

# A Comparative Study of the Aesthetic viewpoint in John Dewey and Zhuangzi

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This essay discusses the common ground for aesthetic experience between Dewey and Zhuangzi. Both of them see art as something that is inseparable from everyday life even though it is fulfilled only through ceaseless effort that takes one beyond ordinary experiences. They also see art as a dynamic process rather than a static object not as an art product but as art work. Most of all, they regarded art as an ultimate stage in human life not just as the object of sensory-emotional knowledge. This, I believe, is an essential aspect of art that is missing from contemporary theories of art.

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**Key Words** : Zhuangzi, Dewey, Nature/self-so, Experience, Art,  
Aesthetic experience

These words might be called a puzzle. But if after ten thousand generations we encounter a single sage who knows the solution, it would be no different from what we encounter every morning and evening!.-Zhuangzi -

## 1. Sketch in Contemporary Aesthetics

The present century is often referred to as the century of culture and art; but on the other hand, it might be also said that at no time has art been so far from us than at the present. Art products rated highly by professional critics are displayed in galleries and sold at inflated prices, even though they do not touch most people's hearts at all. While people mention the term 'art' more frequently than at any other period of history, the views on what should be regarded as art are diverse and conflicting. These discordances have partly been foreseen by a few thinkers since aesthetics as a discipline of study came into the world in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2)</sup>

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1) "On Equalizing Things," *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*, (Kjellberg tr.1996) "是其言也。其名曰齊諧。萬世之後而一遇大聖，知其解者，是旦暮遇之也。" <莊子 齊物論> There are several translations of *Zhuangzi*, and it is *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (Watson 1968) that I have made the basis of my own, but I excerpted the above-paragraph from the selected translation of Kjellberg due to its simplicity and modernity. (The following citation of Watson's translation will be abbreviated to W and page number.) In case, I will adopt another translation with comment.

2) In General, it is accepted as the starting point in the history of Aesthetics when *Aesthetica* published by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762) at 1750 (the second volume was in 1758). It could go back in 1735, when he submitted his

Since the new field named aesthetics was born, there has been much argument about the essence of this new science. In fact, aesthetics started as the study of sensory-emotional values, and was a branch of the theory of knowledge. But one may say that the need for aesthetics itself implied a criticism against the logo-centrism upon which modern philosophy was based, whether or not early aestheticians could agree<sup>3)</sup>. Be as it may, it seems that contemporary theorists have lost themselves in analyzing the concept or in arguing against the criticism rather than trying to accomplish the born task of aesthetics.

Aesthetics, understood here in a broad sense 'the theory of art', which developed in manifold ways, can be divided into two main subjects today: aesthetics and philosophy of art. Although they overlap with each other in many cases, they have been regarded as two different areas; Aesthetics is often defined as the philosophical study of beauty and taste, while philosophy of art is usually regarded as the philosophical study of art works. In other words, it can be roughly said that aesthetics is considered a sort of epistemological theory, investigating what the beauty is, and philosophy of art is considered an ontological theory of art, investigating what the art works are. Art institutionalism, which is also called art ontology, takes its mission to define the concept of art, and to classify art from

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dissertation "Philosophical considerations of some matters pertaining to the poem", where he introduced the term to mean "a science of how things are to be known by means of the senses." It may be due to centripetal tendency to existing dichotomy, to speak flatly, that contemporary aesthetics has been dragged into arguing in a circle on the standard of aesthetic/art without accomplishing its innate mission.

3) See the entry of 'philosophy of music' *New Grove Dictionary* (2002). It summarizes efficiently the arguments from the birth of 'aesthetics' to the appearance of 'philosophy of music' 601-630pp.

the commonplace<sup>4)</sup> On the other hand, aesthetic attitude theory, which inherits the theory of taste, tries to find aesthetic experience in the disinterested attitude, which means "no concern for any ulterior purpose." To pursue the classificatory sense of "art" in society and to search the aesthetic in psychological individuals seem to be opposed to each other at a glance. They are common, however, in a sense that they are still based on subject-object dichotomy as well as dealing with art separated from daily life<sup>5)</sup>.

This phase was precisely foreseen by Dewey. He worried about "the philosophies of art that locate it in a region inhabited by no other creature, and that emphasize beyond all reason the merely contemplative character of the esthetic<sup>6)</sup>." Art institutionalism is indifferent to vivid experiences and constant efforts of people who don't belong to the art world, and aesthetic attitude theory is utterly helpless to the ordinary people who cannot cut themselves free from common interests. Only the belief that art should take root in the real world may allow us to seek for "ancient futures" of aesthetics, which is a new theory to overcome the limit of existing theories of art and to restore the real right of art.

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4) This was the very problem which Danto grappled with. See "Preface" in *The transfiguration of the commonplace*. His topic is quite simple; what makes common things be artworks? It is also regarded as a response for radical question, which modern artists have provoked. With "Fountain" of Marcel Duchamp(1887-1968) as a turning point, modern artist have worked to break down the boundary between common and art. Think about John Cage(1912-1992) "4'33'", Andy Warhol(autonym: Andrew Warhola, 1928-1987) "Brillo Box".

5) Appearance of postmodern aesthetics could be also regarded as the repulsion against such a tendency which modern aesthetics has held. This essay stands that the accounts of Dewey and Zhuangzi have a different position from the postmodern arguments in the point of respect for showing us the continuity of daily life and art work by focusing on real experiences in art practice instead of trying to pull down the boundary of art by conceptual analysis.

6) John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (The following abbreviates it as AE), 10p.

## 2. How to compare Dewey and Zhuangzi

Although it was much later than that of "aesthetics" that the name of "comparative philosophy" came into existence<sup>7)</sup>, the beginning of comparative study might go back to a similar period of aesthetics<sup>8)</sup>. On one hand, aesthetics could not help taking unyieldingness from birth by turning to concern and inquiry toward sensory-emotion instead of reason, which had been the main issue in the traditional academic world. On the other hand, comparative study also emerged with the implication of opposition against or complement to the mainstream of philosophy, for comparative study has represented the venture to find a solution out of western tradition. The scholars who engaged in comparative study mostly set their academic backgrounds on oriental study or came from non-western countries, and they have tried to search for different ways of thinking from the mainstream of western philosophy. It can be said that both of aesthetics and comparative philosophy are incomplete fields of today to be encountered in the point of radical reflection on western spirit which is represented as logo-centrism and dichotomy.

There have been various kinds of criticisms about comparative philosophy. Although it may be true that the proper methodology in comparative study has not been established yet, and the attempt to compare different traditions of thought is inclined to superficial comparison, comparative study is still one of the meaningful

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7) Paul Masson-Oursel(1882-1956), *La Philosophie compare'e* (1922) translated as *Comparative Philosophy*.

8) Generally they call William Jones (1746-1794), who was an English scholar on oriental studies, as an originator of comparative study. On the other hand, the origin of aesthetics is rated around early 1700's. See Paul Guyer "The Origins of Modern Aesthetics: 1711-35." *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*.

approaches in today's academic world. Incommensurability among different paradigms, which is referred to as the strongest criticism<sup>9)</sup>, is based on the assumption of distinct substances between two different traditions. However, there is no such thing as the closed self, separated from environment, and no such thing as unchangeable cultural substance isolated from other cultures in the viewpoints of Zhuangzi as well as Dewey. Every being is an organism in the process of interaction with others, and every affair is connected with each other in dynamic stream. Comparison as communication<sup>10)</sup> between different cultures comes to be not only possible but also necessary to inquiry<sup>11)</sup>.

In comparative study on Chinese philosophy, Dewey's thought has been the major theme of comparison, being indicated to the similarity with Chinese thought in his outlook<sup>12)</sup>. Most papers on

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9) See *Thinking from the Han*, xi-xiii. In addition, Trilogy of Hall and Ames on comparative study are as follows, *Thinking from Confucius* (1987), *Anticipating China: Thinking through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture*(1995), *Thinking from the Han*(1998)

10) Contrary to general anticipation, the criticism of language in *Zhuangzi* does not imply the impossibility of communication, but focus on truthful dialogue without bounding by superficial meaning of words as it is hinted at his ironical hope "to have a word with someone who has forgotten words." See "Language: The Guest of Reality - Zhuangzi and Derrida on Language, Reality, and Skillfulness" in *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi* (The following abbreviates it as ESRE)

11) John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (The following abbreviates it as EN) p.37. "An empirical philosophy is in any case a kind of intellectual disrobing. We cannot permanently divest ourselves of the intellectual habit we take on and wear when we assimilate the culture of our own time and place. But intelligent furthering of culture demands that we take some of them off, that we inspect them critically to see what they are made of and what wearing them does to us."

12) To the similarities between pragmatism and Confucianism, see *The Democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius, and the Hope for Democracy in China* (Hall and Ames 1999) 142p. "American pragmatism and Asian Confucianism are more dramatically similar than one might reasonably expect intellectual movements born from such disparate historical experiences to be."

this topic are with Confucianism; there are hardly any papers found comparing it with Daoism<sup>13</sup>). I agree that Dewey could be the closest one to Confucianism above anyone else in participating and practical attitude, but if one considered how various his philosophical spectrum was and how big his philosophical plan was, one could agree that his metaphysical standpoint on human beings and the universe showed the most similarity to that of Zhuangzi.

As like Dewey in his later works, Zhuangzi has never been a thinker who can be easily understood, owing to his abstruse style. They both believed that there could not be a clear and distinct standard to cognize the one and only truth, and they often took the long way round to say what they really meant. Then, how can I arrange a foundation to compare Dewey(John Dewey, 1859~1952) to Zhuangzi(莊子, 355~275B.C.), who had lived in totally different times and spaces, and had never shared one single word to express their thoughts? I would like to suggest here applying the approaches which they had set to the world and language, so to speak, pragmatic approach and Daoistic approach.

What I would call pragmatic approach is the position of treating an individual as a collective being, whose ideas have been forming and changing under the influence of all other beings, and have been producing affects on the others as well<sup>14</sup>). Now we can consider

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13) There is found the text to take Daoism in a broad pragmatic view, but it can be rarely found the essay to have an eye to the basic similarities in view of human & universe between Dewey and Daoism. This essay is inquiring into the aesthetic feature of their viewpoints on the basis of the comparison of Nature/Self-so in Dewey and Zhuangzi which was carried out in 박소경(2007).

14) Hall and Ames have ever mentioned to such an attitude of pragmatist. See Hall and Ames (1998) p. xvi. "For the pragmatist (as perhaps for any careful thinker) names such as "Pythagoras" and "Xunzi" cannot be thought merely to designate specific historical individuals. Such names are always complex propositions that sum the ideas and influences to which their names effectively refer. Indeed, it is

every aspect of a thinker as a corporate personage. It should not be understood as an arbitrary attitude but as an attempt to see the internal coherence in an anthology without cutting the whole work into pieces. This approach is especially necessary to understand Zhuangzi, which is an ancient text formed by anonymous congenial spirits, but is also needed to understand the entire works of Dewey who had ceaselessly transfigured his philosophy through life.

There is no doubt that Daoistic approach is connected to the first approach in some way, but the former was to make two thinkers in different space-time dialogue now and here, and the latter is focused on how to treat their concepts developed in different ways. Zhuangzi is often called a language skeptic, but now notice what he said; "Words are for meaning: when you've got the meaning, you can forget the words<sup>15</sup>." This sentence does not mean to deny completely the function of language at all. It is, rather, to suggest that the important thing in conversation is, above all, the meaning which comes to mutual understanding, instead of the word in itself. The very next passage of the quotation proves this assumption, "Where can I find someone who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?" He wants to have a true conversation with someone beyond the limit of language<sup>16</sup>. Only when we understand

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a truism that, considered in terms of effective ideas, "Pythagoras" is shorthand for the Pythagorean community, and equally truistic that, as we have stressed throughout our work, that "Confucius" names a corporate personage."

- 15) "Outside Things" chap. 26 of *Zhuangzi* "A trap is for fish: when you've got the fish, you can forget the trap. A snare is for rabbits: when you've got the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words are for meaning: when you've got the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find someone who's forgotten words so I can have a word with him?" (trans by Paul Kjellberg 「莊子·外物」 荃者所以在魚，得魚而忘荃；蹄者所以在兔，得兔而忘蹄；言者所以在意，得意而忘言。吾安得夫忘言之人而與之言哉）

- 16) Dewey seems to share this standpoint. EN p. 185 "Persons and thing must alike

this intention, we can pick up the hidden core in the puzzled text full of parables and metaphors, and we can not get confused with the cases that the different words mean the same, or even the same words mean the opposite.

Even though there are no end of examples on this<sup>17)</sup>, for one example of the latter case, "*qing*(情)" in Zhuangzi distinctly signifies the true state or person's feelings<sup>18)</sup>, but he would also mention it as the general meaning of desires, or emotions of love and hate, which is regarded as the origin of all the problems in the world. It is necessary to try to grasp the meaning of the words without fixed meaning, particularly in reading Zhuangzi. Dewey has the same attitude to language. He emphasizes the distinction between "art products" like a building, a book, a painting, or a statue, and "actual work of art," a consummated experience in artistic procedure<sup>19)</sup>, but, in another part of the same book, he seems to mingle the concept of art work with art product instead of keeping strictly the distinction of art product and art work. I think it results from their attitudes to

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serve as means in a common, shared consequence. This community of partaking is meaning." EN p. 202 "Communication is consummatory as well as instrumental."

17) For instance of that different words mean the same, as GuoXiang(郭象) mentioned on his commentary of Chap. 6 in *Zhuangzi*, *Tian*(天, Heaven, Nature) in *Zhuangzi* is usually interpreted in *ziran* (自然, Spontaneity) in *Lanzi*. "天者, 自然之謂也。"(「莊子·大宗師」, 知天之所為者) There are found the more words which can be interpreted in spontaneity/nature, for example, 自生, 自化, 自為, etc.

18) See the examples of translating '*qing*(情, true state, emotion, feeling)' in Watson(1968): human affair(W33), identity(W38), the true state of affairs(W52), what the situation is like(W59), fact(W60), true form(W330), emotions(W369). On exceptional usages of '*qing*': feelings(W75), the emotions of love and hate(W349)

19) AE 3-13pp. "For one reason, these works are products that exist externally and physically... Since the actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience, the result is not favorable to understanding."

see language as an instrument rather than their carelessness. On this paper, I would quote and compare two thinkers in the way of considering these subtle meanings without oversimplifying.

In the following chapter, I would inquire into Dewey's aesthetic viewpoint focused on his core concepts, and find the parallel ideas in Zhuangzi. In reverse order, the basic ideas of Zhuangzi on the aesthetic and art would be shown and compared with those of Dewey in the following chapter. Then I will discuss comprehensively what could be the alternative suggestion to contemporary theories of art.

### 3. Experience and Nature: from Dewey to Zhuangzi

As is generally known, experience and nature are key concepts in Dewey's philosophy. The theory of art presented in his later works should not be seen as latter appendages, but should be regarded as having roots deep in his thought as a whole<sup>20</sup>. I would thus like to begin with these two concepts.

#### (1) Experience

Dewey severely criticized the philosophical tradition of the west, but it is the attempt to restore the original function of philosophy as a mode of reflection in face of the world entering a new phase, rather than a criticism for criticism's sake<sup>21</sup>. There is the concept of

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20) This point of view, which sees Dewey's aesthetics of experience as the summit in his whole philosophical works, has originated by Richard Bernstein, supported by Philip Zeltner, and comes to life again by Richard Shusterman after temporary vacuum.

experience reconstructed in the center of his criticism. According to Dewey, a chronic problem in western philosophy has been the tendency to regard the results of reflection as being superior to that of other aspects of human experience. On the point that he criticized the thinking, to give priority to abstract idea separated from the empirical world, he seems to be on the side of the empiricists. However, he breaks with old empiricism by refusing to take the sense data of subjective cognition as the essential source of experience.

Both empiricism and rationalism, in Dewey's view, committed the same mistake of static dichotomy in the sense of setting up the material world as an object outside of the individual, and regarding the sensory-perceptual experience as the subject inside of the individual. For him, experience is "of" as well as "in" nature<sup>22)</sup>. Experience never belongs only to the subject and it is produced between the mode of experiencing and the mode of being experienced<sup>23)</sup>. Admitting that the subjective aspect in experience might operate as a linchpin, there is no experience without any intervening of that which is objective, for every being is a movement of events occurring in succession.<sup>24)</sup> In Dewey's view,

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21) EN iii. "The naturalistic method, when it is consistently followed, destroys many things once cherished; but it destroys them by revealing their inconsistency with the nature of things—a flaw that always attended them and deprived them of efficacy for aught save emotional consolation. But its main purport is not destructive; empirical naturalism is rather a winnowing fan—it inspires the mind with courage and vitality to create new ideals and values in the face of the perplexities of a new world."

22) EN 4a

23) AE p.19 "Instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, it signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events."

24) AE p. 35 "Experience occurs continuously, because the interaction of five

experience is constituted in a sequence of interpenetrating conditions, and every experience is an interaction between an organism and its surroundings. Although he called his viewpoint "empirical naturalism" or "naturalistic empiricism," it is very different from what is often called empiricism or naturalism today.

## (2) Nature

If "experience" means, in Dewey's mind, a series of process as in which a living being undergoes qualitative changes, as it interacts with surrounding beings, "nature" means the entire process of events as a continuity of interactions. Nature is not just the static object, which has been regarded as being opposed to the human mind. Dewey, who revised his thought continually right up to his death, replaced the concept of "interaction" with that of "transaction" in 1946<sup>25)</sup> in order to explain the meaning of nature more accurately. He divided the thing which we call action into three models: self-action, interaction, and transaction. Self-action is a model of action, considered as one entity acts independently in no connection with other entities. Interaction indicates a model of action, considered as each entity, fixed and separated from each other, exchanges actions. These actions, however, can not be the true

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creature and environing conditions involved in the very process of living."

- 25) Bernstein indicated that Dewey had re-defined his terms from 1946 on the ground of *Knowing and the Known*, which was published with Arthur F. Bentley in 1949, besides his letters in 1946, and suggested that 'transaction' should be considered as the key concept to understand 'nature'. Therefore we can not find the concept from *Experience and Nature* published in 1925, which is his main work on nature. What Dewey called 'organic interaction' is mostly in accord with it, but sometimes it was used just as 'interaction' in EN. Consequently, Bernstein understood some of interactions in EN as 'transaction'.

character of action. Dewey did not ignore these actions because of acquiring usefulness by posing these concepts in certain theory, but did not think them appropriate because of their premising substantial entity split from other entities. The fundamental turning point occurs in considering the very transaction, which is the continuity of qualitative transition, to be the root of various actions; all kinds of actions are only functional units in the stream of transaction. All sorts of actions may differ from each other depending on their pattern, but are successive in nature. As it were, nature is 'affair of affairs', and at the same time, it is constituted of actions which overlap and penetrate each other.

Another clue to understand 'nature' is 'qualitative immediacy.' As part of a rebellion against the intellectualism in the mainstream of western philosophy, the demand for grasping the immediacy of experience had been surging forward in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the outlook of immediacy, which Dewey tried to inquire, takes a turn for another direction. It is his insight that immediacy is not knowledge but qualities. In other words, qualities are immediately to be felt, to be experienced, and to be belonged, not to be immediately known. We should not mix up 'to experience qualities directly' and 'to form knowledge from experiencing qualities.' Dewey considered that qualities are the qualities of transaction, and belong to neither object nor subject. "The qualities never were "in" the organism; they always were qualities of interactions<sup>26)</sup> in which both extra-organic things and organisms partake...they are as much qualities of the things engaged as of the organism...they may be referred specifically to either the thing or to the organism or to a

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26) As we know, "interaction" here should be read as "transaction."

specified structure of the organism<sup>27)</sup>." It says that, after all, we realize the whole qualities, which are not able to be reduced to physical elements or psychological elements, when we are experiencing something<sup>28)</sup>.

In short, according to Dewey, nature does not indicate the static substance but the dynamic transaction itself, in which various kinds of transactions arise. Moreover, the experience of organism is to feel the whole qualities of situations immediately as well as a certain pattern of transactions participated in by other pattern of transactions. This view leads us to head for the concept of art named 'consummation of experience', which could be the fulfilled life as well as the integrity of experience.

### (3) Art as Experience

Art or aesthetic experience is called "an" experience by Dewey. Although experience occurs continuously, we don't call everything that we experience "an experience." Instead, we call it "an" experience only when the experience runs its way to consummation, and is integrated and becomes distinct from other experiences in the entire stream of experience. It is "an" experience in the sense that there is vital activity which is continuously merging from beginning to end, distinct from other experiences, which are merely emerging and dispersing without weaving. However, it is not something beyond experience, and neither is it far apart from 'real experiences'

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27) EN p. 259

28) EN p. 85 "—in every event there is something obdurate, self-sufficient, wholly immediate, neither a relation nor an element in a relational whole, but terminal and exclusive."

we spontaneously refer to in our daily lives. Now that nature does not mean the thing itself but transaction, an experience, which is the fulfillment of experiences related to undergoing and doing, becomes the consummate junction between an organism and nature i.e. the whole transaction<sup>29</sup>). This is because the meanings of objects, that is, surrounding transactions, are clarified and concentrated by a new experience, that is, the consummation of human experience as a mode of transaction. A human is an organism restricted by nature as well as connected with transaction of nature, and also the creative organism to form 'end' of nature by dreaming of new goals, choosing reflectively, and taking an active hand<sup>30</sup>).

It can be said that art as a vivid activity achieves the ultimate in work of art, but works of art are not restricted to art products, such as a painting or a sculpture. Because the art product itself is something physical, external, and latent, but real art work is a vivid experience. An art product becomes 'work of art' only when it is considered as an enhanced transaction of the artist or creator, and it operates as a vivid transaction with the observer or appreciator. That is to say, a work of art is recreated every moment when it is experienced aesthetically as well as created through enhanced transaction of the artist. Therefore, there is no absolute difference between useful and fine arts, for real art work involves a peculiar interpenetration of means and ends. The things of daily use for ordinary ends may survive to a later period, or be transported to another culture, and finally rank as works of fine art. This view is

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29) EN viii "The highest because most complete incorporation of natural forces and operations in experience is found in art...Art thus represents the culminating event of nature as well as the climax of experience."

30) EN p. 358

the exact opposite to the existing art theories, but most probably coincides with the perception of art in the sentiment of ordinary people. Moreover, applying this view to real works of art, it would be more explainable<sup>31)</sup>.

In Dewey's view, art cannot be separated from the aesthetic, and a creator and an appreciator<sup>32)</sup>. Even when an artist is working alone, he must observe every process with the eyes of an appreciator, and he has to see each particular connection of doing and undergoing in relation to the whole<sup>33)</sup>. When an appreciator totally shares each experience of a creator, he as good as participates in the art work.

#### (4) Zhuangzi in the context of Dewey

There is no concept that corresponds exactly to 'experience' in Zhuangzi, but he is strikingly similar to Dewey in basic thinking. As like Dewey, above all, Zhuangzi also does not regard reflective knowledge as the superior aspect of experience. On the contrary, he reacted a little cynically to the arguments among the intellectuals because of their great distance from the emotion of ordinary people

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31) According to his confess of conversion to pragmatic aesthetics, Shusterman, who had been trained by analytic aesthetics, found that pragmatic aesthetics was more powerful than any other well articulated aesthetics when he applied aesthetic rule to real art work and phenomena.

32) AE p. 19 "Experience in the degree in which "is" experience is heightened vitality. Instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feeling and sensations,... at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events...Because experience is the fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things, it is art in germ. Even in its rudimentary forms, it contains the promise of that delightful perception which is esthetic experience."

33) AE p. 45

e<sup>34</sup>). He describes the experience of ordinary life as something that is a jumble of complex reaction without accurate forecast in ever-changing circumstance, sympathizing with its whole surrounding asleep or awake<sup>35</sup>). Nature becomes the whole of experiences which a myriad of things are doing and undergoing, and neither is it the static physical objects nor the abstract substance above the real world.

Besides, the coincidence of creator and appreciator is one of vital issues in aesthetics of Zhuangzi. Through the allegories as usual, he tells us that an artist shows his skill to the full only with his companion<sup>36</sup>), and a thinker communicates his true meaning only

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34) According to GuoXiang, who was an early and recognized commentator, it is read as follows: Only in their likes they were different from ordinary people. What they liked, they tried to make clear. What ordinary people are unwilling to make clear, they tried to make clear, and so they ended in the foolishness of unnecessary argument, "hard" and "white." (「莊子·齊物論」"唯其好之也，以異於彼 其好之也，欲以明之。彼非所明而明之，故以堅白之昧終。" 郭象注：言此三者，唯獨好其所明，自以殊於眾人。明示眾人，欲使同乎我之所好。) Unlike that GuoXiang regard 'pi(彼, he or that)' as 'zhongren(眾人, ordinary people or public)', Watson(42p) regarded 'pi' as 'true sage' and Kjellberg(219p) translated 'pi' by 'other things'.

35) W 37p "In sleep, men's spirits go visiting; in waking hours, their bodies hustle. With everything they meet they become entangled. Day after day their use their minds in strife, sometimes grandiose, sometimes sly, sometimes petty... Joy, anger, grief, delight, worry, regret, fickleness, inflexibility, modesty, willfulness, candor, insolence-music from empty holes, mushrooms springing up in dampness, day and night replacing each other before us, and no one knows where they sprout from. Let it be! Let it be! [It is enough that] morning and evening we have them, and they are the means by which we live."

36) W269p "Chuang Tzu was accompanying a funeral when he passed by the grave of Hui Tzu. Turning to his attendants, he said, "There was once a plasterer who, if he got a speck of mud on the tip of his nose no thicker than a fly's wing, would get his friend Carpenter Shih to slice it off for him. Carpenter Shih, whirling his hatchet with a noise like the wind, would accept the assignment and proceed to slice, removing every bit of mud without injury to the nose, while the plasterer just stood there completely unperturbed. Lord Yüan of Sung, hearing of this feat, summoned Carpenter Shih and said, 'Could you try performing for me?' But Carpenter Shih replied, 'It's true that I was once able to slice like that, but

with his companion. Inheriting this idea, the concept of 'Zhiyin(知音, a wise man of music)', which means a person who is deeply appreciative of somebody's music, has served as the significant term to tell the indivisibility of creation and appreciation in the art world of the coming age<sup>37)</sup>.

#### 4. Toward Dao, beyond skill: from Zhuangzi to Dewey

Before dealing with the aesthetic viewpoint of Zhuangzi, it should be basically indicated as follows: as Kupperman pointed out<sup>38)</sup>, it is apt to leave a vague, unreliable, deficient, and somehow ridiculous impression for us that the analysis based on the framework and terms of the western philosophy. There are not only the exact correspondent words to the main terms<sup>39)</sup>, but they could also differ

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the material I worked on has been dead these many years.' Since you died, Master Hui, I have had no material to work on. There's no one I can talk to any more."

37) The story of Boya(伯牙) and Zhongzhiqi(鍾子期) handed down in 『呂氏春秋・孝行覽・本味』 and 『列子・湯問』, etc.

38) Joel Kupperman, "Spontaneity and Education of the Emotions in the Zhuangzi" (ESRE p. 185) "There is a dilemma inherent in comparative philosophy as practiced by Western academics attempting to understand and explicate Asia philosophies. On one hand, any approach that attempts to suggest that Asian philosopher X is really just like Western philosopher Y is almost certainly going to be too primitive, giving us a cartoon-like image of X and ignoring X's intellectual and cultural context. On the other hand, Western readers of comparative philosophy are likely to approach any Asian philosophy as something like a second (rather than a first) philosophical language, for which at least some rules of translation into familiar terms would be useful. A deeper problem is this."

39) As is generally known, Dao(道), the supreme concept of Chinese philosophy, has so many versions in English translation: the Way, path, paths, teaching, god, Dao, Tao, the tao, reason, logos, truth, that, ever-becoming, Heaven's way, The Absolute, Nature. As many scholars are, so many interpretations exist.

in the degree of importance the concepts have. Special mention should be made of the concept of 'beauty', which has been the most important concept in the history of western aesthetics. Though '*mei* (美)', which is mostly translated by 'beauty', may be one of main predicates which describes a sort of value, it has never been such an independent substance of the aesthetic object in Asian thought on art. What is more important would be concepts such as *he* (和, harmony), *le* (樂, delight), the meanings of which are often beyond words. Making allowances for these limitations, I would like to look into the aesthetic viewpoint of Zhuangzi, as it is unfolded in his thinking, rather than centering on the main concepts in aesthetics. The following is also the intrinsic order of Inner chapters, from 'Free and Easy Wandering (逍遙遊)' to 'Discussion on Making all things Equal (齊物論)'<sup>40)</sup>

(1) Overcome emotion (無情) and non-self (無我)

Zhuangzi inherited many characteristic concepts from Laozi (老子), and held lots of viewpoints in common, but never repeated them in the same way. Just to mention '*ziran* (自然, nature, spontaneity, self-so-ing)', which is the most important concept of Daoism, it is used much less in Zhuangzi<sup>41)</sup>. It seems strange that when we consider the concept of *ziran* may be a more important concept than even *Dao*, which is the representative concept of Daoism. But, still, it does not mean that Zhuangzi thought little of *ziran*: almost the

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40) I follow the translation of Watson in titles of chap.1 and chap.2

41) Limiting on Inner Chapter, the word of *ziran* (自然) itself appears just twice in chapter 5 and 7 as follows: 「德充符」：「吾所謂無情者，言人之不以好惡內傷其身，常因自然而不益生也。」「應帝王」：「汝遊心於淡，合氣於漠，順物自然而無容私焉，而天下治矣。」

reverse is the case. Instead of exposing the big word of *ziran* on his text, he describes various aspects of *ziran* with an exquisite touch. Laozi used the concept of *ziran* to describe the nature of *Dao* as the root of being and activity of the myriad unique details<sup>42</sup>). On the other hand, Zhuangzi read the meaning of it with appreciation, and turned to concern about a real world in the different angle of self. Zhuangzi focused on the concrete aspect of daily life and realistic feelings of individuals. This may be connected to the fact that Zhuangzi often used *qing*(情, true state, emotion, feeling), which is never found in Laozi, as a key term.

The mark of existential anguish is hidden in every corner of Zhuangzi, which we often fail to notice because of its strikingly humorous style. Zhuangzi seemed to come out in sympathy for mortals, which is related in his great insight into humanity and nature<sup>43</sup>). The questions that arise from this motive are consistent through all the text awaiting solution. The first chapter of Zhuangzi, as 'Free and Easy Wandering(逍遙遊)', begins with the story of an enormously huge bird on a grand scale, but, to sum up in one word, it is focused on 'wujǐ(無己, no-self).<sup>44</sup>' As Hall and Ames soundly indicated<sup>45</sup>), 'self' in Chinese thought is seen as 'focus and field',

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42) Laozi chap.25, People model themselves on the earth. The earth models itself on Heaven. Heaven models itself on the Way. The Way models itself on what is natural(*ziran*, 自然) "人法地。地法天。天法道。道法自然。" See the commentary of Wangbi.

43) A set phrase, as follows, would serve as an example. W80p. "Life and death are fated - constant as the succession of dark and dawn, a matter of Heaven."(死生, 命也, 其有夜旦之常, 天也).

44) W32 "The Perfect Man has no self(至人無己)". "perfect people have no self." (Kj210) The basic meaning of '至' can be interpreted 'to reach', and it implies 'to arrive at his ultimate limit' as well as 'to reach the summit'. It needs a bit to revise the expression of 'perfect'.

45) See *Thinking from the Han*, Hall and Ames, 23-43 pp. To cite just one passage,

as it were, 'self' on focus-field model could have an integrating capacity as well as an individuating capacity. It is never a soul confined in the isolated individual in western tradition<sup>46</sup>). After all, an odd concept of 'no-self' demands turning the focal self toward the larger self by realizing one's life which both constitutes and is constituted by the field in which one resides.

It is important for us to recover 'non-self', not to know, and Zhuangzi considered that we are able to achieve such a state of self-effacement through training and cultivating. Even Hui Shi, who was a conversational partner of Zhuangzi, seemed to feel strange, and when he asked whether a man could really be '*wuqing* (無情, no feeling, no human essence)<sup>47</sup>', Zhuangzi replied as follows: "That's not what I mean by feelings. When I talk about having no feelings, I mean that a man doesn't allow likes or dislikes to get in and do him harm. He just lets things be the way they are and doesn't try to help life along<sup>48</sup>." Needless to say, the person who is without feelings, he would talk about, does not mean an inhuman or cold-hearted person, but a person who understand his relationship to the world, recovers his nature, and, without being carried away by his own emotions, is living in harmony with the surroundings.

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"When 'de' is cultivated and accumulated such that the particular is integrated efficaciously into its environments, the distinction between 'dao' and 'de', as field and focus, collapses and the individuating capacity of 'de' is transformed into its integrating capacity.(40p)"

46) Ibid, p. 24 See four models on self of western thought. (1) rational consciousness, (2) physiological (neuron-chemical; socio-biological) reduction, (3) volitional activity, (4) organic (biological and social) functioning.

47) Watson translated '*wuqing*(無情)' by 'no feelings', and on the other hand, Kjellberg translated by 'no human essence'.

48) W75-76pp. "The sign of virtue complete"

(2) Harmony (和) and Organic Unification with all creatures (萬物一體)

It is hard to imagine a real person who can be perfectly free from personal emotions, but even if such a person were in existence by any chance, might he lead a secluded life? For he might not let his feelings run away with him. The answer of Zhuangzi is that he must not be. The second chapter of Zhuangzi, as 'Discussion on Making all things Equal(齊物論)', begins with 'losing self(喪我)'<sup>49)</sup> and ends with 'transformation of things(物化)'. Ziqi(子綦), who had reached the stage of 'losing the self', was so still as dried wood and dead ashes, but, at the same time, could hear the piping of Heaven as well as the piping of earth, instead of isolating himself. He was relieved from human-centrism, and could listen to natural harmonies which a myriad of holes was playing on the earth, sympathizing with wind. Moreover, he could hear the sound of what let a myriad of things be, that is, he could be harmonized to the rhythm of nature, and unified together with all creatures, as well. It is another remarkable thing to metaphor the moment of no-self as a harmony of sounds.

Such a stage of leaving nothing to be desired could be gradually accomplished through the various experiences of trial and error, that is to say, reflecting on the result of his action, and putting his idea into practice. It is necessary to indicate that Zhuangzi showed another mode of real experience, something more than the sense data or perceptual process, and the reflective knowledge. "Do not listen with your ears but listen with your mind. Do not listen with

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49) According to *Thinking from the Han* (18p) They made distinction between *wuwo* (無我, no-soul) and *wuji*(無己, no-self). In this paper, the concepts of '無我', '無己', '喪我' are regarded as the same without distinction for avoiding to be too much complicated.

your mind but listen with your *qi*(氣). Listening stops with the ear. The mind stops with signs. *Qi* is empty and waits on external things. Only the Way gathers in emptiness. Emptiness is the fasting of the mind<sup>50</sup>." This story seems to be mysterious at a glance, but it is a sober explication of human experience as well as nothing of mysticism. Our daily life is mediated under a variety of conditions raised by numerous events and numerous emotions. Both the sense data via a sensory organ and the reflective knowledge via a speculative process are only fragmentary to Zhuangzi. Only when we are free from the preconception which binds ourselves on a narrow self, and listen to sounds which other beings make with a real feeling, do we just come to learn the way of unhindered communication with each other, and moreover, we can recover the intrinsic function to sympathize with each other, and encounter the affair of affairs, *Dao*.

(3) Skillful life(達生) and spontaneous action (無爲自然) in common life

Recently, the study of Zhuangzi in western academics seems to break from superficial analysis, and enter into orbit. *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in Zhuangzi*, sloughed off the old viewpoint, which defined Zhuangzi as a skeptic or a relativist, and attempted various kinds of new approaches, and showed the remarkable concern about 'skillfulness'<sup>51</sup>.

A lot of skilled workers or artisans take an active part in Zhuangzi,

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50) Kjellberg p. 228.

51) To mention only the examples dealing with skillfulness as the main issue, there are as many as the following 4 chapters out of 9 chapters. "Language: The Guest of Reality - Zhuangzi and Derrida on Language, Reality, and Skillfulness"(Mark Berkson), "Cook Ding's Dao and the Limits of Philosophy"(Robert Eno), "Zhuangzi's understanding of Skillfulness and the Ultimate Spiritual State"(Lee H. Yearly), "Spontaneity and Education of the Emotions"(Joel Kupperman)

such as a cook, a carpenter, a swimmer, a gamecock-trainer, even a cicada catcher with a hunchback etc. It is not because no one was entitled to become an artist in those days. Supreme artists or musicians of fine arts also appear on the stage directed by Zhuangzi, but they can not preoccupy a higher position than others for only the reason of their high social standing. On the contrary, Music Master Guang (ShiGuang, 師曠) is often a target of criticism, in that he may disturb ordinary people to trust their own hearing, let them lose their spontaneity on music<sup>52</sup>). Zhuangzi seemed to be concerned about becoming more distant between art and ordinary life, and considered that copying and following a dominating model without self-experience only devastates human life. Consequently, he made a strenuous effort to describe the mastering life (達生, or skillful life) of various kinds of people instead of authorized artists.

Cook Ding's story, which is one of the well-known metaphors, is about a butcher as well as a cook, which seems to have absolutely nothing to do with art work. When Lord Wenhui (文惠君), who was surprised and deeply moved at Cook Ding's performance of cutting up an ox, asked him the secret, he replied as follows: "What I care about is the Way, which goes beyond skill. When I first began cutting up oxen, all I could see was the ox itself. After three years I no longer saw the whole ox. And now

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52) See W111p. chap. 10 "Rifling Trunks", "Discard and confuse the six tones, smash and unstring the pipes and lutes, stop up the ears of the blind musician Guang, and the for the first time the people of the world will be able to hold on to their hearing." W99p. chap. 8 "Webbed Toes", "He who is overnice in hearing will be confused by the five notes, bewitched by the six tones, by the sounds of metal and stone, strings and woodwinds, the 'huang-chung' and 'ta-lü' pitch pipes-am I wrong? So we have Music Master." W102p. "He who applies his nature to the five notes may go as far with it as Music Master Guang, but I would not call this good hearing." According to text analysis, these extreme passages in Outer Chapter should be not treated the basic idea in Inner Chapter equally. To think about the euphemistic way of his own speaking, it is certainly nearer to *Laozi*, nevertheless it may be still regarded as a sort of variation of basic idea in *Zhuangzi*.

- now I go at it by spirit and don't look with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop and spirit moves where it wants. I go along with the natural makeup[天理, Heavenly pattern], strike in the big openings, and follow things as they are. So I never touch the smallest ligament or tendon, much less a main joint."<sup>53)</sup>

Owing to the description that his every movement was in perfect rhythm, and even the ox seemed to dissolve away at no time feeling pain, we can hardly imagine it to be a bloody sight. It goes without saying, this is an unbelievable story, but we should not fail to notice that it took him as long as nineteen years, and he had done his job again and again until he reached such a height. This opens the possibility of all kinds of experiences surrounding us becoming art, yet there is a qualification for them to become a true experience and true art. To make his daily job for the consummate skill, in the above story, it demanded to overcome or efface a consciousness of 'self' before anything else. He did not gain such a marvelous skill from the beginning. At the first stage, all the thing he, who was most probably trembling with fear, could see was only the external body of an ox, but, little by little, he could lessen and cut the preoccupation and awareness of himself, and then he began to see the inner part of the oxen. Finally, when he reached the critical point of accumulated experiences, he became to meet the natural pattern without being aware of himself.

Although we are apt to regard this like anecdote as just a marvelous story in a book, if we turn our eyes on a variation in experiences of ourselves, we will gradually feel it realistic. When we saw the skillfulness of an expert, with our own eyes, who is living around us, we tend to think he might have a God-given talent, but it is because we can not see his

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53) W 50p chap. 3 "The Secret of Caring for Life"

sweat and time behind the stage he has reached. Such a person responds sensitively and cautiously to ever-changing affairs instead of insisting on having his own way, and reflects the aspect of affairs as like a mirror without distorting the situation by the angle of his own self. It is called 'no-action(無爲)' in the sense of no self-centered action, but it may be spontaneous and active in the point of going on without constraint.

#### (4) Dewey in the light of Zhuangzi

Even if we may not find the perfect accordance with all themes of Zhuangzi from Dewey's works, in the same way as in Zhuangzi, at least, we can say that both of them regarded a true art as the nearest to nature/*ziran*(自然). Of course, this is totally different from so-called naturalism, which means to describe the object as it is without any touch of subjectivity. Rather, the result of one's action works as another condition of himself, and the surroundings also are influenced by his action. They call the whole of these actions 'nature', so is it the other name of the boundless process of 'consummating one's experience'.

A lot of masters described in Zhuangzi have never accomplished their goal at the moment when they attained such a marvelous skill. Human being is a restless doer who should grapple with complicated affairs of the future. They are described as undergoing transformation constantly through their given lives. The story of a person who has been going along for sixty years and has changed sixty times<sup>54)</sup> makes

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54) W 288p "Ju Bo Yu has been going along for sixty years and has changed sixty times. There was not a single instance in which what he called right in the beginning he did not in the end reject and call wrong. So now there's no telling whether what he calls right at the moment is not in fact what he called wrong during the past fifty-nine years."

us be able to imagine the rest of their lives. There may be no better example of this story than the life of Dewey. He was ceaselessly learning as well as teaching, and responding to as well as participating in social issues, and herewith modifying his theory throughout his life. If Zhuangzi knew Dewey, he must have rewritten "sixty" into "ninety."

## 5. Art as consummated experience through daily life

As Bernstein pointed out, Dewey tried to reconstruct philosophy as art. Then we can say that Zhuangzi regarded art as the way to reach *Dao* and regarded *Dao* as something experienced in artistic and aesthetic life. The terminology of them differs, but they may be good companions with whom they communicate their true meaning. They both would not like to set philosophy on an abstract space beyond actual feelings and happenings in daily life, but regard philosophy as an endless quest for the fundamental problems of life. They both criticized the theorist who turned the real world away with great efforts and tried to establish the ideal world beyond it. They, however, would not be content with the status quo, but move forward step by step to the peak.

Therefore, their concerns extended from an actual person now and here through the whole process far and wide, in Dewey's phrase, from earth to mountain peaks<sup>55</sup>). He said, "Mountain peaks

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55) AE p. 3 "This task is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience. Mountain peaks do not float unsupported; they do not even just rest upon the earth. They "are" the earth in one of its manifest operations."

do not float unsupported."It is very interesting that the similar metaphor is used for explaining the transformation of emotions in Zhuangzi. Kupperman once illustrated the church steeple to explain the shift from egoistic desire to spontaneous preference. "The problem is in managing the transition from the square tower below to the roundness of the steeple without its seeming visually abrupt."<sup>56</sup>) The squareness and the roundness would entirely differ in visual, but they are linked together through numerous layers.

Comparing Dewey and Zhuangzi, we can understand both of them better. First of all, we can prevent people from misunderstanding what they said by showing their similarity. There is some reason why people think that one is guilty of extreme secularism, and another of extreme escapism. Zhuangzi pretended his words to be useless<sup>57</sup>) so that the notion of spontaneity (自然, self-so-ing) may not be used by a plausible excuse for maintenance of the status, whereas Dewey put up the flag of the practical in order to avoid the empty discussion. Nevertheless, they are resembled closely in the awareness of the world as a dynamic field of transaction, that is to say, a living creature interacts with its environment, and grows up. This view would be complementary to each other. Hereby, their outlooks do not confine themselves to point out some problems of the art world. They guide us to pondering over ourselves and our experience, and demand the conversion of philosophical horizon. Experience is beyond knowledge. It is important whether one is able to do something, not just to know, and to consummate oneself with all one's strength of

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56) Joel Kupperman, "Spontaneity and Education of the Emotions in the Zhuangzi," (ESRE p.190)

57) See the dialogue of Hui Shi and Zhuangzi in chap.1, W34-35pp.

mind and body, not to adjust oneself to the established theory.

Considering the problems which the contemporary art theories are confronted, it is obvious that the aesthetic viewpoints of Dewey and Zhuangzi will be helpful in finding a solution. They would make us enrich aesthetic thinking with actual art works. The anecdote of Tao Yan Ming (陶淵明, 365–421, 東晉) who carried 'no string lute(無絃琴)' inspired many people, but the anecdote of an imitator only provoked people's derision. In the same way, the unconventional works of modern artists, through groping in the dark, deserved to be a landmark in the history of art, but the art products which follow the fashion of so-called modern art don't have to be regarded as art work. It is a matter of course that the contemporary art theories, represented by art institutionalism and aesthetic attitude theory, contributed to indicate the crucial problems, but the aesthetic viewpoints of Dewey and Zhuangzi are more democratic as well as more radical. They are not to define or classify what is art, but to elevate the common experience to be art, and not to search the essence of aesthetic experience in a monadistic individual, but to encourage the common interests which are inseparable from a living creature to be transfigured. Art work is not a static thing, but is living either during the creation, or after coming into being, with stimuli, impressions, and responses of organisms in every moment. Only what is alive is art work, and it is action as well as process. If it is not alive either to a creator or to an appreciator, it is not art work any longer.

Sometime ago, there was a general stir in the public at the news:<sup>58)</sup> A drunken doodle on a wall by Picasso has been bought for £250,000.

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58) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/04/02/npicasso02.xml>

I believe he had never drawn it looking forward to this situation. I bet if he was a true artist, and he really loved to work, he most probably preferred to meet people who had an eye for his works rather than people who paid big sums of money for his drawings.

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## 듀이와 장자의 심미적 관점에 대한 비교 연구

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본 논문은 듀이와 장자의 철학에서 나타나는 심미적 경험의 문제가 서로 공통적인 기반을 가지고 있다는 점을 비교철학적인 관점에서 논한다.

첫째로 듀이와 장자는 모두 예술을 논하는 대다수의 이론가들과는 달리 예술을 일상생활에서 일어나는 경험으로부터 떨어져 볼 수 없는 것임을 강조하였다. 그렇다고 이들이 예술을 일상의 모든 경험적 활동들과 동일시한 것은 아니며 언제나 일상적 경험으로부터 시작하되 끊임없는 노력을 거듭함으로써 얻어지는 특별한 완성적 경험임을 강조하였다.

둘째로 듀이와 장자는 예술을 정적인 대상 사물 속에 깃들어 있는 것으로 보기 보다는 동적인 과정 속에서 이루어지는 것이라 여겼다. 이런 의미에서 예술은 언제나 예술작품(art product)이라기보다 예술작업(art work)이며, 우리는 예술의 존재에 대한 질문에 대한 답을 단지 예술 작품의 의미에서 구하려 하기 보다는 일상적인 것들이 예술적인 것으로 변화하는 실질적인 예술 작업 과정 속에서 찾아야 할 것이다.

마지막으로 이들은 예술을 단순히 지각-감성적 지식의 대상으로 본 것이 아니라 인간 삶의 총체적 국면이 드러나는 궁극적 경지로 이해하였다고 할 수 있다. 이러한 면모는 예술이 지나는 본질적 측면을 잘 드러낸 것이면서 오늘날 현대 미학이론들이 놓치고 있는 부분이라고 할 수 있다.

**주제어:** 장자, 듀이, 자연, 경험, 예술, 심미경험