

The Dynamics between Quality, Subject, and Meaning in Dewey's Naturalism: Rebuilding Agency as Medium

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Abstract

After the linguistic turn led by R. Rorty, recent pragmatism has assumed a dichotomy between social language and experience, and has neglected the latter, which is now taken to be ineffable, private, and qualitative. However, as various researchers and thinkers have suggested, the possibility of reconstructing social norms seems to exist in what has not yet been named. Therefore, this paper aims to elucidate the dynamic interactions between quality and meaning in J. Dewey's naturalistic philosophy. To start this inquiry, it is necessary to remove the stigma of such qualitative immediacy. The qualitative is supposed to work as an eternal foundation or a "given" for knowledge, so this turns into an epistemological problem. However, if experience is understood in terms of its temporal and transitive character, the problem is dissolved, because we can then properly treat experience as a field in which knowledge develops. The concept of meaning in Dewey's theory shows us mainly two facts: 1) meaning connects the qualitative actuality and its potentiality, and changes immediacy itself, and 2) meaning works as a method or rule to enable collaborative behavior and support the system of social customs and normative standards. In addition, the theory of qualitative thought shows that qualitative situations direct and control the thinking that reorganizes meanings or statements. The discussion above indicates the interactive linkage of language (meaning) and experience (quality). This paper claims that Dewey's naturalism defines a human subject as an agency that rebuilds the preexisting objective order. Moreover, because the agency is located in the intermediate status between the qualitatively formless mode and publicly new objects, such a subject is termed a medium.

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between experience and language—or, following the terminology used in this paper, between quality and meaning—in John Dewey’s (1859-1952) empirical naturalism. In other words, the aim is to draw out the logic inherent in Dewey’s naturalistic philosophy of weaving words and speaking in contact with sensitively given and ineffable experiential reality, and the dynamics of such activities that operate through the world, the individual, and society.

In setting this objective, the following background is involved: (i) the question of the boundary between experience and language is closely related to the way the individual and society are connected and to the question of the subject; (ii) nevertheless, in the context of pragmatism, especially in the post-linguistic turn led by Rorty, there are difficulties in questioning the boundary between experience and language. I will further elaborate on these points.

(i) Why can the boundary between experience and language be a pedagogical issue? First, it stems from the fact that language plays a central role in the introduction (socialization) of the individual into the community. In a few recent issues of *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, the connection between language action, society, and education has been discussed with reference to the ideas of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Judith Butler (e.g., Miyadera, Okuno). Through language use, individuals internalize the rules of the community and are included as participatory members. However, since this socialization through language use is at the same time a subordination of the individual to the existing system (cf. Foucault), this argument is connected to the issue of the subject.

For example, Okuno sees the possibility of “resistance” to the situation in which the subject is constructed as the subordinate through social institutions. The possibility arises from the “instability of language itself,” which fixes “I” in the same existence (Okuno 95). What this “instability” implies is the predominance of inherent existence over language and meaning. This leads to the second point of contention. As language functions as the law of the community, its renewal requires the role of experience beyond language. In addition to Okuno’s point above, the discussion of Jacques Rancière by Kawakami, for example, shares the direction of this hypothesis. Kawakami states that linguistic activity as the “translation” between consensus and silence is an important occasion for “Le partage du sensible” (the distribution of the sensible) that opens the dimension of “politics” in Rancière’s theory of education. These suggest a perspective that questions the possibility of subjectification, as distinguished from subordination, in the movement for the creation of a new language. The importance of such an inquiry

becomes even more pronounced in the contemporary context of what Bernard Stiegler calls “*misère symbolique*” (symbolic poverty). This is an age in which the “decline of individuation” is becoming more common, and the individual is losing their subjective opportunity because they can no longer participate in the production of the symbols that make them unique. In close proximity to these problem areas, Toraiwa's research can be cited as an application of Dewey's philosophy. Toraiwa sees in “the ineffable” in Dewey's reflective thought the possibility of re-creating a new self that does not fall into the mere reproduction of existing dominant discourses or one's own discourses.

Taking its cue from this discussion, this paper focuses on the concept of quality in Dewey's philosophy as the equivalent of “the ineffable.” Quality is the direct experience of things and situations enjoyed sensuously as “feeling,” which is “irreducible, infinitely plural, undefinable and indescribable” (EN 74). At the same time, meaning refers to this quality. The boundary between the non-cognitive, aesthetic, sensory, and bodily experience of the pre-meaning realm and the language-based, cognitive experience of meaning and the dynamics of its crossing is the decisive moment in which what is sensed in a “private” and singular way in the individual passes onto the social and the public. To question this aspect of the logic of Dewey's naturalism is to question the core of naturalism's intrinsic logic. Dewey's *Experience and Nature* (1925), in which he developed his empirical naturalism, focuses on quality as one of the key concepts. In the overall picture encompassing the discussion, there is a cyclical progression from primary experience, which occurs in a state of subject-object inseparability, and secondary experience, which is intelligently compartmentalized.¹ Of course, there are many studies in Japan and abroad that discuss naturalistic thought in relation to both experience and quality (e.g., Kaga, Alexander, Boisvert, Sleeper). However, the relationship between quality-subject-meaning, which is encompassed in the logic of Dewey's naturalism and will be discussed in details in this paper, has not necessarily been elucidated.

(ii) When we approach Dewey's philosophy from the above mentioned perspective, we are forced to confront the problems presented by today's currents of pragmatism. Richard Rorty is especially significant in this case. While Rorty placed himself in the pragmatist genealogy, as the leader of the linguistic turn, he adhered to the dichotomy between experience and language, seeking to dissociate the concept of experience from philosophical discussion.

This paper, therefore, first presents a way to resolve the dichotomy between experience and language and to rescue the status of qualitative experience (Section 1).

¹ On this point, see, for example, Nishimoto and Tanaka.

Then, while confirming the various characteristics of the concept of meaning in Dewey's naturalism, it examines the intersection of the two terms presented in the concept (Section 2). The intersection of the two brings up the following point as the aspect of the subject in Dewey's naturalism is examined (Section 3). In other words, what Dewey called subject is the function of a medium that responds to the qualitative orientation that comes historically beyond the personal framework of "I" and throws it back into the public world through a reorganization of the semantic order.

1. Experience and Language after the Linguistic Turn

1.1. Elimination of the Concept of Experience: A Foundational Given?

In contemporary pragmatism, the influence of Rorty, who led the linguistic turn, remains significant despite its numerous detractors. Its influence remains, for example, in the form of the "experience-language dichotomy" that Richard Bernstein has critically noted (Bernstein 128-29). The implications of this dichotomy are straightforwardly expressed by Rorty when he states that "Dewey should have dropped the term 'experience'. . ." (Rorty 297). In other words, it is an assertion that the concept of experience, which should have occupied a central position in the philosophy of James and Dewey, and which constitutes the source of pragmatism, should now be replaced by language as a social practice, and linguistic and prelinguistic activities should be viewed as fundamentally discontinuous.

This dichotomy is supported by the idea that direct, qualitative experience can play an abject foundational role in an epistemological context. From an anti-representationalist, anti-essentialist, and anti-foundationalist standpoint, Rorty repels epistemological assumptions that recognize ultimate and universal foundations of knowledge, such as empirical directness and natural properties common to all human activity (Yaginuma 154-57). In his essay "Dewey's Metaphysics," Rorty criticizes the metaphysical aspect of Dewey's naturalism, finding in it the residue of transcendental idealism. He asks, "Have we solved the problem of the relation between the empirical self and the material world only to wind up once again with a transcendental ego constituting both?" (83). There is, at the same time, a condemnation of the ambiguity of the concept of experience, which is unnecessarily brought out as an all-powerful and mystical solution. As Koopman states, when experience is an epistemological given, it heads toward the deadlock of foundationalism, as the endorsement of the given principle implies rampant

foundationalism (696).

However, Dewey's prelinguistic experience is not posited as the measure of truth of cognitive experience, as Rorty's critique implies. Qualitative directness is had, not known. That is, directness does not become a cognitive experience without it being named, linguistically distinguished, and "objectified" (EN 198).

Therefore, as Richard Shusterman states, we can be sure that "in insisting that only language constitutes qualities as objects of knowledge, Dewey has already taken the linguistic turn which requires that the realm of cognitive justification be entirely linguistic." Nevertheless, Shusterman asserts that there are still aspects of Dewey's metaphysics that move toward an a priori metaphysics, pregnant with foundationalism, which is still justified by transcendentalist arguments. This is because, in Dewey's argument, the quality of experience ensures the coherence of all argumentative thought and determines its validity by grounding and orienting thought in every situation (Shusterman 163,165 = 250, 254). Drawing on Dewey's *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938) and the article "Qualitative Thought" (1930), Shusterman analyzes the following five logical functions that direct experience serves for thought: (1) to bring together the contextual situation on which thought depends and forms a discrete whole; (2) to control the objects and things that thought recognizes, selects, and uses within the situation; (3) to provide a sense of adequacy, sufficiency, and validity of contextual judgment; (4) to provide unity and direction to inquiry, allowing it to be maintained and carried out as a procedure; and (5) to enable the intellectual association of thought objects (Shusterman 162-65 = 251-54). These, he says, invite a subtle grounding in the way that prelinguistic qualitative experience provides guideposts and criteria for all thinking.

By accepting this criticism, can direct experience in Dewey's philosophy still be positioned as a kind of a given that introduces transcendentalist arguments and cannot escape the approach to foundationalism? Hence, should Dewey's line of reasoning, that is, the quality of experience that gives a certain orientation to thought, be dismissed as a bad singularity in his own philosophy, which is consistently anti-foundationalist?

1.2. Defending Immediate Experience: From its Historicity

The above issues cast doubt on the very thematic setting of this paper—the interaction of experience and language—if not directly questioned from an epistemological context. However, as Bernstein states, reducing the scope of inquiry from experience to language not only fails to take into account the extrinsic and resistive constraints that experience imposes on us, but also significantly narrows the broad field

of human experience (historical, religious, moral, political, and aesthetic experience) that philosophy is to address (Bernstein 152 = 229). Thus, it is necessary to defend the qualitative directness of experience without falling into foundationalism. This paper, therefore, responds to this issue by supporting Colin Koopman's argument. That is, given the historicity and temporality of the concept of experience that Dewey's naturalism embraces, this direct experience is not valid for a given, which provides an invariant epistemological foundation.

In Koopman's view, the philosophies of James and Dewey could not be sufficiently anti-foundationalism in their statements because they had no theoretical tools after the linguistic turn. Similarly, defenders of the concept of experience in the present day, who support them, are not always sufficiently alert to the danger that their arguments run toward Givinism (Koopman 696-702). Hence, though the significance of paying heed to neopragmatist voices arises, the approach of the linguistic turn has its limitations as well. This is because it is difficult to respond to the critique of whether the consensus of sociolinguistic practice it presupposes as the sole limitation of inquiry can provide a more robust standard than relativism without falling into foundationalistic representationalism—as, for example, John McDowell has theoretically called for the existence of an object outside of judgment and beyond current practice. In addition, the criticism that Rorty's verbalism unfairly shuts out nonverbal experience is also invalid. Rorty merely states that there is a sociolinguistic domain of experience involved in the legitimization of knowledge and a domain of experience unrelated to it; but he does not state that the latter does not exist (Koopman 706-08).

However, Barry Allen criticizes that this argument of Rorty is silent about the fact that not only actual knowledge but also knowledge concepts are founded on the contribution of equally diverse skills and performances/techniques and that they cannot be reduced to linguistic, propositional, or doxa entities. Noting this, Koopman says that we need to find ways to reclaim the concept of supra-linguistic experience without reverting to its givenness as an epistemological foundation, and that “such a third version of pragmatism is made viable by focusing on the thoroughly temporal quality of experience” (709). The idea has its origins in the philosophies of James and Dewey, as illustrated by James' use of the metaphor of experience as a stream in motion to depict its transitive character.

This position, which emphasizes the historicity of experience, is named “transitionalist pragmatism.” It states that truth is grasped as something that is situated and established within experience. In other words, knowledge is neither grounded in the ultimate, nor is it a mere consequence that we agree upon, but is redescribed as a relation

between prior and future experience. By positing experience as “a temporal field within which knowledge develops” (710), the concept of experience, like language, allows room for historical contingency. This position also considers language as a form of experience and de-privatizes it in an epistemological context. The fact that foundationalism and linguisticism have taken truth to be a property of sentences, propositions, and beliefs, amounts to an unjustified limitation of the domain of philosophy to such linguistic truths. By understanding language as a form of experience, the various non-linguistic phenomena included in experience can be encompassed within philosophical discussion as necessary tools for the success of human practice (Koopman 713-18).

By emphasizing the transitive character of experience, as described above, the function of prelinguistic experience has been presented in a way that is not a universal given. This perspective on the historicity of direct experience is—although not elaborated in Koopman’s argument—also in keeping with Dewey’s naturalism, which defines quality of experience as the dynamic consequence of history in transition and persistence by regarding quality as both the singular and pluralistic ends of natural events (Inoue). These arguments resolve the problem of the “experience-language dichotomy” by encompassing language as a form of experience and defining the two as non-confrontational.

2. The Intersection of Quality and Meaning in Dewey’s Naturalism

Through the previous section, we have secured a space in which we can argue the intersection of prelinguistic and “private” experience (i.e., quality)—though we will reserve some of this “privateness” for the end of this paper—and social language without being accused of foundationalism. However, the relationship between the two, as outlined by Koopman in his introduction to the perspective of temporality, is limited in its content to a response to an epistemological context. If there is a back-and-forth relationship between the ineffable experience and the speaking experience, and if the private and the public interact in this back-and-forth, how does Dewey’s naturalism depict this relationship? In what follows, instead of the concept of language itself, I will first focus on Dewey’s description of meaning, which is the premise of linguistic activity (meaning makes linguistic activity possible), and explore the aspect of the linkage between the two.

In this section, relying on *Experience and Nature*, we will first confirm the point that meaning is posited as: (i) a transformation of direct reality through the insertion of

possibilities; (ii) generated from and functioning as a rule for cooperative action. Then, (iii) from Dewey's theory of qualitative thought, we may conclude that the generation and development of thought is executed in a correspondence with the silent quality that constitutes the situation. These establish that direct experience arises with a historical and social dimension (i.e., secondary experience) to it and pre-segmental qualities gain a pathway into the social dimension as they are embodied and represented into meaning through thought and communication.

2.1. Meaning as a Node of Reality-Potentiality: From Meaning to Quality

In Dewey's naturalism, meaning, which corresponds to secondary experience, transforms primary experience itself, which is bodily sensed as qualitative directness. This is because things and situations that are qualitatively present in the here-and-now are connected to the dimension of their potentiality through the intervention of meaning.

For specific consideration, let us reconstruct the example Dewey presents in line with this argument (EN 140-44). Consider a phase in which person A wants a flower at hand that is a short distance away. Person A then points out the flower to Person B. In response to A's action of pointing to the flower, B reacts by understanding that the action is not A's behavior per se, but that it means something specific. B will then act toward the future situation to be achieved, which is either to give the flower to A or to reject the proposal. At this point, a leap toward an absent consequence has occurred in the situation.

According to Dewey, meaning is firstly a property of movement, sound, behavior, etc. It is a sign that arises as an intent, which cannot be completed privately (the action of pointing to a flower first has meaning (EN 142)). However, "secondarily the *thing* pointed out by A to B gains meaning" (EN 142; emphasis Dewey), and meaning simultaneously becomes a property of the indicated object when it attains the phase of completion as possibility. In other words, the indicated flower, by being given meaning, is experienced beyond its own directness as something that can be carried in the future and as containing such potentiality.

This situation, in which things are experienced beyond themselves, can also be expressed as follows:

If we consider the *form* or scheme of the situation in which meaning and understanding occur, we find an involved simultaneous presence and cross-reference of immediacy and efficiency, overt actuality and potentiality, the consummatory and the instrumental. (EN 143; emphasis Dewey)

Some qualitative immediacy, when it has meaning, will appear in a figure of reference, a means-object relationship, with other consequences tied to it.

What a physical event immediately is, and what it *can* do or its relationship are distinct and incommensurable. But when an event has meaning, its potential consequences become its integral and funded feature. (EN 143; emphasis Dewey)

This statement suggests that primary experience contains within itself the secondary experience that mediates it.

The same is confirmed in the following explanation that this coexistence of meaning and quality gives things a “double life.”

Events when once they are named lead an independent and double life. In addition to their original existence, they are subject to ideal experimentation: their meanings may be infinitely combined and re-arranged in imagination, and the outcome of this inner experimentation—which is thought—may issue forth in interaction with crude or raw events. Meanings having been deflected from the rapid and roaring stream of events into a calm and traversable canal, rejoin the main stream, and color, temper and compose its course. (EN 132)

Here “events” is used synonymously with the qualitative directness of a being that has a history unique to itself. Such quality is likened to a rushing torrent that continues to pass away because of its recurrent characteristics, while meaning is depicted as emerging from the torrent of qualities, interconnected with it by being placed in the field of non-temporality and transforming it by returning to qualitative experience again. The domain of meaning experience, characterized as intellectual, constitutes and conditions affective and holistic qualitative experience.

2.2 Meaning as the Rule of Cooperative Action

The preceding discussion speaks to the ideas of Niklas Luhmann, who defined meaning as a form of processing of experience, where one possibility is selected from the horizon of possibilities. On the other hand, Dewey's second argument for meaning approximates the narrative of the late Wittgenstein, who viewed meaning in terms of use and described it in terms of phases of action rather than representations of nature. Hence,

Dewey presents language and meaning as methods and rules for establishing cooperative action.

To verify this point, we will again use the specific example of pointing to a flower mentioned earlier. When B reacts in this sense to A's movement of pointing at a distant flower, this reaction is based on the perspective of functioning in A's experience, away from B's own self-centeredness. Dewey sees the essence of communication, signs, and meaning in the commonality of something at several different centers of action, such as A and B.

To understand is to anticipate together, it is to make a cross-reference which, when acted upon, brings about a partaking in a common, inclusive, undertaking. (EN 141)

The heart of language is not "expression" of something antecedent, much less expression of antecedent thought. It is communication; the establishment of cooperation in an activity in which there are partners, and in which the activity of each is modified and regulated by partnership. (EN 141)

This explains the universality of meaning. The fact that meaning is a method of cooperative action is due to the generality or the capability of being diverted of the method itself, regardless of the individual concrete thing or situation to which the meaning is applied each time. "Meanings are rules for using and interpreting things; interpretation being always an imputation of potentiality for some consequence" (EN 147). "It [Meaning] is universal also as a means of generalization" (EN 147). Thus, meaning is rapidly and autonomously applied to new cases as well as for launching a community of action.

At the same time, meaning is a social register of relationships between things, regarded as an established pattern with objectivity.

. . . essence [as an ulterior and permanent meaning] is the rule, comprehensive and persisting, the standardized habit, of social interaction . . . (EN 149)

Transitive natural events can only be intentionally utilized through the fixation of "some easily recoverable and recurrent act," such as "gestures and spoken sounds" (EN 146-47), and it is here that the ritualization and institutionalization of things through meaning is established. Meaning thus supports institutions, communal practices, and more comprehensively, cultural networks. The regular character and objectivity of meanings

are fundamentally involved in the constitution of social conventions and norms. This fact forms the premise for the individuality of the mind as deviance and deviation to be declared subjective in the reorganization of the meaning order, which will be discussed later.

2.3. Implications of Qualitative Thought Theory: From Quality to Meaning

At the same time in which meaning in the social phase transforms the qualitative directness of experience as it manifests itself in the individual, the quality that permeates the situation is reverted in the direction of the creation and reorganization of meaning. What Dewey calls qualitative thought is the description of a situation in which a totality of qualities in an undifferentiated state that is beyond language, evokes, develops, and governs the thought that accompanies speech. Again, these qualitative orientations of thought are not immutable but the result of historical consequences inherent in each moment of transition. This nature of thought represents the second brackish-water region where quality and meaning intersect in this paper.

Dewey, for example, layers quality onto what has been called the subconscious, working behind the thoughts. It is the feeling of a myriad of cognitively unnoticed organic actions—such as a sense of rightness or wrongness—that numerous influence thought and action (EN 227). At the same time, this pre-reflective quality, closely related to what has been conventionally named intuition, guides reflection, reasoning, and rational design prior to them (QT 249). What derives thought especially is the quality that permeates the whole situation that is vaguely held as problematic before being segmented into terms and relations.

The sense of something problematic, perplexing, or to be resolved reveals the presence of something that permeates all elements and considerations. Thought is the operation by which it is transformed into a proper and consistent nominalism. (QT 249)

The qualities that are directly experienced before they are segmented into words in a narrative are not meaningful in themselves.

[H]owever, it is recognized that predication—any proposition having subject-predicate form—marks an attempt to make a qualitative whole which is directly and non-reflectively experienced into an object of thought for the sake of its own

development, the case stands otherwise. (QT 253)

Dewey states that in this statement, the copula is as an active verb that contains the anticipation of a dynamic change and is understood in terms of its own consequence. In other words, what “that thing is sweet” means is “‘that thing’ will *sweeten* some other object” (QT 253; emphasis Dewey) and implicates consideration and attention to the imminent consequences of what it can do. The term also imposes a boundary on a quality that has, within itself, a dynamic transition, movement, and direction. In the preceding predication, the changing event is intellectually symbolized and transformed into an object of thought by the definition of its boundaries as “that thing” or “sweet” (QT 252-55). These reconfigurations of logic by Dewey are directed toward the recombination and creation of objects and new relations through the demarcation of their boundaries with the existence of dynamic qualities as a background for language.

3. Subject as Medium

So far, we have examined aspects of the linkage between quality and meaning encompassed by Dewey’s naturalism. In light of the interest of this paper, we can say that the linkage is a cyclical movement that generates new quality by forming meanings and opening to others by figuring, expressing, and sharing experiences in response to the hyper-linguistically produced experiences. More importantly, if this movement is connected to Dewey’s discussion below, it is the very condition for the existence of subjectivity.

Let us present the points in this section up front. The subject, in Dewey’s sense, is the individuality of the mind, which has been discovered and utilized since the modern era as an originator and innovator reorganizing the existing order of meaning. The subject, as the one that renews, has an intermediate character and is a preliminary step before taking the form of a segmented meaning that can be publicly manifested. In the context of Dewey’s argument, the paper positions the subject as a “medium” that connects the qualitative reality, which historically and uniquely arrives at the individual and directs each person’s thinking, with the field of meaning, which opens up to social communication.

3.1. Subject as the Agent of Renewal

To begin with, it should be confirmed that Dewey, in *Experience and Nature*, refers to the subject as the moment of creation and renewal of order. The recombination is an event triggered by individuality, especially individuality of the mind. In what follows, I would like to extract this line of reasoning from Dewey, which has been buried under the convoluted arguments peculiar to *Experience and Nature*.²

In Dewey's naturalism, the personal individuality of human beings is considered to be both fundamental and continuous with the individuality of natural things in general. Such individuality is recognized not only in organic life, such as animals and plants, but also in the dimension of simpler natural events, such as physical and chemical phenomena. It is exemplified by the fact that atoms and molecules show and try to maintain their own specific preferences and centrality in their reactions and sensitivities.

Personality, selfhood, subjectivity are eventual functions that emerge with complexly organized interactions, organic and social. Personal individuality has its basis and conditions in simpler events. (EN 162)

This individuality of things, including the personal and spiritual, when viewed in relation to the total order in which it is contained, implies a state of difference, deviation, and exception. There was a historical shift between antiquity and modernity regarding how to grasp and locate individuality as a difference from wholeness, and in these two contrasting shifts, Dewey sees the discovery of the subject.

In ancient Greece, individuality was positioned as a mere exception outside of the universal and systematic system, species, and familial kind of things. It was a failure to realize an objective aspect, a defect that was merely a source of ignorance, timidity, and error. This conceptual position given to individuality is permeated with the social experience of the time: "[s]uch a marked difference in the estimate of the status of individuality is proof of difference in the empirical content of ancient and modern culture" (EN 163). In primitive cultures, the individual had no more status than a part of the whole, and thus it was important to absorb the customs and traditions possessed by the group as a whole. Then, established patterns, standards, and methods were considered the objective nature of things to be accepted without question, and individuals' potentialities were viewed as dangerous deviations. In eliminating deviations and maintaining tradition,

² Some of the discussion of the subject dealt with in Section 3 has already been organized by Hiroo Kaga as a naturalistic theory of *syukansei* (i.e., subjectivity, also see Note 4) (Kaga 347-50). This paper, on the other hand, takes the position that the renewal of order that the subject takes on is also a theory of *syutai*, as it requires the practical act of communication as a necessary condition for such renewal.

“[c]ustom is Nomos, lord and king of all, of emotions, beliefs, opinions, thoughts as well as deeds” (EN 164). Thus, individuality was grasped as a fixed part of a completed and established static system of order.

However, the individuality of mind as an exception to the established order can work constructively toward the inception and invention of new things. Even at a time when innovation was seen as a threat to the collective, human beings were not entirely subject to the demands of convention.

Even in cultures most committed to reproduction, there is always occurring some creative production, through specific variations, that is, through individuals. Thus, while negatively individuality means something to be subdued, positively it denotes the source of change in institutions and customs. (EN 165)

Thus, Dewey raises the following proposition: “Empirically, it [subjective mind] is an agency of novel reconstruction of a pre-existing order” (EN 168).

It is noteworthy here that the concept of subjectivity thus formulated is founded on a critique of both ancient and modern views. In other words, there is a sublation of the two views: the ancient Greek view of individuality as a deviation from the universal order, and the post-modern view of the individual as an isolated and independent center of desire and thought.

After making a sharp distinction between “individuals with minds” and “individual minds” as fundamentally different, Dewey criticizes the concept of self and subject assumed since the modern era as an unburdened fiction of social and historical traditions. The mind, which is theoretically imparted to the modern subject, is such that it is directly and genuinely observable from a privileged position, isolated from historical and traditional burdens.

But the whole history of science, art and morals proves that the mind that appears *in* individuals is not as such individual mind [that is responsible for the renewal of tradition]. The former [i.e., individuals with mind] is in itself a system of belief, recognitions, and ignorances, of acceptances and rejections, of expectancies and appraisals of meanings which have been instituted under the influence of custom and tradition. (EN 170; emphasis Dewey)

The mind in the “individual with mind” is solely a system of meaning-ordering that is shared historically and communally and is enforceable in both perception and practice.

3.2. Subject as Medium

This subject, which is responsible for renewal, departs from the restraints of the historically given order, which is an aspect missing from the modern subject. It adds something new to the existing order, which is an aspect of individuality that was ignored in ancient Greek thought, and is considered to have an intermediate character.

The point in placing emphasis upon the role of individual desire and thought in social life has in part been indicated. It shows the genuinely intermediate position of subjective mind: it proves it to be a mode of natural existence in which objects undergo directed reconstitution. (EN 171)

Since the “objects” to be reorganized is the event that is endowed with meaning in the scheme of Dewey’s naturalism,³ what is occurring here is a recombination of public meanings.

The thoughts and desires held by this individual are subjective and a medium of transforming the old object and bringing it into a new public and objective object. The re-creation of the object involves imagination, which is not “mere reverie” but “terminates in a modification of the objective order, in the institution of a new object” (EN 170-71). This imagination “involves a dissolution of old objects and a forming of new ones in a medium which, since it is beyond the old object and not yet in a new one, can properly be termed subjective” (EN 171). These statements clearly indicate that subject is an intermediate medium in the process of construction that is being transformed into a new object that is accepted in the public world.⁴

³ This is confirmed in statements such as “[e]vents turn into objects, things with a meaning” (EN 132). Thus, Dewey’s locating the object as an event doubled by meaning and the subject as the agent of a renewal of the meaning order indicates that the subject-object symmetry in Dewey’s naturalism *hinges* on meaning. That is, subject and object correspond to the one that imparts meaning and the one that is imparted meaning.

⁴ The discussion so far and Dewey’s writing in the text suggest that this subject concept crosses the boundary of “*syukan/syutai*” that is distinguished in the Japanese translation of the word “subject.” In light of this duplexity, I have literally used the term “subject” rather than *syukan* or *syutai* in the original paper. This different Japanese translation of the two generally corresponds to a difference in their epistemological (i.e., *shukan*) and practical (i.e., *syutai*) contextual emphasis—this distinction refers to Paul Standish’s explanation, which depends on Naoki Sakai’s discussion (Standish 31-32). However, as Dewey’s instrumentalist theory of inquiry is a good example, the two are grasped as continuous, as his position rejects the dualism of epistemology and practice. This is logically demonstrated in the theoretical construct that subject is viewed from the function of modifying the objectively accepted order of meaning, and that the meaning being modified is at once cognitive and practical (cf. Section 2 “Meaning as a Node of Reality-Potentiality,” “Meaning as the Rule of Cooperative Action”).

Now, the subject as a medium presents a fluidity that straddles language (i.e., meaning) and non-verbals and continues to transform in an indefinite manner.

There is a peculiar intrinsic privacy and incommunicability attending the preparatory intermediate stage. When an old essence or meaning is in process of dissolution and a new one has not taken shape even as a hypothetical scheme, the intervening existence is too fluid and formless for publication, even to one's self. Its very existence is ceaseless transformation. . . This process of flux and ineffability is intrinsic to any thought which is subjective and private. (EN 171)

Thus, Dewey portrays the sensing and thinking being as one who is representing a new object that can be shared in the public world. It is the process of adding and redrawing boundaries in response to an ineffable qualitative reality, as qualitative thought theory suggests.

However, the experience, which plays the role of an occasion for order restructuring by evoking thoughts and words, is not possessed privately and exclusively by an individual who is enclosed and isolated as the so-called "subjective," as distinguished from Dewey's use of the word. "It is absurd to call a recognition or a conception subjective or mental because it takes place through a physically or socially numerically distinct existence" (EN 171). Rather, qualitative sensation, which seems "private," is an event open within "objective" nature that arrives impersonally with an a posteriori appropriated self as its locus.

. . . [I]t is not exact nor relevant [to the intent of Dewey's statement] to say "I experience" or "I think." "It" experiences or is experienced, "it" thinks or is thought, is a juster phrase. Experience, a serial course of affairs with their own characteristic properties and relationships, occurs, happens, and is what it is. Among and within these occurrences, not outside of them nor underlying them, are those events which are denominated selves. (EN 179)

In this way, experience, by its very nature, is not localized as someone else's, but arises historically as an event between the places involved. However, when it is virtually and fictionally attributed to an independent self, the subject stands a posteriori as a newly added social event. Therefore, the implication of making "I" rather than "it" the locus of thoughts, beliefs, and desires is the recognition and acceptance of the responsibility that is established there, and the identification of the self as the independent and external

origin of beliefs and feelings (EN 179-80).

The argument that what brings about a reorganization of meaning in a medium is the quality that precedes the self and arises as a historical consequence has allowed the subject as medium to be shifted even further, going a little beyond Dewey's statement. To reiterate, the subject was situated at the intersection of quality and meaning. The subject, guided by what comes historically in an impersonal way, takes on the utterance of that thought from the starting point of "I" and returns it to public society as a new meaning. This subject's way of being can be understood as a *mediumship* that listens to what can now be called the "voice of nature" and translates it into human language.

Conclusion

This paper has explored Dewey's naturalistic philosophy to depict the movement between the pre/supra-linguistic experience (i.e., quality) and language (i.e., meaning), which has been ignored in the face of the "experience-language dichotomy" that has been rampant in the thought context of pragmatism since the linguistic turn. In Section 1, we secured for this purpose the status of the directness of qualitative experience. The focus on the historicity and temporality of experience repels the epistemological problem of possibility as its foundational givenness. In Section 2, the character of the concept of meaning in Dewey's naturalism was examined to see how experience and language interact. Intellectually segmented and socially shared meanings expand and transform direct experience by inserting a dimension of possibility, and conversely, quality, which is always already historicized and acculturated, drives and guides thought, directing the reconstruction of new meanings and discourses. In Section 3, we have confirmed that Dewey's views subject as an agent of renewal of the meaning order that sustains conventions and norms. The subject, guided by a voice that arrives impersonally as a historical consequence of natural events, has an aspect of being a medium that gives meaning anew and returns that voice to a social dimension.

Finally, I would like to conclude by pointing toward two implications of this discussion. The first is the distance between Rorty and Dewey. Rorty's abandonment of the concept of experience may be related to the distinction between the public and private spheres, which is another gap between Rorty and Dewey, and to his liberal ironist arguments that are possible under this distinction; but I did not go that far in my analysis. On the other hand, in relation to that point, the following discussion by Ken McClelland suggests an interesting fact. McClelland points out that when Rorty speaks of "metaphors"

and “the invention of new idioms,” he is effectively sheltering a place for the non-cognitive and nonverbal via linguistic devices, which is a qualitative starting point for re-creating the web of beliefs, desires, and practices that bind us. This point indicates that, considering the previous discussion, Dewey and Rorty, despite their presuppositional gap, are on the same track in that they are both open to the re-creation of society in the wake of their qualitative starting point.

The second is a response to Gert Biesta’s criticism of Dewey. Biesta states that the understanding that Dewey’s presentation of action, communication, and learning adopts, at its root, a hermeneutic worldview that continually brings the world back to an internal understanding on “my” part (Biesta 46 = 73). He says that it remains at the limit of a self-contained or, in Emmanuel Levinas’ terminology, “egological” worldview that closes itself off to external voices by the world and the “other.” However, this criticism is one-sided when we reconsider Dewey’s naturalistic philosophy as a premise to support such a theory of education. The subject as medium in Dewey’s naturalism is the very logic of world-centered activity that accepts and responds to what comes as an event.

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