

INTERPRETING DEWEY'S REMARKS ON ART

Instructions: Briefly write down your own interpretation or application of the quotes that follow from John Dewey's book *Art as Experience*. (Use the back of this page or a separate piece of paper to write down your ideas.) These quotes appear in the author's language (English) instead of in translation (as is often the case with philosophy). Then, in small groups, compare your interpretations of these quotes.

"As long as art is the beauty parlor of civilization, neither art nor civilization is secure."

"For to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent...Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art."

"The live being recurrently loses and reestablishes equilibrium with his surroundings. The moment of passage from disturbance into harmony is that of intensest life."

"A surgeon, golfer, ball player, as well as a dancer, painter, or violin-player has at hand and under command certain motor sets of the body. Without them, no complex skilled act can be performed. An inexpert huntsman has buck fever when he suddenly comes upon the game he has been pursuing. He does not have effective lines of motor response ready and waiting. His tendencies to action therefore conflict and get in the way of one another, and the result is confusion, a whirl and blur. The old hand at the game may be emotionally stirred also. But he works off his emotion by directing his response along channels prepared in advance: steady holding of eye and hand, sighting of rifle, etc. If we substitute a painter or a poet in the circumstances of suddenly coming upon a graceful deer in a green and sun-specked forest, there is also diversion of immediate response into collateral channels. He does not get ready to shoot, but neither does he permit his response to diffuse itself at random throughout his whole body. The motor coordinations that are ready because of prior experience at once render his perception of the situation more acute and intense and incorporate into it meanings that give it depth, while they also cause what is seen to fall into fitting rhythms."

Questions:

1. How divergent were the groups' interpretations of the same text?
2. Can you successfully interpret or apply these isolated quotes without more context, such as reading more thoroughly Dewey's book (available online at Google Books)?

