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## FEELING, WILL, AND SELF-REALIZATION

*Toward a Meaningful Universe*

W e have seen Dewey's arguments for holding that we are entitled to think of ourselves as belonging to a single, interconnected, and meaningful whole. We are entitled to think this, he believes, because our knowledge all along builds towards such a result. We have now to consider Dewey's reasons for saying that we can also *feel* ourselves belonging to this meaningful whole, and that we should act, as well, as if we do belong to it.<sup>1</sup>

The crucial steps in Dewey's argument at this stage are to show, first, that feelings are about "self-realization," and second, that they contain a universal progression (EW 2:241–43). To say that feelings are about self-realization is to say that we can feel our way into our own development. The self, for Dewey, is not a static thing: its "life is one of . . . growth rather than attained being" (EW 2: 260). The self is able to grow, to enlarge itself. It "grows wider and deeper with every experience" (EW 2: 241). The self is able to develop itself, and

to enrich its own meanings and interests, by adopting the meanings and interests of others into itself (EW 2: 249). Feelings are guides to this process of self-development. They help the self recognize the extent to which it is growing in a healthy direction (through feelings of pleasure and happiness) or in an unhealthy direction (through feelings of pain) as it incorporates more and more of things outside itself into itself (EW 2: 216).

To say that feelings contain a universal progression for the self is to say that there is a certain direction in which all selves must move in order to find true pleasure and happiness, although no two selves will move in this direction in exactly the same way or at exactly the same time (EW 2: 217). The direction in which Dewey thinks each self must go in order to become more fulfilled is toward feeling itself as belonging meaningfully to a whole. The self must adopt feelings of true sympathy, by which it feels at one with everything else, even as a condition of possessing its own distinct being. It must come to feel itself as part of a wider whole in order to feel that it has a place somewhere, and thus in order for it to *be* a self at all—that is, in order to have a distinct role to play in life and action that will help to define it.

I want to emphasize, however, that this apparent goal of the self is no goal; the self yearns for something, in Dewey's account, but it does not know what this something is. It feels unfulfilled with every finite determination of itself, and it desires a more complete version of itself, but the self does not have any clue what this more complete version of itself would be (not even sympathy fulfills the condition). There is something *missing* in the self—what Slavoj Žižek has termed an “absent centre”<sup>22</sup>—that drives the self towards a wider and wider identification of itself with other things. It is seeking itself, without a sense of what it is looking for. It keeps dislodging itself from itself, saying: “But this is not me either”; and the self's very disturbance in this regard is the impulse that creates the direction in which it moves. The impulse to grow is not caused by any determinate external goal that imposes its form upon the self, but rather emerges from the self's own finitude and feelings of isolation, its own inherent lack and poverty as an isolated thing.

In this chapter, I first explain Dewey's account of feelings and show how this account helps him make the case that feelings are about self-realization and contain a universal progression. We will see that Dewey presents a compelling argument for the view that our human feelings progress from narrow, isolated states to more and more universal and encompassing ones. Insofar as this is the case, we will see that human beings create the sense of a meaningful whole with which they can identify, contrary to the modernist insistence that the separate individual harbors isolated meanings that he must oppose to a world utterly lacking in significance. Dewey tries to show, on the contrary, that our individual feelings in their normal capacity broaden out to include, eventually, the meanings of the entire universe, meanings of the world that are at one with the self's own meanings. Modernism, with its isolated self opposed to the universe, will on this account prove to be an aberration, an abnormality and sickness that manifests itself in various problematic feelings and in other unhealthy ways .

In the second part of the chapter, I will show how, for Dewey, this same pattern repeats itself in our willing: our wills, too, are about our self-realization, about our ability to put our ideal meanings more and more into our actions. Hence, contrary to the modernist assumption, our wills also help demonstrate the meaningful nature of the universe—a universe now imbued with human meanings through our efforts, and therefore a universe that human beings can embrace.

### *Feelings and Their Universal Progression*

To see how the individual self is able to grow and come to identify itself with ever-larger meanings outside of itself, let us briefly review what we have seen so far about how the self obtains meaning.

The process by which meaning-giving takes place is idealization, a process by which an actual event, in itself quite malleable, is given significance and value based on the self's interest and needs.<sup>3</sup> The engine of idealization is rupture, the negation of a given sensation in its actual elements and its connection with other sensations. "The

mind,” Dewey says, “is an activity which connects every fact, event, and relation with others. Nothing remains isolated” (EW 2: 131). And this connecting and relating process occurs through “the free idealizing activity of mind working according to its own subjective interests” (EW 2: 175), a process that “always takes us beyond the bare presentation, to its connections and relations to the rest of experience” (EW 2: 121). By allowing us to uproot static, isolated sensations, for example, and to put them into certain relations with other sensations, rupture produces meanings in the objects that are presented to us. For meaning is defined, quite precisely, as the significance that one thing has in relation to another. An orange, for example, *means* that object which gives me a day’s worth of vitamin C, can be distinguished from an apple, has a certain color, and so forth.<sup>4</sup> By negating the given fact of the visual sensation of the color orange, for example, and freeing it to be put into relation with other facts, such as “gives me vitamin C,” “can be made into juice,” and so on, our powers of rupture allow us to establish certain relations between facts based on our needs and interests, to establish, therefore, idealizations of things—that is, to make things possess meanings in connection with one another conducive to ourselves (in this case, the collection of meanings comes to signify orange juice), and we are therefore able to find and to create a world ordered according to elements of significance and value for us.

We have seen in the preceding chapters how this process of meaning-giving is supposed to work in the case of knowledge. Through the powers of apperception and retention (special forms of rupture), the self negates the brute, given fact of some raw, sensuous material, freeing it to be organized into new and different forms. Through the power to unify present sensations, as well as to bring our past experiences to bear on present objects, the self establishes new patterns and connections between things—patterns and connections that can only be called ideal because they are the result of the mind’s own activity. An orange, for example, is a perceived object, or in other words, a unified series of different sensations, and this unification includes in its meanings the whole extent of my past experiences with oranges.

Because knowledge, for Dewey, is a construction in this way of ideal meanings, he is able to conclude that known objects are “the objective side of self” (EW 2: 243)—that is, the outward presentation and manifestation of activities that the self has been engaged in all along as it has constructed its idealizations of vague motions by negating them and turning them into perceived objects.

It is essential to realize that the process of idealization that occurs in the construction of our knowledge of objects is also occurs in the self. The self negates its present version of itself and thereby enlarges itself, growing into a new self. Rupture lies at the heart not only of the self’s relation to objects, but also of its relation to itself. Perhaps the best way to think of this point is to say that the self, for Dewey, is not a substance: “It is not something *which* acts; it is activity” (EW 2: 216). It is activity, moreover, that builds on itself. The self does take on various forms, but then it moves away from these, negating them, as the activity that the self *is* pushes forward. Through the process of rupture, by negating its previous versions of itself, the self is able to organize itself in relation to things and to other selves in more and more meaningful ways. It is able to expand itself to include these others as part of what *it* is and what it means to be a self. In the early Dewey’s basic picture, the universe is moving; it is a universe of events and activities, some of which form into selves, or self-replicating activities that may be at first quite rudimentary, but that grow into more complex forms, and that are, in any case, more and more purposefully advancing. The self is an activity that builds on itself, that learns to become more than itself, until eventually it develops the complexity that enables it to take an interest in itself and to actively promote itself, to realize itself, where and when it can. For example, the self begins as an organic body, but “the self is something more than a body. It enlarges itself, grows wider and deeper with every experience” (EW 2:241), developing into higher states of perception, feeling, and the awareness of meanings, such as consciousness, which then enable it to monitor its own organic states and to use these to measure how well it is developing itself. The self evolves and continues to grow; and it grows into a self that can to some extent shape

and construct its own growth. And this process of self-development, of the self coming to realize itself more and more, is endless, as Dewey sees it; it is an unceasing activity. The self, for him, is never a static thing: "our life is one of progressive realization, not of completed development, of growth rather than of attained being," and so, as a result, there always arise for us "feelings of dissatisfaction and of limitation" (EW 2: 260). The self feels uneasy and modifies itself; it tries out different versions of itself. The self, this tireless searching for itself, keeps moving toward something, keeps moving toward itself, in ever new directions and variations.

Dewey will seek to show that what I am, in essence, is something drawn out of itself by a vague longing into or toward something else. What I feel is a longing after a more and more complete and ideal version of myself. With every new version of myself I attain, I feel that it is not enough. "Every relation known brings with it a dim sense of others with which it is connected, but which are not known" (EW 2: 261). I feel a lack at the heart of what I have so far attained, "the vague and indefinite feeling of this universal self as not realized," as what I have not yet become (EW 2: 261). The Absolute Self, the ideal of a complete and perfect version of ourselves, draws us forward, draws us out of our particular, given selves; it is the secret source of rupture and hence of the growth of ideal meanings, of meanings beyond myself, which I strive after but have never yet attained. The self "is taken beyond its limitation to its immediate sensuously-present experience, and transferred to a realm of enduring and independent relations," but these enduring relations are never our final resting point (EW 2: 245). We continue on; we keep seeking through an "infinite variety of concrete ways" to realize ourselves (EW 2: 319).

Such is Dewey's basic conception. Let us turn now to how he argues for this conception. The self acts, Dewey holds, and its actions either help it to realize itself or not. Feelings are the mental states that accompany this self-realization or its opposite, the self's lack of realization. Feelings tell us how we are doing in our actions; they help us sense the extent to which we are realizing ourselves through our acts, or failing to do so. Nothing in this process is guaranteed; Dewey

offers no easy optimism here. There are clear cases of failure of self-realization, as, for example, when one's acts lead to "permanent break-down" (EW 2: 236) or to a sense of loss or unhappiness (EW 2: 253–54).<sup>5</sup> And as we will see, Dewey sees modernism itself as a special version of the self's failure to realize itself, characterizing it again and again as a kind of "emotional suicide," noting that "there has probably never been a time when this unhealthy employment of feelings was so prevalent as it is now" (EW 2: 259). The isolated, separated self of modernism generates a distinct set of unhealthy and problematic feelings, ranging from "cynicism" to "*aestheticism*" to "*malice*" towards others. Unhealthy acts are committed, and they are accompanied by unhealthy feelings—unhealthiness here being characterized by the failure of the acts to help engender the self's realization, the failure of the self to fulfill itself in a world beyond its own narrow, given confines (EW 2:253; 279; 282; 288).

Although for Dewey there is no guarantee that one will act and feel the right way, nonetheless there is a normal course of progress that one's feelings can take, although he notes that there are no two ways alike by which different selves will realize this progression. "[A]n infinity of directions" with "an infinity of contents" are inevitable, since feelings are subjective states and every subjective state is personal and unique (EW 2: 217). Nonetheless there are phases of feeling that every healthy self must go through to be itself, although each self goes through these phases in different ways and at different times. "There are, in other words, universal and essential realms of experience in which the self must find itself, in order to be a self at all" (EW 2:243). Healthy, normal experiences and their accompanying feelings are, first of all, those that are absorbed in their objects: we do not normally experience a sense of separation between our feelings for objects and the objects themselves, but rather a fusion of the two.

The connection is not an external one of the feeling *with* the object, but an internal and intimate one; it is feeling *of* the object. The feeling loses itself in the object. Thus we say that food *is* agreeable, that light is pleasant; or on a higher plane, that the landscape *is* beautiful, or that the act is right. (EW 2: 239)



Only a detached, overly self-conscious self tries to distinguish itself and its feeling for an object from the object itself. Normally, the feeling is one with the object; we feel, not our own feeling, but a feeling of the object itself. In normal feeling, in other words, we already exist outside of ourselves to some extent; we exist out there, in the object, with which we emotionally identify. "Normal feelings, in short, are regarded as real *values* in the objects which excite them" (EW 2: 251). The feeling we have when we taste a delicious orange, for example, is regarded as a real property of the orange: we call it a delicious orange. We say that the orange is delicious, that it has this value as part of what *it* is.

Secondly, this feeling outside of our selves is something that can grow and develop to incorporate greater reaches of material with which we feel and sympathize. Indeed, one can chart the course of this ever-enlarging "feeling with" into higher and higher meanings until we seem to reach, in the end, a feeling of the universe's own meanings. More specifically, Dewey identifies three different types of feelings, and he develops in minute detail the manner by which each type makes possible higher and deeper degrees of feelings—feelings that continually progress to include an emotional attachment to aspects of ourselves beyond our narrow and merely private selves, an attachment, indeed, to the universe itself in its full and comprehensive nature.

The three types of feeling are *sensuous*, *formal*, and *qualitative* (EW 2: 217). We can cover sensuous and formal feelings rather quickly, as they are easier to grasp, while qualitative feelings, being more complex and with more important results, will require fuller treatment. Sensuous and formal feelings are feelings regardless of the contents—that is, regardless of what we are having feelings about. As such, taken just by themselves, they are abstractions, but they serve to indicate definite modes of feeling that we possess, and even here we can see the way feelings reach out beyond themselves. Qualitative feelings are feelings for objects wherein we definitely consider the content of the feelings, or that for which we feel (EW 2: 217).

*Sensuous feelings* are feelings of the body, or those we possess in merely having sensations—namely, the bare intensity of feeling something (whether too intense, not intense enough, etc.; states that are accompanied by pleasure or pain in themselves)—and also the feeling of merely being alive, which is the basis of all feeling (EW 2: 217–21). “This vital sensation remains at all periods . . . the substructure of every feeling,” although it seems to be “much more vivid in childhood than afterwards” (EW 2: 221). We simply feel alive and vital, especially if we are well and not thinking about it. Indeed, here we can see especially clearly what is true of all feeling, namely, that when it is functioning best we are not aware of it. “The healthy workings of the organism give us our most fundamental feeling,” but normally “we are not reflectively conscious of it. . . . The healthier the feeling, the more we are absorbed in it, and the less we recognize it, even as a feeling” (EW 2: 221). In normal, everyday life, we are lost in the objects of our concern, and our feelings of well-being only serve to promote our continued unconscious engagement with the world.

But that is not all. There is also a progression of this normal vital feeling of being alive that also ensures that the self who experiences it gets outside of itself. The feelings occurring with our various senses, from taste and smell to hearing and sight, seem to move from relatively private to more public. Taste and smell, for example, are bound up with our own subjective states and are not easily transferrable to others. The sense of touch, however, along with our motor activities, begins to engage us with the wider world, until at last, with sight and sound, the qualities are objective and shareable and much less subjective, for which reason they are able to serve as the basis of language and music and to convey more universal meanings shareable by all (EW 2: 221–25).

Dewey provides an interesting discussion at this point in the text, about how

terms expressive of moral qualities and such as name activities are derived rather from touch and muscular activity. A person is

sharp, acute, or obtuse. He has smooth, polished manners, or is rough and coarse. Character is firm or yielding. An upright man is said to be square. . . . Some men are slow, others fast. An act is right and of a high character, or is base and low. Good elevates a man, bad degrades him. (EW 2: 224)

Harmony and disruption work together to produce meaning, for the bodily states are harmonious with or still retained in some form in “higher feelings” (EW 2: 224). But notice that for the early Dewey, it is only by drawing on senses that move us away from our bodies that feeling becomes more developed. “The more immediate it is,” he says about sensuous feeling, “the less developed it is. The more we are absorbed in the feeling as such, and the less we are absorbed in the object or activity to which feeling clings, the more undefined and undeveloped is the emotion” (EW 2: 225). If we want to get beyond feelings such as high and low, smooth and coarse, we apparently need to take the cue from “feelings of sight” and begin to develop feelings that are more “objectified.” We will then be able to develop more “mediate intellectual feeling,” which will make up for “what is lost in the way of direct sensuous feeling” by enabling this sensuous feeling to turn up again, but in a higher form, through the mediation of intelligence (EW 2: 225–26).

*Formal feelings* are those that “take us beyond” the “immediate presence” of bodily feelings (EW 2:217; 228). “They are psychical experiences which extend beyond the intrinsic qualities of the sensation to the emotional value which it has from its connections with other experiences” (EW 2: 228). Formal feelings derive from the way our experience hangs together, from the fabric of our experience. Here we are talking about our experiences of struggling with and against the objective world. In the course of such struggles, “we have feelings of *harmony*, of *conflict*, and of *reconciliation*, or harmony after conflict,” not to mention further conflict, and a new reconciliation, and so on (EW 2: 230).

It is important to realize that this basic pattern of our feelings in relation to things (harmony-conflict-harmony-conflict) is driven, above all, by conflict. Indeed, as Dewey stresses, “The more conflict

the better, provided the conflict does not become actual opposition—that is, provided all the conflicting activities are capable of being unified in one whole—for such conflict only calls forth more activity and results in more complete adjustment, that is, in more complete development of the self” (EW 2: 231). As with all the other modes of idealization that we have discussed so far, here, too, rupture and harmony work together to produce meaning, in this case the meanings enjoyed by a “more complete development of self.” But conflict is the driving force. Conflict, or the disruption of our harmonious activities, is the necessary condition for the emergence of our effort, which tries to control or “to adjust present factors” and take them in new directions (EW 2: 230). And the process is endless. Notice that Dewey does not mention “the most complete” development of the self, but only “more complete” development, for, as we will see, there is no end to the pattern of conflict and self-development. To be sure, he thinks that we will arrive at a place where we might have faith that our development can be complete at some point, and that we side then with the deepest and best sources of meaning in the universe, but the fact that this conclusion is reached by the result of faith means that it is not based in actual fact—that it is an ideal, in other words, and serves only to lure us on to further endless developments of the self. It helps us to deal with future conflicts. But conflict, in any case, is the recurring force that drives us on to the development and enjoyment of new meanings. Paradoxically, the dismantling of significance is the mechanism of its realization, just as death, as some people see it, entails a new birth.

Formal feelings take on three definite patterns, based on our relations to the present, the past, and the future. In the present, we respond to conflict by “the putting forth of energy so as to adjust present factors” (EW 2: 230). If the conflict is something to which we can successfully respond, and we do so respond, we feel “*triumph or exaltation*” (EW 2: 230). If the conflict is too much for us, we feel “*impotence, which may amount to discouragement or depression*” (EW 2: 230). If the conflict is too prolonged and taxing, “there results the feeling of *fatigue*” (EW 2: 231), while if the conflict involves “such

activities as bear a purely external relation to the end sought . . . this gives rise to the feeling of *drudgery*” (EW 2: 231–32). Indeed, a whole catalogue of feelings can be defined in terms of the basic structure of our responding to some activity:

There is a feeling of *clearness* when each element in the activity is appropriately directed towards its object. . . . When each interferes with some other, and there is no evident way of reconciling the conflict, although this does not amount to entire opposition, there is the feeling of *confusion*. When there is conflict of various activities going on, and no resolution of them is at hand, there is the feeling of *suspense* or *uncertainty*. (EW 2: 230–31)

Every conflict provokes a response from us; and our response to the conflict generates a feeling—a feeling related to how adequate our response to the conflict is, in terms of our own well-being and self-realization.

Some cases are more complex and recurring, and they, too, bear out the general principle: we do not know what to call such emotions, but “we *rarely* make a decision which is not followed by a mixed feeling of content for that which is attained, and regret for that which is foregone” (EW 2: 231; emphasis added). Something happens; we respond; a decision is made. As a result, we feel both contented and regretful. For some part of us has been realized by the decision, while another part has been closed off and denied. Hence, there exists the complex feeling-state of contentment-regret, which may well define a good part of our life experience. For the most part, life is bittersweet. Only rarely, it seems, when “the conflict is ended, not by the repression of any element, but by the harmonious inclusion of all in some comprehensive activity, there is the feeling of reconciliation, which may become *joy*” (EW 2: 231).

Another pattern of formal feelings arises from our relation to the past. Our past experience is retained in a way that affects our present activity (EW 2: 232). When the present situation is consistent with our past experience, for example, we have “a feeling of familiarity,” which “is pleasant because the energy which occasions it is put forth

in a well-worn groove, and it requires no overcoming of obstacle and resistance" (EW 2: 234). When the past experience overwhelms the present situation, there is "*brooding*,"

the feeling of dwelling or lingering upon a subject. . . . If the dwelling is upon some supposed wrong done, there is *sullenness*. If upon some past agreeable experiences in contrast with present painful ones, it is *melancholy*. The opposite feeling, induced by a pleasant transition, is *gladness*; while opposed to sullenness, which looks for occasion for pain, is *cheerfulness*, which is the feeling which arises from a constant tendency to find pleasure in the change of experience. (EW 2: 233–34)

Again, a whole range of emotions becomes intelligible when we understand emotions as following the harmony-conflict-reconciliation model, this time for experiences specifically oriented to the past.

The same goes for our response to expectations of future activities, which likewise elicit certain responses from us, responses always accompanied by feelings. "The typical feeling of this class is *expectancy*, which is the feeling that accompanies the stretching forward of the mind. Its acute form is *eagerness*," and so on continuously (EW 2: 237). Hope, anxiety, courage, timidity, yearning, aversion, the "feeling of *success* or *failure*," "*satisfaction* or *disappointment*"—all these feelings can be accounted for in terms of Dewey's model of feeling as an "accompaniment of adjustment," or self-realization (EW 2: 237). One feels hope at the prospect that the future will conform to one's desires, and anxiety at the prospect that the future will not (EW 2: 237). "*Courage* is the feeling with which one faces a future to which he feels equal" (EW 2: 237).

In all of these cases, the objective world confronts us and creates a conflict with our settled self, which elicits our response to the conflict; and in general we feel good when our efforts can reconcile the conflict, and bad when they cannot. We feel good or bad, that is, depending on whether or not our unsettled self becomes a new self, one that has been able to reconfigure itself in an enlarged, more harmonious way.

So far, however, we have said nothing of the content of any feeling. We have only discussed the bare form of our feelings. To include the content is to discuss what Dewey calls *qualitative feelings* (EW 2: 239ff.) which, as I have mentioned, are the most important in his account. There are three types of qualitative feelings: intellectual, aesthetic, and personal (EW 2:256ff.; 2: 267ff.; 2: 281ff.).

Two points should be noted right away about qualitative feelings, as Dewey understands them. First, these feelings are normal when they go out to their objects; they involve a healthy “forgetfulness of self” (EW 2: 293). With intellectual feelings, for example, we are “lost in the objects known”; with aesthetic feelings, we are lost in the aesthetic values we contemplate; and with personal feelings, we are lost in the ends of the actions we are pursuing relative to other people (EW 2: 251). “Normal feelings, in short, are regarded as real *values* in the objects which excite them, or exist only as springs to action; they subserve conduct” (EW 2: 251). Such feelings become abnormal when they no longer seem to pertain to actual objects and their values, or the ends of some action, but only pertain to our mode of knowing and regarding our feelings. We focus excessively on our awareness of our feeling with regard to the objects. “Feeling is unhealthy . . . when set free from its absorption in the object or in the end of action, and given a separate existence in consciousness” (EW 2: 250). Such feelings, “cut loose from their connections . . . occasion what is called ‘self-consciousness’ in a bad sense of the term, when the individual is unduly conscious of the reference which feelings have to him as an individual” (EW 2: 251). This is unhealthy because the feelings then serve only one, detached aspect of our self, which never gets negated and never goes beyond itself; it prevents our full self-realization, which, to be achieved, requires that the self is ruptured or goes outside of itself to form a new self, a self formed by acquiring a new set of relations to some object in the world other than itself. It should be clear by now that such abnormal, self-conscious feeling almost defines modernism. Withdrawing wholly into subjective experience, lingering not on objects in the world but on our subjective apprehension of objects in the world, detached, isolated, lost from the world, the

modernist self is unhealthy by definition. Its feelings are perverse, too limited and estranged for what an actual self is capable of. Some singular, superficial aspect of the self is taken as what the self is, and it is frozen in that aspect, regardless of what the world offers and occasions. The example of the character Mersault in Albert Camus's novel *The Stranger* comes to mind. For no matter how many events in the world demand an emotional response from him—such as his mother's death or his killing a man—he refuses to be affected by them.<sup>6</sup>

The second main thing to note about qualitative feelings is that when feeling becomes isolated in one's individual consciousness, there is a "conflict of feeling," in that one feels one's fuller self to be blocked by some isolated element (EW 2: 251). There is, in fact, "a more or less permanent conflict of feelings resulting from the opposition of some particular individual interest to some more universal one" (EW 2: 251). One has a constant feeling of conflict between one's individual self and one's larger self, the "someone else" and "someone better" one is capable of becoming. If a person partakes too much in bodily pleasures, for instance, he opposes his better nature and feels bad as a result. "Even in purely organic matters, he has a universal side. His body should conform to *law*, and law is universal. The result of a constant neglect of this universal side is pain, disease, possibly destruction of the organism" (EW 2: 252). Mersault, for example, ultimately gets himself killed. As Dewey puts the point in more detail, "in gratifying the purely particular side of his nature, he gets pleasure; but, as this gratification disorganizes the universal side, that which connects him with the laws of the universe, he gets ultimate pain. There is conflict of feeling" (EW 2: 252). The alcoholic, for example, may gain pleasure from his drink, but this pleasure is accompanied by a feeling of pain, in that he is neglecting the rest of his body and person. He goes against "the law" of his own nature by isolating one feeling, the pleasure, and focusing all of his energies on that, instead of focusing on the total pleasure of his body as a barometer of how he is developing overall as a person (EW 2: 252). He may therefore become diseased, lose social standing, or perhaps even die. "Or, upon a higher plane, suppose that one has made the pleasures



which come from money-getting an end in themselves; suppose he has isolated them from his integral being, and makes his life to consist in their gratification” (EW 2: 252). Such a person, unlike the alcoholic, may not feel any physical pain. “What he feels is rather loss, dissatisfaction, misery” (EW 2: 253). Isolation of one particular feeling from the rest of one’s life will lead one’s particular feeling into conflict with “a higher general feeling of well-being,” a higher feeling that results from the fact that “the self . . . is a very complex organism, uniting physical, intellectual, aesthetic, social, moral, and religious interests. . . . [I]n acting to gratify any one of these interests, pleasure will necessarily result, but not necessarily happiness” (EW 2: 253). For the early Dewey, happiness is the result of coordinating the various feelings of which we are capable, “an active unification of various acts into a whole life” (EW 2: 254). “Happiness is the feeling of the *whole* self, as opposed to the feeling of some one aspect of self” (EW 2: 254). Moreover, a person must come to identify his or her whole set of interests with universal aspects of the self to truly be happy. For only if a person is “thoroughly identified with more universal and permanent interests, intellectual, aesthetic, social, etc.,” will the person be able to accept the loss of the particular interests and pleasures that are beyond his control, a loss that might happen at any point, and in the case of death certainly must happen (EW 2: 254).<sup>7</sup>

What these two points amount to, in essence, is the idea that there is a difference between “*the actual and the ideal self*” (EW 2: 254). The actual self is lost in particulars and what they mean for the self narrowly defined, and is not as well-rounded as it could be; the ideal self is universal and completed. The ideal self is not there; it does not exist. But it is the self we could be, or perhaps should be. It is our self realized to the full extent of its capacity, which can only mean, on this account, the self that lies beyond my limited person and finds its adequate home and meaning in universal values—intellectual, aesthetic, and social. In feeling, I grope my way toward this universal self—a self, be it noted, that while universal also allows me to find my own distinct identity as an individual more clearly within its universal framework. The ideal self would not be my ideal self if it totally lacked

any connection to my actual self. The ideal self must still make room for *me* to be something actual, a distinct self, even if it negates an earlier version of what that actual self was by putting the actual self into fuller connections with other people and things, intellectually, aesthetically, or socially (EW 2:254).

This is the main idea behind Dewey's account of qualitative feelings. To make more sense of this account and see whether or not it is plausible, we must examine it in more detail. Let us begin with "intellectual feelings," after which we will consider "aesthetic feelings" and "social feelings" (EW 2:256; 267; 282).

*Intellectual feelings* are feelings that pertain to knowledge, whether we are talking about "feelings of acquisition" or "feelings of acquired knowledge" (EW 2: 257; 260). If we keep in mind that knowledge on this account means an understanding of the connection of objects to one another, and that this connection objects bear to one another is the meaning objects have, then we can say that intellectual feelings are "feelings of the meaning of experience," feelings pertaining to what our knowledge means or portends for us (EW 2: 267). In acquiring knowledge, we might have feelings of "habit and routine," when what we come to know is already akin to us (EW 2: 258). Or we might have "a feeling of *surprise*," when the known factor goes against what we had previously believed (EW 2: 258). (Notice again the pattern of a conflict of different elements at work.) Here at once, in the feelings related to knowing, an abnormal feeling can occur, the feeling that nothing new happens under the sun.

This is the *nil admirari* spirit; the feeling that there is nothing in heaven or earth which can surprise one, for one has gone through it all. Such a mood results from a cessation of the healthy objectification of feelings, and from dwelling upon them as experiences of self, until the entire capacity for freshness of feeling has been destroyed. (EW 2: 258)

We are talking about the world-weary cynic (EW 2: 259). By focusing on the feelings of objects that are possessed by a narrow and limited self, and regarding these as all there is to say (or feel) about the

objects, one negates the real meanings of the objects and condemns oneself to an inability to be surprised and to a denuded sense of what the world has to offer. Truly, the world has very little to offer so long as a person's way of experiencing it is narrow and limited. The point with normal feelings, however, is that they meet the objects out there in the universe; they are feelings for these things. "The true self finds its existence in objects in the universe, not in its own private states" (EW 2: 259). To be sure, private states do exist, but they exist so that they might serve to inform us of what is going on outside of ourselves in the wider world. They exist in order to make apparent the meanings of the world around us. "Although it [the true self] does and must have these private states, it pays attention to them only for the sake of their universal worth. They exist not for their own sake, but as the medium through which the universe makes its significance and value apparent" (EW 2: 259). We will see that this capacity of feeling to make us aware of the meanings in the universe is especially true, for Dewey, in the case of wonder.

In the possession of knowledge, and not simply in our acquiring of it, we naturally develop a "sense of ownership and power," as if we were not controlled by external factors but in some sense free in regard to them (EW 2: 260). But the normal self feels this sense of ownership alongside its own limitations, alongside a sense of how little it still knows. The feeling of ignorance arises, which is a feeling for our universal self that has not yet been realized. We feel that we are incomplete, not fully in possession of what we would need to know to be complete. Here again an abnormal form of feeling may present itself: the feeling of the "unknowable" (EW 2: 261). To feel that something is not yet known is normal. But to feel that something will never be known, cannot ever be known, "could only paralyze all action," whereas the feeling of ignorance makes us desire to find out, propels us to action, to inquiry (EW 2: 261). Strictly speaking, the feeling of the unknowable is impossible, because it would be "a feeling of something utterly unrelated to self" (EW 2: 261). This would be "a psychological impossibility" (EW 2: 261). Those who believe they have such

a feeling are abnormal, in Dewey's account; moreover, they risk experiencing alienation, the feeling of an alien world that they can never know, entirely set over against them.

We come next to the feeling of wonder, according to Dewey one of the most important feelings we can have. Wonder is basically the feeling of awe that we have in the presence of a world outside of ourselves, a feeling we might have, for example, when gazing into the night sky. "Wonder is the attitude which the emotional nature spontaneously assumes in front of a world of objects" (EW 2: 261–62). When we stand in front of the world, we feel that here is a secret we must unlock, here is something we must try to know. For the mind has "the sense that it is in the presence of a universe of objects to know which is to find its own true being" (EW 2: 262). We feel genuinely interested in external objects but also feel implicated in their meanings. In the case of wonder, it is not that our narrow, private selves want to understand themselves in relation to the world, in order, as it were, to know where they stand with respect to the world. The feeling is rather one of negation of our private selves, and of our intimate connection with what is larger than us, the sense of a shared mystery that we feel compelled to unravel, the solution of which would allow us to know ourselves as well as the world. Or, to put it another way, in the feeling of wonder the mind has the sense that its true being is *out there*, out in the world, and not simply inside itself; and the mind senses that to know our true being, we must come to know the being of things "out there."

The mind that loses the sense of wonder is abnormal. It is a mind that in some sense kills itself, denies itself as mind. To lose a sense of wonder about the wider world "is to sink back contended into one's own subjective possessions, and thus commit intellectual suicide" (EW 2: 262). One cuts oneself off, intellectually, from what one is, from what one must understand if one would understand oneself.

Dewey has the highest praise for the feeling of wonder and reserves for it the highest function, insisting that "wonder is the cause of all growth" (EW 2: 263). The normal mind wonders at facts until it feels

“at home” in them and knows its own meaning (EW 2: 262). This effort requires going out to the facts, genuinely wanting to understand them, whereas in its degenerate form, where wonder clings to its subjective meanings and uses, we end up with mere “*curiosity*,” or else knowledge for the sake of “*vanity*,” or “*power*,” or “*self-culture*,” and so on (EW 2: 263–64). The normal mind, however, is comfortable with going beyond itself and takes a genuine interest in doing so. *It wants to grow*. It is interested in extending itself through an encounter with what is outside of itself, and feels that to know this wider world would be, in an essential sense, to know itself as it really is.

The last point to consider about intellectual feeling is the precise way in which it relates to the world outside of itself. The key notion here is “*presentiment*” (EW 2: 264). What comes first, for the early Dewey, are not the rules of logic, but the actual practice of thinking in some situation. Actual thinking is guided not by rules but by presentiments of what the mind is seeking, and how it should seek. One has a vague feeling of what one is searching for; one does not know in advance. Indeed, the “intellectual genius” is the one who hits the mark most successfully without really knowing, guided by “*intuition*” rather than the application of pre-given, formal requirements (EW 2: 265). Said another way, the end we are seeking is not known, but felt (EW 2:264). Feeling here has an immense amount of intellectual power. It guides us in our explorations as we grope along. Afterwards, we when look back on the path we have traversed, we can formulate the standards of our movement and specify the route we have taken. But we must not confuse the secondary formal rules for the actual living inquiry. In intellectual matters, we are guided forward by a feeling that draws us onward—a vague feeling of finding ourselves outside of ourselves, a feeling of coming to know more and more of what we are beyond our narrow selves. We are drawn outside of ourselves into something that may be our higher selves (EW 2:264–65).

*Aesthetic feeling*, the second type of qualitative feeling, pertains to the worth of any experience relative to how close it comes to “the ideal of mind” (EW 2: 267). The closer our partial selves come to the universal ideal, the more those selves appear beautiful, and are judged

to be so by us. Aesthetic feelings occur to the extent that we experience the world as it is shaped by our best and highest ideals. In other words, what is essential is that our ideals be embodied in outward form (EW 2: 268). The sensuous in these cases is literally made to embody values or ideals, and not just any values or ideals, but the values and ideals of the self, so that the material seems “as one with self” (EW 2: 270). In aesthetic feelings, the mind recognizes itself in the objects in the world that are presented to it. Thus, for the early Dewey, the ideal at work in any art must be “true . . . to human nature” (EW 2: 271). An artwork misses its mark if it is alien to human beings and does not mirror our needs and interests, or does not at least express our meanings.

More specifically, what an aesthetic feeling conveys is “the feeling of the agreement of some experience with the ideal nature of the self” (EW 2: 273). Art is like a revelation to us, a revelation of “our own inmost nature” (EW 2: 273). “We find a landscape beautiful,” for example, “because we find ourselves in some way reflected in it” (EW 2: 273). We then experience *admiration* for the object in its beauty (EW 2: 274). Admiration, indeed, is the key to aesthetic feeling, just as wonder is the key to intellectual feeling. The reason we make art, according to Dewey, is to give us something to admire; we want something to admire in the world, and art fulfills this need. In point of fact, therefore, “aesthetic feeling . . . is something more than passive enjoyment of beauty; it is active delight in it” (EW 2: 274). We actively pursue and interpret the object for what it can tell us about our higher selves. Thus we expect of art that it must struggle to manifest the ideal completely; that is, it must hint at, and try to express, the “completely developed self,” the self that we would be at the end of an infinite process of perfection, our ideal self, which lies far beyond our narrow, actual self (EW 2: 274). But Dewey stresses that we do not know what this ideal self would be. “Art can completely satisfy admiration,” he says, “only when it completely manifests the ideal—whatever that may be” (EW 2: 274).

Dewey gives an interesting account of how close the different art forms come to expressing this completely developed self—of how

close they come to presenting our self-realization in outward form—but the details of this account need not detain us. As he moves from an account of architecture (the art form most dependent on its material), to sculpture (material made to approximate the human body and spirit), to painting (mere pigments that require active ideal interpretation by the mind), to music (mere sounds made to express human emotions and aspirations), to poetry (mere breath given ideal life), moving thus from art forms that are less ideal to those that are more ideal (an account that seems similar to the one Hegel gives in his *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*<sup>8</sup>), he arrives at dramatic poetry as the crowning achievement of the arts (EW 2: 274–77).

With dramatic poetry, as Dewey sees it, art becomes almost entirely human and ideal and therefore closest to the spirit of the complete self. Dramatic poetry deals with the human predicament, and, being poetry, does so in a manner less dependent than other art forms on material elements; thus it “consummates . . . the range of fine arts” (EW 2: 276–77). Both its form (less material than other arts) and its content (the human story) are related to “personality” (EW 2: 277). Dramatic poetry tells the story of human life, not, as does epic poetry, “as the result of any external historical forces,” nor, as does lyric poetry, with privilege given to “man’s inner life,” but in a manner that combines subjective and objective meanings in an ideal way (EW 2: 277). Dramatic poetry exhibits, not simply the inner states of human beings, nor simply the objective forces that shape us, but “man as irresistibly pushing on towards an inevitable end through his own personal desires and intentions” (EW 2: 277). Dramatic poetry reveals how inner, private life comes to take on larger meanings and significance. And with this idea, we arrive once more at Dewey’s basic claim, namely, that feeling is not simply a physiological event, though it is this, but is also a deep, rich, complex, and nuanced occurrence that, in the end, is about our self-realization, about our becoming selves whose meanings are out there, present in the world. As the case of our aesthetic feelings shows, we are forced outside of ourselves; our feelings draw us outward into new and other versions of what we are.

The last point to notice about aesthetic feeling is that here, too, as with intellectual feeling, “the canons of taste” or rules of assessment come later and are secondary (EW 2: 279). For Dewey, all great art is natural, and says something to us of the mystery of ourselves (EW 2: 278).

The great artists are, after all, only the interpreters of the common feelings of humanity; they but set before us, as in concrete forms of self-revealing clearness, the dim and vague feelings which surge for expression in every human being, finding no adequate outlet. Thus it is that we always find a great work of art *natural*; in its presence we do not find ourselves before something strange, but taken deeper into ourselves, having revealed to us some of those mysteries of our own nature which we had always felt but could not express. (EW 2: 278)

It is the expression of the artist that we must trust, not the critic who comes afterward and judges the art according to standards of aesthetic appreciation. For the artist is in first contact, as it were, with the mysteries of our nature, while the critic comes afterwards and notes the procedures that have worked in the past to address these mysteries. Art cannot be given a rule, since it is a creative enterprise, but rules can develop out of successful versions of art, and they can serve future artists and their admirers by steering them clear of “vain and unfertile attempts” (EW 2: 279).

In aesthetic feeling, too, there are abnormal forms of feeling that should be avoided. These occur when we feel not for the object itself but for our own personal satisfaction in apprehending the object. One then becomes a superficial admirer of art, or perhaps a superior expert snubbing everyone else. This person “prides himself upon his fastidiousness and refinement of taste rather than loses himself in the realm of objective beauty” (EW 2: 280). Aesthetic feeling then

degenerates into *aestheticism*. . . . Feeling . . . is shut up within itself, instead of being made the key to the unlocking of the beauty, grace, and loveliness of the universe. The penalty is inevitable—loss of freshness, of healthiness, and finally of all vitality of



feeling. Feeling has to live on itself, instead of finding new food in every object of experience, and it ends by destroying itself. (EW 2: 279–80)

Once again, the abnormal is the isolated, the withdrawn (EW 2:282). In such a state, a feeling has no real inspiration and becomes the shallow instrument of a petty, self-serving taste. The standards of taste can help us avoid these abnormal forms, for example by reminding us of how the artist must connect with more universal meanings. Even so, we must always remember, according to Dewey, that the art comes first, and the critic must constantly accommodate his standards of judgment to the artist and what he does when he does his task well (EW 2: 279). In truth, for the genuine artist, the ideal is “a spur to new creation,” but the critic “fossilizes the ideal into cut-and-dried formulae,” which makes the ideal only “a burdensome command to produce nothing new” (EW 2: 279).

The third and last type of qualitative feeling is *personal feeling*, the feelings we have for other persons. With the process of self-realization, I am usually connected to other people; and personal feelings are those that develop within me in my relations to these others. These interpersonal relations are fundamental to our own realization. “The self has no meaning except as contrasted with other persons” (EW 2: 282). The abnormal version of this process is egoism, or “egoistic feelings” (EW 2: 282), in which the self resolves the interpersonal feelings it undergoes solely into its own personal states, instead of letting them exist between, and among, ourselves and others. But Dewey notes that egoism only makes sense with the presupposition of other people. It is never the case that we have an individual feeling first, and then a feeling (or not) for others. Instead, our own feelings always include others, an acute awareness of others, which then serves as the basis for our later embrace of or resistance to them. In this sense, there is always a “*reciprocal* relation of egoistic and altruistic feelings” (EW 2: 281). These feelings imply one another and are grounded in the more general feeling of encountering others, which is primary and ineradicable.

Dewey identifies three types of personal feelings: “social, moral, and religious” (EW 2:282). Social feelings come in two forms: feelings we have for others (e.g., “antipathy” and “sympathy”) and feelings we have for ourselves in relation to others (e.g., “pride” and “humility;” EW 2: 283–88). The feelings we have for others “are feelings *which result from the identification of one’s self with another,*” and they demonstrate, above all, the connection we have with other people, the unity of human nature even amid our differences (EW 2: 283). As we have seen, “the self has no meaning except as contrasted with other persons” (EW 2: 282). Even antipathy, for instance, can result only from a prior identification with (and then rejection of) the other person. There are two types of antipathy: “disgust” and “indignation” (EW 2: 283). “In disgust we identify the state of mind or experience of others with ourselves, and find it repulsive to our own actual state” (EW 2: 283). When I feel indignation, I identify someone or their actions with myself and then see him (and myself) acting in a less than ideal way. Two things happen: I identify with another person—that is, I see myself as if I were him—and I judge him to be failing to live up to an ideal that we share (or should share). I am not simply angry at the other person, which would mean a blind sort of rage, but rather I am very specifically upset at him for not living up to his full potential, for coming up short, for not being his ideal self (EW 2: 283). This shows again how some feelings can take us outside of ourselves; having the feeling depends on our ability to identify with another person and also with an ideal version of how both of us should act. Indeed, Dewey argues that “could we not identify the other person with self, and then measure both by a common ideal, the feeling of indignation would be impossible” (EW 2: 283).

This condition of having personal feelings—namely, that my feelings pertain to the feelings of another, or the other’s feelings pertain to mine—is even more prevalent, and indeed reaches a higher grade, in the feeling of sympathy. Sympathy requires that another person’s experiences are felt to be ours: “we take the feelings of another for our own” (EW 2: 284). We can feel their emotion because we can have it ourselves. An additional feature is also required, namely, I

must also *recognize* that this emotion that I could have is actually someone else's. Suppose someone feels hurt, for example. I know that feeling; I can undergo it myself. And I also understand that this same feeling that I am capable of is being experienced by another (EW 2: 283–84).<sup>9</sup>

What the feeling of sympathy shows is that once more we go out to others and we find the meaning of our selves outside of ourselves. Sympathy requires “the ability to forget self” (EW 2: 285). Sympathetic feelings are feelings of mine, but are felt as “the experience of some one else” (EW 2: 285). I objectify my own feelings *in* someone else. I thus enlarge myself. Otherwise I would simply watch and observe the other person and not feel what he or she feels. But to feel sympathy I cannot simply experience the person as an object for me. “We must not only take their life into ours, but we must put ours into them” (EW 2: 285). We must take an “*active interest*” in the other; we must recognize our own feeling in them *as another who is not me*. Someone else, out there, has *my* feeling; consequently, I feel for her; I feel for her as if she were I, although she is in fact someone else besides me. My feeling therefore extends beyond myself and becomes a feeling for another from whom I am nonetheless distinct. This is the feeling of sympathy.

According to Dewey, the feeling of sympathy strongly suggests that we are able to move outside of our private lives and closer and closer “into what universally constitutes personality” (EW 2: 286). For there is something shared between two distinct individuals (and so something no longer local, specific, and individual) and, moreover, there is no boundary to this feeling of sympathy. It is not restricted to the life of only this or that individual. Indeed, such a restriction is “a defective sympathy,” as when we arbitrarily restrict our sympathies to only “our own family” or “our own neighborhood” (EW 2: 286). In itself, the feeling of sympathy is expansive. It continues to grow if it is nourished. Thus, as the self develops, it is able to have sympathy for more and more people and things beyond itself, until at last, the most “developed personality” would become “absolutely universal” and would have universal sympathies, if this could be achieved. This

would mean that we attain a feeling that “can . . . recognize no distinction of social rank, wealth, or learning, or anything that tends to cut off one person from another” (EW 2: 286).

If we were to reach this point, our expansive sympathy would be a feeling for society as “an organic whole, a whole permeated by a common life, where each individual still lives his own distinct life unabSORBED in that of the community” (EW 2: 286). Or, as Dewey also puts it, in the feeling of universal sympathy, our life widens “till it becomes as comprehensive as humanity, and at the same time deepens our own distinct individuality” (EW 2: 286–87). The more universal is the range of our feeling, the more distinct becomes our individual personality in relation to the universal whole with which we feel connected. This is so in virtue of the nature of sympathy itself. As we saw above, sympathy involves both an identification of myself with the other and at the same time the recognition that we are distinct (EW 2: 286). I feel *my* feeling, and I feel that it is also *the other’s* feeling. I feel, therefore, that two distinct selves share a common feeling. Sympathy is this third, new feeling, the feeling of the other, as he feels something that now exists for me, a feeling which therefore takes me outside myself even as it allows me, in my connection to the other, to be myself.

What the feeling of sympathy reveals, then, is that “our true nature” does not simply exist inside of us as private selves, but exists in a wider version of ourselves, in a “universal personality,” in a self that is larger than ourselves. I feel that I am a distinct self who has his own feeling, which is at the same time a feeling beyond itself, shared with others (perhaps, eventually, with all others, since for Dewey there is no limit to what I can sympathize with). I might be able to extend the feeling of sympathy to all of humanity, for example, or even, perhaps, to the cosmos as a whole (EW 2: 286–87).

So much for the feelings I have for others: with sympathy as their highest expression, these feelings, Dewey would say, reveal to me my longing to find my true nature as a distinct member of a universal whole. There are also feelings I have *for myself* in relation to others. Dewey has in mind pride and humility (EW 2: 287). Feeling *proud*

Dewey interprets to mean “a sense of our own worth compared with a personality not ourselves,” and he interprets *humility* to be the feeling of our having less worth when compared with others (EW 2: 287). There are degenerate forms of these feelings. Too much pride means “conceit” or “vanity” and indicates that the person has failed at “getting outside of himself” and is failing at his self-realization, at becoming a more universal self with more universal sympathies than his own narrow interests (EW 2: 287). At its best, pride means “self-respect . . . the feeling that we *are* personalities; that there is embodied in us the infinite value of a self which is worthy of respect wherever found” (EW 2: 287). Pride would then seem to indicate that we possess higher worth than mere particular organic bodies, to be used at will. On the contrary, each of us is a personality, which means we participate in larger meanings beyond the bare given fact of ourselves. We participate in shared social meanings and we form laws, for example, that confer on us our worth and our rights; and we reach toward even higher ideals than this for humanity. Humility, at its best, is our feeling our own lack in relation to the ideal self we could be (EW 2: 287). We are humbled by recognition of the ideal self that it is possible for us to be, and we feel the contrast between this ideal self and the self we are (EW 2: 287). But humility can also degenerate, as when “it takes the form of sensitiveness, self-depreciation, perhaps even . . . degradation” in contrast to some specific person we meet in the world (EW 2: 287). As the form of pride called self-respect reminds us, we also do count for something in relation to other people; and so the proper mixture of emotions would be pride (or self-respect) combined with humility. In the emotionally healthy person, “pride and humility necessarily accompany each other” (EW 2: 287).

Dewey notes that a whole range of more nuanced feelings, from “*envy*,” to “*jealousy*,” to “*malice*,” to “*covetousness*,” can also be explained on the basis of what he has already said about social feelings (EW 2: 288). Malice, for instance, “is the egoistic form of pride joined with antipathy” (EN 2: 288). In other words, malice is pride, understood in its degenerate form of taking a vain interest only in oneself, coupled with antipathy, or the feeling of being revolted at the other

person for failing to live up to an ideal. In malice, we feel a peculiar kind of indignation at the person for failing to live up to the ideal of our narrow selves—we hold it against the person, rather perversely, for not being as we want them to be, where the “we” here is not our shared ideal self, but rather the particular, wayward conceits and desires of my individual self.

“Moral feeling” is the second type of personal feeling. This is the feeling of obligation we have towards others with whom we can identify. Grounded in sympathy, and expanded to include all human beings, moral feeling consists of the sense of “rightness” we feel about good acts, when we feel that our ideal personality could be realized in the acts (EW 2: 288).

In moral feeling man feels his true self to be one which comprehends possible relations to all men, and all acts which are necessary to bring the actual self into harmony with this true self, to make his will, in other words, conform to a universal will, he conceives as *duties*. (EW 2: 289)

I think here of our obligations to future generations, for example. Is it right to pollute the earth to the extent that life becomes a hardship to humans who come after us? Not if they, too, are an aspect of our true self. If they are part of us, then to harm them is to harm ourselves. Moreover, as we feel an obligation to promote our own self-realization, so we feel an obligation to the self-realization of the humans who will come after us, since these others are in fact part of what we are, in Dewey’s expanded conception of the self, and therefore we bear to them the same responsibilities that we bear to ourselves.

Herein lies one of the key points of Dewey’s early position: the self extends beyond the individual organic body, even beyond our own egos, and even beyond the things closely associated with our own egos, such as family, friends, our neighborhood or nation (EW 2:286). We come more and more to identify ourselves with something larger than ourselves—indeed, with a “universal self” that is the ideal of humanity; perhaps even, as we will see, with an ideal self at work in the

cosmos. This growth or expansion of self is felt in various ways, as we have seen throughout this chapter, as if the self were headed outside of itself toward some goal. It is a dizzying and unsettling process, to be sure, and at times there may appear to be no sure footing for this loss of self, for our past self's disintegration; and yet, at each stage we seem to be moving toward some other definite aspect of what we are. Moral feeling is no exception. In moral feeling, we lose the iron-clad protection of our own isolated ego, but this loss is accompanied by a sense that we share a bond with all others; we feel we are part of a universal self, and, feeling part of this self, we feel certain duties toward it and toward the others who also form a part of it. "The feeling that a universal self is our own true being is necessarily accompanied by the feeling of obligation and responsibility" (EW 2: 289).

Moral feeling contains two aspects, "*reverence*" and "*remorse*" (EW 2: 290). In the first case, we feel that this universal self is within our reach, and we feel an obligation toward it. We feel humbled in the presence of the self that is larger than us, and also we feel a duty to realize its nature in us, that is, through right actions that we strive to realize. In the case of remorse, we feel that our acts fall short of realizing this larger self—as when we feel that we have let ourselves down by behaving badly (EW 2:290).

The third and last type of personal feeling is "religious feeling" (EW 2: 290–291). There is a serious defect in moral feeling, namely, that in the end it fails. "There is a conflict in moral feeling as such" (EW 2: 290). We can never wholly be what we ought to be; we cannot always do what we ought to do. In Dewey's terms, there is a fundamental rift, "a gulf between the actual and the ideal or universal self" (EW 2: 290). As finite beings, we never achieve the culmination of all of our efforts; we never realize the inexhaustible, infinite self we could be, the universal self. Our actual selves never finally become ideal. Thus, in our endeavor to be moral, we will encounter an inevitable crisis. The moral self is negated; it must, therefore, press on to a new formation. Religious feeling is that new formation.

Religious feeling is the feeling that the conflict between my actual self and my ideal self is overcome, or so it seems, because I seem to

lose any remaining feelings of separation from my ideal self (EW 2: 290). I feel that my actual self, which until now I had regarded as still to some extent separate from the whole, must now be regarded as essentially belonging to the idealized whole. I feel that my true self is realized in God, or the Absolute.

Religious experience is the sphere in which this identification of one's self with the completely realized personality, or God, occurs. Religious feeling is, therefore, the completely universal feeling, and with it the progressive development of feeling ends. (EW 2: 290–91)

For Dewey, religious feeling, in other words, is the feeling that we are one with the universe. We identify with the cosmos, with the entire grand, awesome sweep of things, and we feel that our own self is at one with this grand sweep. Where it goes, we willingly follow; for we recognize that we are it, are at one with it, which we feel is the ideal state to be in, the way things ought to be, so that we accept the way things occur.

Religious feeling therefore involves two different emotions: “dependence” and “peace” (EW 2: 291). The “*feeling of dependence*” is the feeling of the complete loss of the isolated self within the universal self. “In religious feeling we recognize the worthlessness, *the nullity*, of this private separate self, and surrender ourselves wholly to the perfect personality, God” (EW 2: 291). The separate self is now negated; it has no existence apart from the whole. Hence, we feel our utter dependence on the life of the cosmos, and our inability as separate selves to be of any genuine ideal worth. Our personal meaning is now transcended by the higher, more ideal meanings that we impute to the cosmos. We feel that our private, individual meanings are not sufficient, that they can only find justification in the cosmos as a whole, upon which we are dependent.

This brings peace, as Dewey sees it. The “*feeling of peace*” is the feeling that there is no conflict anymore between our actual selves and our ideal selves. We no longer feel the tension of the self's resistance to the whole. Identifying now wholly with the ideal self upon



whom we are dependent, and losing, at last, the final remainders of our separateness (but not our distinctiveness), we feel that the whole course of things will ultimately continue on and take care of itself and us with it. A person feels that “there can be no essential dualism in his life, for the only thing which is real for him is that Being in whom personality is complete. There is, therefore, the feeling of peace” (EW 2: 291–92). Since “the only thing” that seems real for a person at this point is God, a complete and perfect personality existing in the world, the person feels that there exists no actual self any longer to oppose this ideal self, so that the ideal self alone is what exists. This feeling that there is an Absolute self brings the person peace because he now feels that he can find comfort in the ideal self that underlies everything and holds it together.

If this were the end of the matter, however, then rupture as the mechanism of the loss of self, and its subsequent growth, would finally come to an end (EW 2: 290–91). There would in fact be a complete attainment of self-realization, and rupture would finally cease. Complete harmony in the eternal Absolute, as in the philosophy of Josiah Royce, would be the fundamental reality, securing the meaning of all actual events in its higher ideal meaning.

The matter does *not* end there, however, for Dewey goes on to write about “the feeling of faith”—what I have called faith in life. Faith is a peculiar emotion in the Deweyan conception, in that it is at once the completion and incompletion of all emotional progression. As we saw, morality ultimately fails, because it “constantly asserts that the final reality for man is that which cannot be made out actually to exist” (EW 2: 292). The feeling of faith “only brings this element to conscious recognition” (EW 2: 292). In other words, faith is the explicit awareness that we do not realize the ideal. But it is also the insistence that the ideal is nonetheless realized. We perceive keenly that God “cannot be immediately felt to be” (EW2: 292). But we claim that he exists nonetheless. In Dewey’s view, “religious life,” which embodies the feeling of faith, “asserts that this Personality [God] is not only ideal . . . but that it is perfectly real” (EW2: 292). But this “that it is . . . real” only emerges with the awareness of the failure of

the ideal to be real at the same time. Faith is the assertion of the reality of the ideal even as we are aware of its lack of reality.

This feeling for the cosmic whole needs to be there, Dewey says, because otherwise all feeling is disruption and division until the end. "Without it feeling can be only dissatisfaction, for it must reveal discord between what is and what is felt after, its goal of happiness" (EW2: 363). Life would be nothing but constant tension, and fundamentally unfulfilling, without some ultimate sense of unity to our endeavors. But this sense of unity does not itself derive from our feelings. Nor does it come from our knowledge: we are never completely justified in holding that the universe forms a whole. Both human knowledge and feeling are finite, while the whole we long to be a part of is infinite. We can never adequately reach what we long for. The best we can do, therefore, is to assert through our wills that the whole is real, even as we know we do not possess it and feel that it is lacking in our experience (EW 2: 361–362).

Dewey explains this crucial part of his argument as follows: "There cannot be knowledge that the true reality for the individual self is the universal self, for knowledge has not in the individual compassed the universal" (EW 2: 361). We wish to grasp all things as a whole, but "in knowledge there is no ultimate justification for this belief. It finds its validity and the revelation of its meaning only in the will" (EW 2: 361). In fact, we understand that we should seek for complete knowledge only because it is lacking. It is our assertion that the whole must exist, even when we do not grasp it, that compels us to search for the whole in the first place and so perhaps to get closer to it. The will, the assertion of belief, takes priority over knowledge. "The motive to knowledge and the energy of its realization is the *belief* that there is truth, and that every act of intellect, legitimately performed, leads to truth" (EW 2: 361).

Nor do our feelings reveal the cosmic whole to us. "This will or faith," as Dewey calls it, "this act of faith also precedes and transcends *feeling*. There is, in the feeling of *harmony*, the feeling of unity, but this feeling accompanies will. It is the internal side of the universal or objective unity realized through the will. Without this act of will, all

feeling is that of discord, of incongruence” (EW 2: 361–362). We must assert that there is a cosmic whole to which we belong before we can feel the harmony of so belonging. Our lack of the feeling, in other words, compels us to assert that there are grounds for having the feeling, and then we have the feeling, because of our assertion, which we understand, however, is based on a lack.

We can reconstruct Dewey’s account of faith as follows:

1. There must be a cosmic whole to which we belong, or else everything is ultimately division and conflict.
2. We do not know for certain that the cosmic whole to which we belong exists (the last feeling we have before faith is of division and lack; it is the always-failed moral experience, and our inability to know the whole).
3. The only thing we can do is to have faith that the cosmic whole exists (we negate the *lack* of it).
4. That is, we can only assert that all division and conflict is reconciled in the cosmic whole and let this assertion influence our feeling and guide our lives.

The upshot, then, is that division and disruption always remain, but with the faith and the feeling that they are amounting to something in the whole. Faith is the feeling that there is an ideal out there that is realized, but in truth the ideal is not realized but merely asserted to exist in order to fill its absence. Faith is a feeling that is useful: it enables us to work through disruption and conflict to greater harmonies. But it can occur only with the explicit acknowledgement of our inability to realize the ideal, with the awareness, that is, of the lack of the reality of the ideal. The point of faith, in other words, is not to bring all tension to a close, but to ensure that through the tension we achieve a “progressive appropriation” of an ideal self and state of things (EW 2: 363). Faith gives us an ideal to aim for and to progressively realize.

Faith, then, relates to religious experience in a very specific manner. In faith, we understand instead that we can only ever *assert* that we can realize the ideal. Religious feeling then follows; but this means

that religious feeling depends on faith, on an ungrounded assertion. We can never know that the religious feeling is validated, that its object is real.<sup>10</sup> We can only ever fall back on *the assertion* that it is, that the completed self can be realized. We reach out to the cosmic whole and hope for the best; and in reaching out, we are able to function and to create meanings.

Let us take an example—say, the case of the ancient Egyptians and their pyramids. Some basic stuff is given to them—rocks and mortar (or ultimately “motions,” which they turn into sensations, which are then transformed into the perception of rocks and mortar as objects of knowledge)—and they transform these objects into an ideal formation, the pyramids. The ancient Egyptians make these new objects (the pyramids) to symbolize many things, including eternity. Eternity becomes the ideal meaning for these objects and for the Egyptians’ selves as well, for the human lives that interact with these objects; their ideal selves are found in relation to these objects. But ultimately, we do not know that these objects with their ideal meanings mirror the actual world behind our knowledge. The ancient Egyptians had no guarantee, despite all of the ways these objects (the pyramids) bespoke to them eternity, that they were in any real and true way connected to eternity. Yet the faith that they were connected to eternity was precisely what enabled the Egyptians to build these objects, produce these ideal meanings, and so render the world as they experienced it more and more ideal and filled with meanings they could recognize.

We build castles on sand, and the sand lets us build them. So we build castles and live in them; and what else, indeed, is a human being supposed to do? Dewey’s early philosophy is an honest attempt to describe the human condition, and to show us why, despite our precarious position as finite beings, we can nonetheless affirm our condition due to the power of ideals to transform the world and make it more meaningful. With the assertion of faith comes the feeling of peace, therefore; but this feeling is peace amidst the struggles of human life, not the peace of the assurance of final victory. And the

feeling of dependence is the feeling that our efforts are permitted, that the world is allowing our idealizations, so that we can pursue them without fear.

If we now try to sum up personal feelings as the early Dewey understands them—that is, our feelings in relation to others, including God, who exist or could exist—then we can say that these feelings ultimately compel us to *love*. For in all forms of personal feeling—in our social, moral, and religious feelings—we extend ourselves to include others; that is, we identify with them and their interests, and this is love. Love “is active interest” in the other person, our care and concern for him beyond our narrow, isolated self and its interests (EW 2: 292). Hate, of course, is always still possible, but according to Dewey, we only hate in the person what prevents him from realizing his better or more ideal self. In fact, it is impossible to hate the person as such without hating some part of ourselves at the same time, since “personality is a universal characteristic” (EW 2: 293). Likewise, social laws, although they are grounded in a kind of hate, in that they involve force against individuals, are *ideally* an act of love; that is, they express the obligations that we all owe to one another (to “personality”) in the forms of laws and norms we are compelled to obey (EW 2: 294–95). And, of course, as there is with so many other feelings, there is an abnormal version of love; it is the feeling we bear toward another only insofar as he means something for us, rather than what he means for himself and for ever-more-ideal versions of himself. The abnormal form of love is love turned inward, rather than outward toward the other person (EW 2: 293).

Love, then, as the ultimate meaning of personal feeling, bears an interesting connection to the other ultimate forms of qualitative feeling we have seen—namely, to the wonder that comes with intellectual feeling and to the admiration that comes with aesthetic feeling. In each case, but in a slightly different way in each, we lose our isolated self and expand to include as part of it something outside of it. “As wonder and admiration are forgetfulness of self in the presence of the universe of [known] objects and [aesthetic] ideals, so love is forgetfulness of self in the presence of persons” (EW 2: 293). Each feeling is a

different occasion for us to go away from our actual selves and try to realize our ideal selves, the ideal meanings of which we are capable, which are to be found out there beyond our actual selves.

Lastly, we can say about personal feelings—about social, moral, and religious feelings—that they shift from a feeling to a norm, that is, to a judgment we can make about the feelings. This judgment about the feeling is what Dewey means by *conscience* (EW 2: 296). Our conscience presumes to tell us whether “a given act of ours is in harmony or in discord with a truly realized personality” (EW 2: 296). Dewey insists, however, that there is no law for this; only the life of the individual is the source of the feelings of rightness, and conscience only comes after the fact in order to help us by formulating handy guidelines for our behavior (EW 2: 296–97). In truth, the feeling self is always in “development,” always “in process of realization,” and it is the feeling process that is the actual reality, not the laws of perfection that we may try to prescribe to it (EW 2: 296). Dewey centers (or rather de-centers) meaning in the finite life of the actual self struggling to find the Absolute, not in the Absolute considered as an eternal entity outside of time whose perfection is guaranteed. This is precisely why, as the culmination of his account of feelings, he ends with faith, which is something finite beings might need, but not the Absolute.

This is also why Dewey insists that feelings in general, feelings taken as a whole, are actually infinite in content and meaning, with as many feelings existing as there are people to feel them (EW 2: 217). His account is only a general framework in terms of which we can understand feeling, but the feelings themselves, in all of their infinite variety and movement, are the actual reality. The self, for Dewey, is engaged in an infinite process of development, endlessly undergoing new feelings and their richness of meanings as the self grows and changes. And its feelings tend to become more universal as the self adjusts to more and more circumstances. “With every new realization of personality comes a higher ideal of what constitutes a true man, and a keener response to relations of harmony and discord” (EW 2: 296). The feelings are capable of this growth, as Dewey’s account of

feelings intends to make plausible. The feelings themselves are able to develop this way; there is no form imposed upon them.

We are drawn forward and outward in and through our feelings. We are drawn out of our actual self and its individual meanings into meanings beyond us that we nonetheless recognize as our own (that is, as the meanings of our higher self). Feelings, then, in general, are mental states that attend our self-realization; they are essential elements of a process (its internal, emotional aspect, as it were) by which life comes more and more to embody an idealized meaning of things, even if in the end we do not know for certain that our meanings are secured at the heart of things.

One aspect of the general framework of feelings that Dewey advances is especially noteworthy. As we have seen, each form of qualitative feeling seems to reach towards higher meanings. More specifically, presentiment guides intellectual feeling in its search for total truth, which is a higher and more rational meaning than that of mere facts, or even of our own individual, partial beliefs. Likewise, dramatic poetry expresses in aesthetic feeling the inevitable drawing out of the self to a new aspect and understanding of itself. The feeling of faith, in our personal feelings, encourages us to believe in a universe that is meaningful and harmonious in the end, even if we never see this in actual fact. In several different ways—in intellectual, aesthetic, and personal feelings—we are guided by a vague but powerful sense that there must be meanings beyond the facts and beyond our actual selves that we ought to attain and to realize.

### *Will as Self-Realization*

Our detailed consideration of the early Dewey's neglected major work, the *Psychology*, comes to a conclusion with an account of his concept of the will. The will is the last of the three powers of human beings that Dewey thinks enable us to produce meaning in the universe—the three powers being, again, knowledge, feeling, and will. Dewey's concept of will is fairly straightforward, and for this reason I do not think it demands the kind of extended analysis I have provided

for the fundamental concepts of knowledge and feeling. The devil, in those two cases, was in the details. Whatever persuasive power Dewey's accounts of knowledge and feeling achieve is earned through how much they explain; doing them justice required me to give a detailed description of their operation. Not so with Dewey's account of will—here his ideas are fairly general and can be related in general terms. Moreover, his concept of the will in many ways contains the other two concepts (knowledge and feeling) and is a summary of them, so that his concept of the will can be explained relatively easily once we understand these other concepts. I do want to caution the reader, however, that in taking this more limited approach, I will have to overlook many details of Dewey's account.

For Dewey, the self is not “a passive vessel” but an active agent (EW 3:356; EW 2:216; 318). As selves, we act; we go forth and do something. When we act we are not simply acting at random but are actually trying to realize ourselves—that is, we are trying to make the world fit our ideals, or, what is the same thing, we are trying to become a definite self in the external, objective world, a world that admits us, that harbors some of our ideals and allows for us to be selves of a certain sort. How exactly do we try to make the world fit our ideals? We do so, for one thing, in the case of knowledge. In one stage of knowledge, for example, we go out to sensations and actively seek in them a recognizable form (as in Dewey's camel in the clouds example, LW 8: 117). What we do, in other words, is actively transform our sensations into ideal forms, and we do this more and more in an ordered and reliable way, and this ever-increasing idealization is objective knowledge. In knowledge, we put ourselves into the world; we put our sense of order into it, and as a result we find an ordered universe of known objects. Feeling is the personal side of this process—we feel the extent to which we are realizing or losing ourselves in the external world through our activities, with pleasure and pain resulting accordingly. Accompanied by pleasure, our feelings progress toward more universal aspects, whether in our intellectual, aesthetic, or personal feelings. As our feelings progress, we realize our true nature more and more (e.g., we move from an isolated, egoistic self to a social self). In addition, the self acts in several



ways to control itself, and it seeks to control itself in these ways precisely in order to realize itself. “*Physical control*” and “*prudential control*” are good examples of this (see Dewey’s account, EW 2: 321–41). We seek to control our impulses (in the one case physically, in the other in terms of what our impulses seek out) in order to achieve a fuller or better sense of ourselves. In these cases, too, then, the self is shaping the world—the world of its own actions—in order to render it more ideal. It negates what is merely given, the actual self, and pushes this self beyond its current state towards something that will be better for the self in the long run (EW 2:209; 216; 358).<sup>11</sup>

This suggests that there is an ideal self toward which the self is tending, and against which it is measuring itself. This ideal should not be understood in terms of a Freudian superego, however, a concept, in any case, of which Dewey could not have been aware when he wrote the *Psychology*. For Dewey, the will that in our active efforts strives to realize itself is motivated by an ideal end, the completed self, that it holds before itself, “the vague ideal of a completely universal self, by which it measures itself and feels its own limitations” (EW 2: 358). The ideal self is a social self (one adopting inherited social norms), but it is not only a social self; nor is it simply a part of us that has developed during a certain stage of our psychosexual development, as is the case with the superego.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, the ideal end we feel drawn by is a completed self, a self that is thoroughly ideal, without any limitations within it, lacking in nothing, a fully realized self. Not that this self is ever achieved or even clearly understood. Dewey makes it clear that “the self . . . cannot be realized by some one act; it can be realized only by realizing every possible legitimate desire; that is, every desire whose realization does not preclude the realization of some other. We realize the self only by satisfying it in the infinite variety of concrete ways” (EW 2: 319). In other words, we never can realize the self; but it is in the process of trying to do so that we try out an infinite variety of possible self-realizations, and this process itself is what is meaningful about the self’s activities. It is a process that, to be infinite in its production of meanings, requires the vague, unspecific ideal of a completed self that we strive to become

but never can become. In short, the ideal of a completed self “must prevent the self resting in any realized attainment. It must form the spring to renewed action” in order for there to be endless new meanings in the world (EW 2: 319).

Some evidence that the completed self is the ideal self for which we strive can be found, Dewey thinks, in the cases of presentiment, dramatic poetry, and the feeling of faith, as we have seen. But it should be stressed that as Dewey sees it, at best these three aspects of feeling give us only a vague sense that we are moving toward something, we know not what. Presentiment, dramatic poetry, and the feeling of faith may provide a sense that we are moving towards an ideal, completed self, but they do not offer an account, with details of the nature of the completed self—a self that in truth cannot be manifest in any actual stage of existence. For the actual self, “what this will or self as complete is, it does not know. It only feels that there is such a goal” (EW 2: 358). Indeed, by the nature of the case (a finite self seeking an infinite one), the actual self cannot know what the completed self is (EW 2: 361). It can only feel that there is such a self, and based on this feeling, seek in various ways (some resulting in failure, others moving it closer to the ideal, based on the feelings that result and the knowledge gained) to approximate this self. And all the while, driven on by an unclear, infinite ideal, the self is creating meanings in the world in this way and partially realizing itself.

Now Dewey wants to say that although the ideal is drawing us on, we are not explicitly aware of this when we possess knowledge or feeling. We are simply knowing or feeling, and at best only groping our way, as it were, toward the understanding that at the basis of these activities is the lure of our higher ideal self. In fact, it is only in the will, and in particular the moral will, that we come to understand what is really going on, for with the moral will we have a will that explicitly understand that the actual self *ought* to be one with the ideal self. In morality, in other words, we understand that the ideal self ought to be the basis and foundation of our acts. We see that this “ought” is at work in all of our efforts, or at least that it should be, for we understand that it is right that it should be. We here grasp the

actual explicitly in terms of what it should be, in terms of its better and more ideal nature. This does not mean, of course, that the ideal self is in fact at work in our activities, as their underlying basis, as it were, but only that we recognize that it ought to be; and we recognize that, in fact, the striving for this ought, for an ideal arrangement to things, is what has been going on all along in our other activities, although we had not brought this insight into our full awareness before in quite the same way (EW 2: 359–60).

With “the moral will,” we realize that the ideal self ought to be the basis of our action. We come to see that we should act as if there really were one universe of interconnected events, in which each individual occupied a distinct and essential place. We understand that we should act in such a way that each person counts as an essential part of the whole. That is how our ideal self would act, as revealed by our moral feelings, and that is how we should act (EW 2:348). But of course the ideal self is not always at work in our actions. We sometimes go astray. In fact, realizing the moral will is forever a struggle, for even when we have formed the best of characters, we must still always choose between good and bad ends in each situation before us. That we must still always choose means, however, that our actual and ideal selves have not, in fact, been reconciled; they “have not been truly unified” (EW2: 360). The moral will, therefore, since it forever involves a choice, is never complete, and in it we have no guarantee of finding our complete self. We only know that we should strive for it.

*Religious will* is the will that simply asserts (or, in Dewey’s words, “declares”) that the ideal will is the basis of the actual self—asserts that *it* is what is drawing us on, and not only our individual, partial self (EW 2: 360). This assertion relies on faith, not knowledge, Dewey makes a point of saying, because knowledge never reveals a complete self; a complete self is not something we can know, and we cannot get behind knowledge and what we know to say what is there for sure. Thus, “there is always a chasm between actual knowledge and absolute truth” (EW 2: 361). Our actual state of knowledge at any given time does not demonstrate anything that Dewey has been arguing for—it does not establish that there is an absolute truth, an ideal self

towards which we are tending. To believe that behind what we know there is an ideal self drawing us toward it, drawing us to leave our actual selves and realize its higher, ideal version of what we are—to believe in this requires faith. It requires an act of will to believe it and is not the result of our knowledge.

On the other hand, Dewey thinks that this is a reasonable faith, because he thinks that when our actions become more harmonious, they seem to become more ideal. Moreover, he thinks that this ideal, more harmonious self is always implied in our actual knowledge, and indeed in all of our activities insofar as they are idealizing, because, for example in the case of knowledge, our motive is to grasp everything, the whole of what is, and all the finite particulars, in a systematic arrangement. But in the end, we believe that this completed knowledge exists without knowing for sure that it does. In this case, we have faith, and our faith impels us to try to know and so to acquire at least some partial knowledge (EW 2: 361). In a similar fashion, we have faith that there is an ideal version of ourselves, one that treats everybody as equally essential to the whole, and this faith provides us with the motive to try to treat everyone in this way. We believe that what ought to be done *can* be done, and so we try to do it.

Ultimately, then, it is a matter of faith that our idealizations amount to anything complete—but this faith acts as “a spur” to idealizations of reality that, although partial and incomplete, do nonetheless occur and do give us meaning along the way (EW 2: 358). Faith is the motor that keeps meaning not simply going but progressing to richer and fuller contents. As Dewey puts it, faith in the ideal “has been a constant motive power, which has energized in bringing forth the concrete attainments in knowledge, beauty, and rightness” (EW 2: 359). Without the faith that our idealizations of life are possible, we would have to submit without reserve to the failures of actual life. Modernism would therefore win out in the end. Isolation of the self and its meanings from the actual world would be the result; and we would then look out to the world, ultimately, with the sense of a lack of any true connection with it. With the faith that the world can always be rendered more ideal, however, we are compelled to try to

realize ideals in the world; and we have, moreover, an infinite reserve at our disposal, a constant source of resistance to the failures of the actual world. For it is a completed, or Absolute, self in which we have faith, a faith that provides the constant possibility of moving past the failures of finitude. Ironically, faith in this Absolute—in something that sounds as if it might be a *substance*—is actually faith in the endless power of rupture, or in that which disrupts all substances and final stages. To believe in ideals *means* to believe that we do not have to submit to the dictates of actual life, that these can be negated in order for us to move past them and toward something more freely developed and meaningful for human beings. To believe in the Absolute (or the ideal of the infinite) is to believe that this power of resistance to actual fact is endless, and that the world can always become more ideal.

I should stress here, then, that it is essential to Dewey's position that the whole process of rendering reality more ideal (based on the ideal of a complete self) ultimately rests on faith. As I mentioned in chapter 3, this admission is not, as Robert Westbrook has said, a confession of failure on Dewey's part.<sup>13</sup> It is the very point he is trying to make. The essence of Dewey's early philosophy is that we *believe* we are compelled by higher ideals to reshape the world and make it more meaningful for us. It is a belief that absolutely cannot be grounded in fact, or in any kind of knowledge (EW 2: 361). By not being grounded in fact, we are able, precisely, to move the facts toward the ideal rather than becoming submerged and lost in the facts. Rupture from facts produces idealized meanings such as we have seen throughout this study, meanings like those that are present in science, art, social life, and morality; and we have faith that these meanings are always able to move toward better and better versions of themselves, and hence are capable of taking the facts with them and literally making the world more fully ideal. But in the end we only have faith that this is so. And this is as it should be, in Dewey's view. For were we ever to think we positively had reached the completed self, we would cease to move toward it; we would only think we had arrived when we had not, for an infinite self can never be realized; and we would then have

only the supposed realization of what cannot be so. We would be sunk wholly within some present facts and not the complete ideal. It is precisely by having faith that the complete ideal is possible, but not yet realized, that we keep trying to realize it, and it is precisely by our efforts to realize it that actual events in the world can become more ideal.