

Abstract

This essay makes the case that one of the most significant errors in aesthetic theory is its failure to account for art as a creative act that emerges from the temporal flow of lived experience. Drawing on John Dewey's aesthetics and contemporary poetics, it articulates a view of creative action in terms of temporal experience. It begins by showing why time must be considered central to aesthetic theory, drawing a connection between time and what Dewey calls the logic of qualitative thought. It then distinguishes between time as a temporal ordering and time as a temporal quality of creative action. Finally, it argues that creative action is only possible because it is a temporally emergent process that is qualitatively experienced. As a result of placing temporality at its core, aesthetic theory shifts from a concern with the *products* of the art world to the *practices* of creative action.

Keywords: John Dewey, Aesthetics, Time, Temporality, Creativity

When philosophers consider art, they typically do so from the standpoint of an outside observer, yielding a description of the phenomenon as though it was in actuality a mode of philosophy. Here the work appears to have been constructed as part of a purely rational process, or at least dominated by logic and cognitive intention at all meaningful points along the way. In the final account the anoetic is eclipsed by the noetic, which is taken as its most important and most valid dimension.

Recently Thomas C. Hilde (2000) claimed that "the typical philosopher's vantage is nevertheless bound to present an

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account of art and the practices the artwork implies or conceals that is different from and sometimes a caricature of the actual doings of artists” (p. 550). This is because, as Hilde argues, “the majority of [philosophers] do not practice painting. This is not to say, of course, that philosophers do not have aesthetic experiences. It is rather to say that these are not usually from within the practices of painting but from the observation of the object(s)” (p. 549). In his essay, Hilde, who is also a painter, provided an alternative to this problematic account of art by arguing for the inclusion of the notion of accident in art-making. Hilde’s assessment resonates with my own experience as a practicing poet who completed art school before turning to philosophy.

In this essay I will add to Hilde’s argument by articulating a view of creative action in terms of time or, more specifically, temporal experience. I will begin by showing why time must be considered central to aesthetic theory, drawing a particular connection between time and what John Dewey calls the logic of qualitative thought. I will then distinguish between time as a temporal ordering and time as a temporal quality of creative action, arguing that the latter should be central to aesthetics. In the remaining sections, I will turn to insights from poetics to argue that creative action is only possible because it is a temporally emergent process that is qualitatively experienced. Ultimately it is my contention that one of the most significant errors in aesthetic theory is its failure to account for art as a creative act that that emerges from the temporal flow of lived experience. To the contrary, taking temporality seriously shifts the central concern of aesthetic theory from the *products* of the art world to the *practices* of creative action.

Time and Aesthetic Theory

The central, if not most misunderstood, concern of Dewey’s aesthetics and his broader theory of experience is the logic of qualitative thought. While Dewey claims that qualitative thinking lies at the heart of all experience, in the context of philosophy “either thought is denied to the [qualitative thought], and the phenomena are attributed to ‘intuition’ or ‘genius’ or ‘impulse’ or ‘personality’ as ultimate and unanalyzable entities; or, worse yet, intellectual analysis is reduced to a mechanical enumeration of isolated items or ‘properties’” (p. 246). Denying the reality of qualitative thought results in either the view that creative action is outside the boundary of philosophical analysis (i.e. non-intelligent), or that it must conform to the logical structures of philosophy to be properly understood (i.e. purely rational). Dewey rejects both of these positions. Instead, he constructs an aesthetic theory on the logic of qualitative thinking, attempting to understand art, creative action, and lived experience in a way that is more robust and meaningful than viewing art as a mere cognitive artifact. It is an attempt to understand artistic creation on its own terms.

One reason why the qualitative dimension of creative action is so frequently misunderstood or ignored in aesthetics is its intimate connection with the immediate, temporal dimension of experience. Qualitative thought is not only “felt,” or in Dewey’s language, “immediately had” - it is also a temporally emergent event that cannot be completely de-contextualized and reduced to logical and linguistic structures.

Dewey’s aesthetics attempts to build an understanding of art that is explicitly temporally emergent and concerned with practices of creative action as they take shape in and through time. Dewey (1934/1988) explains the nature of this irreducible temporal context in *Art as Experience*, writing that

when a flash of lightning illumines a dark landscape, there is momentary recognition of objects. But the recognition is not itself a mere point in time. It is the focal culmination of [a] long, slow process of maturation. It is the manifestation of the continuity of an ordered temporal experience in a sudden discrete instant of climax. It is as meaningless in isolation as would be the drama of Hamlet were it confined to a single line or word with no context. (p. 29)

As Dewey understands it, one of the central problems in aesthetic theory is its reduction of the holistic, temporal process of artistic creation and aesthetic experience to the singular art object – the “instant of climax,” “single line,” or “word with no context.”

It should be no surprise, then, that Dewey (1925/1981) argues one of the central mistakes of Western metaphysics (particularly Substance Realism) is its insistence on a two-tiered view of the cosmos that removes “the notion of temporality and change as a necessary quality in the structure of reality” (pp. 192–193). It is this very foundationalist commitment which is carried forward into contemporary aesthetic theory’s attempt to provide what Richard Shusterman calls “wrapper” definitions of art (see Shusterman 1992/2000, p. 40). Following Dewey, Shusterman argues that art is not an object but an experience undergone by an observer or reader. Poet Charles Bernstein (2011) argues something similar in claiming that “poetry is not an essence but a practice...there is no fundamental nature of poetry and it changes over time” (pp. 227–228). Shusterman and Bernstein agree that the temporal is irreducible and active both in the act of making (i.e. the standpoint of the writer) and the act of undergoing (i.e. the standpoint of the writer and reader).

Without considering the temporal within aesthetics, theories of art are rendered incapable of transforming our understanding of art, art making, or the human experience. As Shusterman (1992/2000) argues “wrapper definitions” only serve to “present, contain, and conserve

their object.... They do not significantly transform that understanding; nor, except incidentally, do they enhance or modify our experience and practice of art” (p. 40). This is a significant problem both in aesthetics and philosophy more generally because as Dewey argues the goal of philosophy is not to search for a priori foundations underpinning the cosmos, but to render the qualitative, temporal flow of experience more meaningful.

Time and Temporality

Before moving further, it is important to clarify the notion of the temporal in the context of artistic practice and aesthetic theory. There are several aestheticians who have purposefully included the concept of time in constructing a theory of art. One of the most notable is Arthur Danto who makes a case that art’s history is central to its identity (Danto 1986, pp. 196–198). More recently, Eddy Zemach (1997) articulated an aesthetic theory that accounts for what he calls “time-sensitive properties” which reference “the location of the observer in time” with respect to any particular work (p. 77). When Danto and Zemach consider time, it is in terms of its impact on the social, historical, or geographic standpoint of the artist, observer, or critic as they create or assess the artwork. Here time functions as a kind of contextual anchor within an otherwise logically ordered process of creating or understanding art. While this view of time certainly informs art and artistic criticism, it is not the view of time with which I am concerned here. Instead, I am interested in time as a *quality of creative action*.

Dewey’s distinction between *temporal order* and *temporal quality* is helpful here. For him “[t]emporal order is a matter of science; [while] temporal quality is an immediate trait of every occurrence whether in or out of consciousness. Every event as such is passing into other things, in such a way that a later occurrence is an integral part of the *character* or *nature* of present existence” (Dewey 1925/1981, p. 92, italics in original). Temporal order serves as a kind of abstracted description of a resolved process: it is past-directed, abstract, logical, and often results in what Dewey describes as “motion in space” (Dewey 1940/1988, p. 98). Temporal quality, on the other hand, attempts to describe actual, lived experience, which is future-directed, synthetic, and emergent. It is my contention that most aestheticians view creative action as a temporally ordered process. The danger of such a view is that artistic making is incorrectly viewed as a logically determined, causally dependent process unfolding toward a teleological end, rather than a felt process of coordinated action-in-environment.

One major difficulty in conceptualizing the interpenetration of time and creative action is that the metaphorical resources of the Western tradition almost exclusively articulate time as an ontologically distinct and spatialized concept. Instead, Dewey understood temporality as a

quality describing the flow of life from which relationships develop and meanings emerge. Martin Coleman (2008) argues that “the image of time as stream supposes time as a medium separate from things that exist temporally. Dewey’s account suggests that time does not consist of separate sections analogous to spatial divisions” (p. 686). Instead, temporality is a felt reality and a property of experience. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999) argue that in the English language, time “is not conceptualized and talked about on its own terms. Very little of our understanding of time is purely temporal. Most of our understanding is a metaphorical version of our understanding of motion in space” (p. 139). If we want to construct a view of experience as temporal, often the best we can do is move toward what Lakoff and Johnson call spatial time, or time as discreet units. This view is a bit like watching a movie on an 8MM projector: it shows motion and even represents events well, but it is still not life.

The Temporal as Transactional

Rather than turning to philosophers in trying to understand the relationship between temporality and creative action, I believe it is more fruitful to turn to poets in their articulation of the process of art making.¹ For practicing artists, unlike philosophers, the notions of temporality and temporal flow have never been seen as antithetical or irrelevant to their work. To the contrary, temporal emergence is more often celebrated as a central ingredient within creative action. In my own experience as a student in poetry workshops (those classes in which creative writers learn creative writing), issues of a poem’s meaning or its value to the art world were never considered. Instead the aim was teaching the art of direct expression, as well as the delicate task of entrance to a flow moment out of which the transactional process of poetic construction might emerge. The goal was to develop the embodied habits of creative of action.

The transactional experience of writing, which is an active and alert commerce with the world, is only possible because it is a temporal process that is qualitative and contingent. Unlike the context of philosophy, these traits are not understood as a point of error or scandal, but of strength and vitality. Dan Gerber (2010) writes that

as a poet, or any artist, learns to trust and to give him- or herself up to the process by which the work reveals itself, he begins to see that what may have seemed only a random series of images in the moment of creation bear a definite and incontrovertible relationship that, once discovered, can no longer go unnoticed. (p. 38)

Here, Gerber captures the sense that poets are keenly aware that their relationship with the world is meaningful as a result (rather than in spite)

of its contingent, transactional temporality. Temporal contingency does not undermine value, such as it does in foundationalist metaphysical accounts, but is that thing which brings value to life. This is because, as Dewey (1925/1981) recognized, outside of time the world “possess[es] neither truth nor falsity, since without application [it has] no bearing and test” (p. 325). Without temporality there is no participation, no precariousness, no possibility for growth, and consequently no meaning or value. Reciprocally, accepting temporality is an explicit acceptance of our embeddedness in the transactional instability of the cosmos.

This contingent stance holds not simply for fine artists, but also is true of all forms of inquiry. For Dewey, all forms of making and doing exist on a kind of spectrum of creative action. Dewey does not draw an ontological distinction between making as expressed in the arts and the sciences. For him, all forms of making exist on a kind of spectrum of creative production for which qualitative thinking serves as a ground and context. The goal of scientific creation is to produce formulas which signify potential actions yielding relatively stable consequences within particular natural and social contexts.² Scientific artifacts are tools which bring our lives stability and predictability. Artistic creation attempts to deepen our experience of and relationship with the world. Aesthetic experience brings our lives meaning and value. Yet both the sciences and the arts are rooted in a common pattern of inquiry, with each drawing from and emphasizing different phases of that pattern to yield their heterogeneous ends. For Dewey (1925/1981), then, “the striving to make stability of meaning prevail over the instability of events is the main task of intelligent human effort” (p. 49). In the final account, *all* human experience is guided by a temporally dynamic end-in-view and is creatively transformative of its environment.

The Poetic Situation

The point of contact between the everyday and the productive side of artistic creation is a disrupted situation. It is a moment, like smelling rain on the horizon, in which our everyday, anesthetic mode of being is no longer capable of capturing our experience of the world.

Richard Hugo, the former director of the creative writing program at the University of Montana, wrote one of the most well known pedagogical texts for poets titled *The Triggering Town*. Some of his advice for students includes the following

[W]hen you are writing you must assume that the next thing you put down belongs not for reasons of logic, good sense, or narrative development, but because you put it there. (Hugo 1979/1992, p. 5)

One way of getting into the world of the imagination is to focus on the play rather than the value of words. (p. 16)

The poet may not be aware of what the real subject [of the poem is during the process of writing] but only have some instinctive feeling [when] the poem is done. (p. 4)

Hugo argues that in order to write, the poet must feel her way through the qualitative flow of an emerging situation. This is a deeply and necessarily temporal experience, one which mutes (but does not eliminate) the influence of the cognitive over experience. Hugo writes that “contrary to what reviewers and critics say about my work, I know almost nothing of substance about the places that trigger my poems. Knowing can be a limiting thing” (p. 6). Hugo does not advise beginning a poem by collecting a group of pre-constituted, a priori ideas (the meaning) which are later imposed onto poetic symbols (the form). Instead, Hugo suggests that the poet begin the writing process through the act of putting pen to paper.

What Hugo calls the finding the “triggering subject” is that moment when the writing process, which is a temporally and qualitatively emergent situation, begins. It is a type of heightened awareness, of absorption, of deliberation which is grounded and directed by the act of making: by literal, embodied action taken in an environment experienced as a temporal flow.

In the *work of art* (here I include both artists in the act of creation and observer-participants) we experience a heightened sense of spatio-temporal unity with the world, which is so often masked in the anaesthetic routine of everyday life. We have a deeper sense of how thought is immediately bound to and emerges from the temporal and experiential “feel” of a present transaction. That “feel” is a type of intuitive readiness, improvisational ability, heightened sensory awareness, and openness toward a novel future which occurs from an often totalizing immersion in the present moment. As Sandra Rosenthal (2002) argues, it “involves an anticipation of a next experience to come, something for which we are waiting, an expectation set in motion by the temporal stretch of human activity” (pp. 175–176). This very temporal flow is the way the world hangs together as contextual, interwoven, and dynamic. It should be no surprise, then, that Dewey (1930/1984) views art as experience because he believes that artistic logic “is the logic of what I have called qualitative thinking” (p. 251).

The Emergence of Meaning

The removal of temporality from aesthetic theory has led many aestheticians to view art as a reified object stripped of its qualitatively emergent and embodied context. Without such context, it becomes far too easy to view art and the process of art making as a purely noetic act. As Bernstein (2011) argues

part of the problem may be in the way a certain idea of philosophy of critique, rather than art as practice, has been the model for the best defense of the university. Critique, not as opposed to aesthetics but without aesthetics - that is, the sort of institutionalized critique that dominates the American university - is empty, a shell game of Great Books and Big Methods full of solutions and cultural capital, signifying nothing." (p. 9)

To the contrary, it is imperative that philosophers and critics attend to the logic of artistic production on its own terms and employ it within aesthetic theory. Without such sensitivity, philosophy turns art into artifact by asking not what poetry does, but what it means (Bernstein 2011, p. 9).

Dewey's view of the emotions is helpful here. Both Dewey and William James were revolutionary in reconstructing the traditional view of the emotions, which had previously located perception and cognition prior to action in environment. Here the mental is not only distinct from the physical but is viewed as ontologically prior. To the contrary, both James and Dewey prioritized action as being prior to, but not distinct from, the emergence of thought and meaning. Dewey, in particular, resisted any dualism separating action from thought. For him, as Jim Garrison (2003) argues, "[m]eanings, including meaningful emotional expressions, emerge from physical and biological activity without breach of continuity" (p. 413). For Dewey thought does not occur prior to, but *through and as a result of* embodied, qualitative action-in-environment. Or, in the words of E.M. Forster (1927/1985), "how can I tell what I think till I see what I say?" (p. 101).

As early as *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897/1972) Dewey placed creative action at the center of his theory of inquiry, writing that

the active side precedes the passive side in the development of the child [sic] nature; that *expression comes before conscious impression*; that the muscular development precedes the sensory; that movements come before conscious sensations;...that conscious states tend to project themselves in action. (p. 91, italics added)

This inversion of action and thought is a temporal notion, which places embodied experience *before abstracted thought* in the emergent situation. This view is also part of the collective wisdom of working artists. In workshop, young poets aren't taught to think, but they are taught to mimic, through copying, "the voice" of their artistic heroes. Like an athlete developing muscle memory, artists attempt to recreate the embodied and temporal action of a master craftsperson. This is a long-standing practice for poetic pedagogy, even in the West, where artists often place a high priority on individual novelty.

Essayist Adam Gopnik (1998) writes that the act of copying has deep historical roots in communities of artists and artisans, where copying was done to emphasize that in the creative act *making comes before meaning*. It was through the act of copying that “the artist would produce small alterations that could yield new symbolic forms” (p. 62). It is through the process of repetition that young artists begin to understand the logic of the craft and develop habits of action. Yet, through this process, there is always difference and adaptation that leads to change.

Traditional Western aesthetics, drawing heavily on the image of the transcendental artistic genius, are committed to the idea that in order to be creative one must be novel. Here the value of the creative act has all to do with the artist being self-consciously interpretive or distinctly cognitive, making the poet’s relationship to the world a purely noetic one. The traditional view concurrently holds that copying, which begins in and is directed by a felt, anoetic relationship with the medium, is *merely* servile and passive and therefore holds no capacity for meaning. However the traditional view of creative action mistakenly prioritizes meaning before doing, or space before time, where cognitive intention is imposed onto and ontologically distinct from the act of making.

Good artists know that the practice of copying is neither servile nor passive. In mimicking, the young artist is developing the habits of creative action, while also constructing their own unique voice because “no matter how faithful, [each copy] produces subtle variations” (p. 62). Gopnick writes that copying is the way the young artist “represents not an isolated ideological position but something discovered in the latent possibilities of some other artist’s invention, and therefore still bears the traces of its quirky, unpredictable evolution... These copies suggest that every ‘why’ is just the accumulation of a thousand particular ‘how’s’” (p. 65).

The poetry community also holds this to be true. T. S. Eliot was famous for saying that a poet’s originality was in her ability to reconstruct new relationships out of subject-matter which was already available. According to Eliot (1920/1997)

one of the surest tests [of a poet] is the way in which a poet borrows. Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different than that from which it is torn. (p. 72)

Similarly, contemporary poet Todd Davis (2010) writes that “in these kinds of moments, I begin to become something other than I am. By imitating – via the modality of language – I am presented with the

possibility of unlocking part of this thing that I am not, and in doing so, I privilege not myself but this thing that is other than the self” (p. 7).

Creative ability, then, has less to do with *right meaning* than it does with *right practice*. Mary Rose O’Reilley (2010) writes that

the most useful thing I believe about writing poetry...is that *the mind seeks coherence*. I often advise writers, stuck in a draft, to ‘trust your mind.’ By mind, however, I don’t mean the thesis-generating or outlining organism, but rather, a kind of wild horse that bears us along in the dark. This horse knows how to get home. (p. 102, italics in original)

In the creative act, meaning emerges *as a result* (rather than in spite) of an embodied, felt process of making.

Artistic Intelligence

Placing action as prior to, but not distinct from, thought is not the removal of intelligence from creative action, but in fact serves as the bedrock for the development of meaningful work. Traditional philosophical thinking would claim that non-cognitive dimensions of experience, including action, emotion, and intuition, are non-intelligent. Yet, as Dewey (1934/1988) wrote, “the odd notion that an artist does not think and a scientific inquirer does nothing else is the result of converting a difference of tempo and emphasis into a difference in kind” (p. 21). In the traditional view, the mind-body dualism is translated into the view that intelligence is the sole territory of rational, cognitive thought. To the contrary, for Dewey (1934/1988) “the artist does his thinking in the very qualitative media he works in, and the terms lie so close to the object that he is producing that they merge directly into it” (p. 21). For working artists, intelligence is experienced first as an immediate, qualitatively felt notion, and only secondarily manifested as cognitive reflection.

Poets, as with most working artists, think *through* the very material they construct and reconstruct during the creative act. Bruce Andrews (2001) argues that poetry attempts to foreground “in a pretty drastic way the materiality (and social materiality) of the reading surface, down to its tiniest markers.” The logic of word selection is as much (if not more) deeply formed by a word’s cadence than by definitional meaning. Every part of the poem’s material life (rather than simply the words) contributes to the poem’s presence. If read silently, this can include punctuation, white space, line breaks, font, and even the texture of the paper. If voiced, this might include the rhythm, inflection, and tone of the reader, as well as the physical context of the reading space (e.g. acoustics, lighting, the author’s appearance) in which the poem is read.

This is to say nothing of the impact of the listeners and readers who are always already co-constructing the experience of the poem. It is in and through the material conditions and contexts that the poem finds its life and vitality.

Dewey (1934/1988) argues that “we see a painting *through* the eyes, and hear music *through* the ears” (p. 128, italics in original). It is only after reflection on the experience that we are able to break the artistic experience into analytic parts, but “carrying into the primary experience as part of its immediate nature whatever subsequent analysis finds in it, is a fallacy” (p. 128). Intelligence in creative action is not an imposition of concept into form, but an embodied and intuitive thinking *through* the material until the material itself hangs together in a way that exhibits what is to be expressed.

Dewey and Andrews agree that the material out of which the poem is formed belongs to the everyday, public world “and yet there is self-expression in art because the self assimilates that material in a distinctive way to reissue it into the public world in a form that builds a new object” (Dewey 1934/1988, p. 112). The work of the poet is to draw from a common fund of material resources, reconstructing and reshaping them through the poet’s own unique experience. Poet Jane Hirshfield (1997) argues that, in this way, creative process occurs in much the way “geological pressure transforms ocean sediment to limestone” (p. 5). It is “through such tensions, physical or mental, the world in which we exist becomes itself” (p. 5). Meanings and knowings, like tapestries and poems, are not created *ex nihilo* but instead emerge as part of our contingent participation in the world.

A poem’s meaning, if it can be said to have one, is therefore created as part an embodied, contingent, and emergent process. It is also transactional, representing a *unity* of thought and action. The result, as Walt Whitman (1889/1973) argues, is that poetry’s place is “to give ultimate vivification to facts, to science, and to common lives, endowing them with the glows and glories and final illustriousness which belong to every real thing, and to real things only” (p. 564). It is out of this kind of qualitative reshaping of the everyday that new significances are born.

Importantly, it is only through concrete acts of making that artistic intelligence is cultivated. Linda Gregerson (2012) says that teaching someone else to become a poet requires teaching “them to think on the page...an actor discovers where to go by going there; she begins with a gesture and then it fills. The ones that fail to fill, you scuttle. In other words, the process of pure induction” (pp. 17–18). In this way, the aesthetic characteristics Hilde calls for in theory - unpredictability, failure, ambiguity, and serendipity - are all fundamental aspects of emergent creation because they are all possibilities that emerge from within the transactional experience of art making. Hilde (2000) wrote that “artists often view their own works as fallible attempts to circumscribe a realm

in which accident may play out...Ends sought are not the ends finally discovered (but, of course, this also means that many works end up in the trash)" (p. 558). The unpredictability and serendipity of action makes the notion of pure intention, the purely noetic relationship which places meaning before making, a literal impossibility.

Revision and Aesthetic Experience

The logic of the temporal guides not only how the creative process happens, but also the principle which guides poets as they revise their work: that they want participant-observers to undergo a making out of which they might construct meanings. Shara McCallum (2010) writes that "the word *stanza* originates in Italian and means 'little room.' By extension, I imagine the poem as a house. The length of each stanza reflects how long I wish the reader to dwell in each room and how much space I want to offer between these rooms" (p. 90).

In my own experience in a poetic community, I never heard a single poet concerned with transmitting an objectified meaning to an audience or reader, but instead they were concerned about providing an opportunity for the undergoing of an experience which might exhibit particular types of aesthetic qualities. Poetic craft is far more concerned with how spatio-temporal resources like image, sound, line breaks, and white space contribute to the possibility of a future, lived experience. Poets rarely speak of intent, but instead about how a poem draws in a reader, or pushes them out. They are concerned with word choice because of a word's cadence rather than its definition. Poets are obsessed with line breaks because of the way they affect rhythm and voice.

In the process of revision, poets are, then, deeply aware that a poem is not thought but *physically moved through*. Hirshfield (1997) writes that, "we breathe as the author breathed, we move our own tongue and teeth and throat in the ways they moved in the poem's first making. There is a startling intimacy to this. Some echo of a writer's physical experience comes into us when we read her poem" (p. 8). A poem is not exclusively what lies before a reader's eyes on the page but is the temporal experience she might undergo when carrying out the embodied action of reading aloud, or listening to the cadence and breath of an experienced reader. It is a form of action which attempts to bring a kind of meaning and value which resonates throughout lived experience.

Conclusion

The purpose of this essay was to challenge what I believe is one of the most significant errors in aesthetic theory: its failure to account for art as a creative act that that emerges from the temporal flow of lived experience. As a result of this error, many aestheticians reduce the rich, embodied process of making and experiencing art to a cognitive object.

Framed another way, they focus exclusively on the *products* of art without giving meaningful attention to the *practices* of artistic creation and creative action. Without such attention, theories of art are rendered incapable of transforming our understanding of art, art making, or the human experience.

My argument began by showing why time must be considered central to aesthetic theory, drawing a particular connection between time and what John Dewey calls the logic of qualitative thought. I then made the case that time must be considered central to aesthetic theory, particularly distinguishing between time as a kind of temporal ordering and time as a quality of creative action. Lastly, I turned to insights from poetics to argue that creative action is only possible because it is a temporally emergent process that is qualitative and contingent. This includes both the way in which poems take shape during the productive phase of artistic creation and the logic that guides the process of revision.

Ultimately it is the temporal dimension of experience that creates the very possibility for creative acts, therefore, becomes the ground of its emergent meaning and value. The physical object of art, which is only the spatialized outcome of the process of art making, is then not the work of art. Instead, the *work of art* is the temporal undergoing – the acting and the doing – which is ultimately an act of reconstruction: a participation with the world in the co-construction of the world.

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NOTES

1. With limited space available in this essay, I am regrettably unable to ground my philosophical analysis in a craft-based reflection on the construction of a particular poem. Here, I will refer readers to Davis and Murphy, 2010 and Moyers, 1999 for the opportunity to read such reflections.

2. Dewey (1938/1988) argues that "the name *objects* will be reserved for subject matter so far as it has been produced and ordered in settled form by means of inquiry; proleptically, objects are the objectives of inquiry" (p. 122). Objects are not facts which are taken by the inquirer from the fiber of a static universe. Knowledge and meanings are, instead, molded and sculpted as tools which help establish and resolve particular problems. This claim is a direct rejection of epistemological foundationalism and Substance Realism. It is not, however, a retreat into postmodern nihilism because viewing knowing as an act of making is built on a transactional metaphysics. For an extended discussion, see Hickman, 1990 (pp. 17–59).

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