John Dewey's *Experience and Nature* and elements of Martin Heidegger's middle and especially later works (e.g. "The Question Concerning Technology," What is Called Thinking?). These similarities are distinctive enough to make a possible connection worthy of interest, but I know of no way clear and recognized historical connection between Dewey's work in the 1920s and Heidegger's in the 1950s.

Reinhard May's Heidegger's Hidden Sources documented Heidegger's nearly lifelong friendships with Kyoto School scholars, especially Tanabe Hajime and Nishitani Keiji, and indicated how those relationships exhibited deep influences on Heidegger's thought that he directly and actively obscured. Kyoto School philosophy is typically conceived of as emerging out of Shin Buddhism and Phenomenology, but also was significantly influenced by American Pragmatism, especially William James. This provides a plausible basis for numerous striking similarities between Dewey's later work and Kyoto School philosophy—and, by extension, with Heidegger's work as well.

As an initial exploration of the value that might be found in these historical connections, this presentation will explore conceptual connections between Pragmatist and Kyoto School works that directly draw upon James's radical empiricism: John Dewey's *Experience and Nature* (1925) and Nishida Kitarō's development of "basho logic," starting in his Basho (1926).

Citing James's Essays in Radical Empiricism, Dewey says that experience "recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality" (p. 8). Dewey then attributes many or most of the systemic errors of Anglo-European philosophy to mistakenly attributing ontological authority to the epistemic categories used in the secondary experience of reflection, in which act and material and subject and object are conceptually separated. The solution, in his view, is to return to and recognize the ontological priority of immediate experience and to recognize the insoluble problems of the Anglo-European tradition as mere mirages.

Nishida takes a similar route through his basho logic, both in broad outline and also in many notable details. Nishida claims European epistemology has pursued a fundamental reality through removal of contingent qualities, resulting in the impossible idea that the true object of knowledge is a subject without predicates. The solution, in his view, is to proceed in the other direction, seeking out predication without subjects. In immediate experience, as can be reached through e.g. zazen (坐禅) meditative practice, we enter into a place (basho, 場所) where the truth of knowledge happens, but where traditional European epistemology cannot reach, since it insists on knowledge being a knowing by a subject of an object, and truth is found in that productive nothingness (mu, 無) of pure predication.

These connections may be of interest as work in the history of philosophy but also allow us to better align distinctive concepts across schools of thought to find what is present in some and absent in others, indicating possible areas of further development in current philosophical work based on these traditions.

Robin Zebrowski (Beloit College), "Machines of Action-Undergoing: Deweyan Habits for Enactive AI" (Session 6C)

In 1925, Dewey recognized that, "… unless there is a breach of historic and natural continuity, cognitive experience must originate within that of a non-cognitive sort" (23). Yet in 2025, Large Language Models (LLMs) are a clear reminder of the failures of traditional AI. Even embodied robotics, where we see systems able to successfully navigate dynamic environments (e.g. Boston Dynamics), has not produced the kind of interesting systems that the strong AI project has hoped for. By most accounts, AI is a trillion-dollar enterprise now, while the strong AI project (AGI) moves toward a religious enterprise rather than a scientific research program. On the occasion of the centennial of Dewey's *Experience and Nature*, it's worth revisiting the text to see how Dewey's reluctantly-metaphysical approaches might help us envision artificial minds using what are now commonly considered enactivist principles.

While enactivism normally proceeds from the assumption that life and mind are a continuum (seemingly ruling out AI on principle), Di Paolo (2003) proposes for robotics the possibility of replacing life with way of life – rather than a focus on autopoiesis or metabolism, what if we attempt to build artificial systems that seek to conserve the vital habits of perpetuation, the role often played by life processes in the natural world? This paper puts several texts into conversation in an attempt to see what this revisiting of habits in this context might look like, and why this is the best bet for an AI research project that has the potential to create actually interesting systems. Focusing on Di Paolo's (2003) proposal and Dewey's focus on life processes in *Experience and Nature* (1925), the tentacles of this claim also extend into critiques of LLMs via questions of enactive and embodied language (Di Paolo, Cuffari, and De Jaegher, 2018; Birhane and McGann, 2024), and social cognition and constitution in both natural and artificial systems (Fuchs and De Jaegher 2009; Di Paolo and De Jeagher 2007; Seibt, 2020). *Experience and Nature*, then, should be properly considered as an originary text not just in enactivism, but also enactivist AI, despite the focus on life and life-processes. It offers valuable approaches to the AI project that are not currently being pursued.