

Barnes' influence on John Dewey's Aesthetics: a preliminary approach¹

A influência de Barnes na estética de John Dewey: uma abordagem preliminar

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Abstract: Within Dewey's thought, the genesis of his aesthetics deserves more attention than it has been given in the literature. One aspect in particular has been virtually neglected—with the remarkable exceptions of Robins 2015, Ueno 2016, Hein 2017 and Granger 2018a and b—namely its ties with Albert Coombs Barnes. Our hypothesis is that Barnes has played a crucial role in the “aesthetic turn” of Dewey's mature philosophy. In the present article, we take a first step towards clarifying the relationship between them and attempt to show the art collector's influence on the philosopher's work.

Keywords: Albert C. Barnes. Aesthetics. Classical pragmatism. Dewey's correspondence. John Dewey.

Resumo: *No interior do pensamento de Dewey, a gênese da estética merece mais atenção do que lhe é dada na literatura. Um aspecto, em especial, tem sido virtualmente negligenciado— com as notáveis exceções de Robins 2015, Ueno 2016, Hein 2017 e Granger 2018a e 2018b — a saber, os vínculos com Albert Coombs Barnes. Nossa hipótese é que Barnes desempenhou um papel relevante na “virada estética” da filosofia madura de Dewey. Neste artigo, nós tomamos um primeiro passo rumo ao esclarecimento da relação entre eles e uma tentativa de mostrar a influência do colecionador de arte na obra do filósofo.*

Palavras-chave: *Albert C. Barnes. Correspondência de Dewey. Estética. John Dewey. Pragmatismo clássico.*

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1 Introduction

John Dewey lived ninety-two years—October 20, 1859 - June 1, 1952—leaving behind a vast oeuvre (thirty-eight volumes of *The Collected Works of John Dewey* and other four volumes of the Correspondence) that deals with topics belonging to several areas of philosophy, from epistemology and metaphysics, through philosophy of psychology to ethics and philosophy of education. Facing this indisputable variety, a question that one usually finds at the very beginning of articles and books on Dewey gravitates around what the heart of his philosophy is (Alexander, 1987; Hickman and Spadafora, 2009; Rodríguez, 2017; Shook, 2000; Quinton, 2011; Bernstein, 1961; Cunningham, 1995; Shusterman, 1989; and Westbrook, 1991).

Regarding this question, a first glance at Dewey's work until 1920, shows an undeniable preponderance of four topics within his texts:

- Education is a crucial topic, perhaps the most important one, since Dewey's numerous works in this field are very profound and have had a vast impact. A clear example of this is *Democracy and Education* (1916), which is one of his most famous books.
- Ethics or moral philosophy is second in importance, *Ethics* (1908) and *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (1909) being two of his more distinguished books in this field.
- Psychology is the third most relevant topic within Dewey's work, *Psychology* (1887), *The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology* (1896) and *The Psychology of Effort* (1897) being the most important works, among other books and articles.
- Epistemology should be mentioned in the fourth place, with works such as *Is Logic a Dualistic Science?* (1890) and *The Logic of Verification* (1891).

Thus, if we consider Dewey's works up to 1920, the core of his philosophy should be either one of the four topics mentioned above or a combination of them. From a broader perspective, however, this outlook is clearly misleading. In other words, if one analyzes his oeuvre *in toto*, one must consider *Art as Experience* (1934) as one of his crucial books, and aesthetics as an essential discipline within Dewey's philosophy as well. From this broader perspective some fundamental questions arise: why did aesthetics become a pillar of Dewey's philosophy as late as 1920? Put differently: why, being aesthetics so important to Dewey's oeuvre as late as 1920—when he was 61 years old already—were art and the aesthetic experience still given a completely inadequate treatment within his philosophy, as he overtly acknowledges, and what are the reasons for the transformation of his mature philosophy?

A comprehensive answer to these questions falls beyond the limits of this article. A more modest but indispensable step, however, is necessary so as to start clarifying an aspect of Dewey's philosophy that has been almost completely neglected in the literature (with the outstanding exceptions of Robins 2015, Ueno 2016, Campeotto and Viale 2017, Hein 2017, and Granger 2018a and 2018b), namely,

the influence of Albert C. Barnes on the genesis of Dewey's aesthetics.² To this end, we develop our argument in four sections. In the first (Aesthetics within Dewey's Philosophy), we show how Dewey conceives of aesthetics in *Art as Experience*, his main work in this field. In the second section (Three Crucial Letters) we present and examine three relevant letters about aesthetics, which Dewey exchanged with Barnes and Sidney Hook respectively. In the third section (*Piecemeal Aesthetics vs. Systematic Aesthetics*) we argue that previous to the systematic approach of *Art as Experience* there is a development in aesthetics within Dewey's work that could be described as fragmentary or piecemeal. Meanwhile, between the piecemeal and the systematic aesthetics, we argue that the decade of 1920-1930 is essential to understand how Dewey formed his systematic view. In the fourth and most important section (Barnes' Influence on John Dewey's Aesthetics) we put forward our hypothesis that Albert C. Barnes has played a fundamental role in the genesis of Dewey's aesthetics. Finally, we draw some conclusions.

2 Aesthetics within Dewey's Philosophy

If one takes some pages of *Art as Experience*, aesthetics should unquestionably be set at the very heart of Dewey's philosophy. We quote *in extenso* two essential paragraphs of this book that support our statement. In the first one he states that:

For this reason, while the theory of esthetics put forth by a philosopher is incidentally a test of the capacity of its author to have the experience that is the subject-matter of his analysis, it is also much more than that. It is a test of the capacity of the system he puts forth to grasp the nature of experience itself. *There is no test that so surely reveals the one-sidedness of a philosophy as its treatment of art and esthetic experience.* Imaginative vision is the power that unifies all the constituents of the matter of a work of art, making a whole out of them in all their variety. Yet all the elements of our being that are displayed in special emphases and partial realizations in other experiences are merged in esthetic experience. And they are so completely merged in the immediate wholeness of the experience that each is submerged:—it does not present itself in consciousness as a distinct element (*LW 10: 278, our italics*).

Meanwhile, in the second paragraph, Dewey argues the centrality of aesthetic experience to comprehend what experience itself is:

This fact constitutes the uniqueness of esthetic experience, and this uniqueness is in turn a challenge to thought. It is particularly a challenge to that systematic thought called philosophy. For

2 Before the works of Robins 2015, Ueno 2016, Campeotto and Viale 2017, Hein 2017, and Granger 2018a and 2018b there were different kinds of interpretations on the relationship between Dewey and Barnes. Some of them (e.g., Rockefeller 1991) highlight the relevance of Barnes's influence on the development of Dewey's aesthetics. They do not go, however, beyond this statement and do not take the analysis to a more profound level.

esthetic experience is experience in its integrity. Had not the term “pure” been so often abused in philosophic literature, had it not been so often employed to suggest that there is something alloyed, impure, in the very nature of experience and to denote something beyond experience, we might say that esthetic experience is pure experience. For it is experience freed from the forces that impede and confuse its development as experience; freed, that is, from factors that subordinate an experience as it is directly had to something beyond itself. *To esthetic experience, then, the philosopher must go to understand what experience is (LW 10: 278, our italics).*

This explicit centrality of aesthetic experience maintained in *Art as Experience*, however, is a very late development within Dewey’s philosophy. In the following sections we will attempt to shed light on this transformation of Dewey’s mature thought.

3 Three crucial letters

Aside from the outstanding works by Robins, Ueno and Hein named above, there exists an overt lacuna within Deweyan literature regarding this basic question: why does Dewey put aesthetics at the center of his philosophy as late as 1920 or 1930? As we see it, three important letters help us to start understanding this process, that is, how Dewey’s aesthetics originated.

The first letter was sent to Dewey by Albert C. Barnes. But, who was A. C. Barnes? He was an American doctor and pharmacist who became a millionaire in his twenties by producing a medicine called Argyrol, which he started to produce in 1902. Barnes devoted part of his fortune to buying paintings and sculptures, which, in few years, formed one of the best private art collections. In 1922, he created the impressive Barnes Foundation, whose first director was Dewey. The close friendship between Dewey and Barnes, which is evidenced in the hundreds of letters they exchanged between 1917 and 1951, is one of the topics that deserves a much more detailed treatment within the literature. In 1919, the entrepreneur from Philadelphia sent Dewey a letter with the proposal for a seminar on aesthetics at the University of Columbia:

I have a suggestion in your academic line which I believe is practical and much needed: [...] You hold a seminar at Columbia on life itself and its aesthetic phases. All the material you need is in *Democracy & Education*, Santayana’s *Reason in Art*; it would [include] William James, McDougall, *Creative Intelligence* [...] we’ll have some Renoirs here to show the meaning—real meaning, not bunk—of the terms, drawing, color, values, etc. [...] I would be glad to cooperate each week in getting the plan in practical shape. Don’t say it won’t work—I know it will, I’ve tried it for years with people who never went to any college but a work-shop. Of course I eschewed [technical] terms and I was handicapped by the absence of what you could put into it (letter included in HEIN, 2017, p. 62).



Photograph of John Dewey and Dr. Barnes.

Source: ANDERSON, John. *Art Held Hostage: The Battle over the Barnes Collection*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003.

Meanwhile, Dewey's answer is crucial in a genuine understanding of his thought on aesthetics in 1920. In his reply, written on January 15, 1920, he disclosed the uneasiness that he felt about this subject:

I was interested in your suggestion about a seminar in esthetics. But I can't rise to my part in it. I have always eschewed esthetics, just why I don't know, but I think it is because I wanted to reserve one region from a somewhat devastating analysis, one part of experience where I didn't think more than I did anything else [...] I feel about [esthetics] precisely as the average intelligent man feels about all philosophical discussion (Dewey Correspondence II, N: 04091, 1920.01.15).

Summing up, in 1920 Dewey stated that he had always avoided aesthetics. We will refer again to this statement in the next sections. Finally, in the third letter that we will make reference to, Dewey wrote to Sidney Hook the following:

I still feel the desire to get into a field I haven't treated systematically, and art & aesthetics has come to me. One reason

is the criticism for neglecting them and the consummatory generally. I have jotted down 10 possible titles—this is hurried & would doubtless change. But the essence is in the first 3 headings—the attempt at an empirical philos. of art &c, which is more than merely psychological. That is to show why & how experience contains aesthetic & artistic factors in itself. The middle titles are quite tentative (Dewey Correspondence. II, N: 057298, 1930.03.10).

The ten possible titles are:

- I The artistic & the esthetic in experience—
- II The emp roots of (fine) art in experience.
- III The contribution of the arts to experience—
- IV Social Patterns and Art.
- V Art and the Instruments of Artistic Production (place of tools & techniques).
- ~~(VI Art & Criticism.)~~
- VI & ?The Diversity of the Arts.
- VIII ? The Growth of the Arts.
- IX Art & Appreciation.
- X Art & Criticism. (Dewey *Corresp.* II, N: 057298, 1930.03.10).

We analyze the implications of this letter in the next section.

4 *Piecemeal Aesthetics vs. Systematic Aesthetics*

Two features of the three aforementioned letters should be examined: firstly, Dewey's statement that he had *always* eschewed aesthetics (1920); and secondly, his affirmation that he was dealing with aesthetics *systematically* for the first time at that moment (1930). Taken together, both statements are indispensable for beginning a true understanding of the genesis of Dewey's aesthetics.

Regarding the first, Dewey's statement is crystal clear: he claims that he has always avoided aesthetics. In a strict sense, this affirmation is inaccurate. From the very beginning of his career—though in non-systematic ways—Dewey produced works that could be labeled as texts on aesthetics.³ Meanwhile, we have a more precise account in Dewey's letter to Hook, i.e. his statement that in 1930 he was dealing systematically with aesthetics for the first time. Then, if we consider Dewey's complete *oeuvre*, we will find that until 1920 there is what could be called *piecemeal* aesthetics, that is, fragmentary but important references to aesthetics throughout his works. Meanwhile, from 1930 on, we have what could be named *systematic* aesthetics, basically the lectures that Dewey gave at Harvard University in 1931 in honor of William James ("Art and the Aesthetic Experience"). These lectures constitute the grounds of *Art as Experience* published in 1934.

3 Dewey's writings over aesthetics previous to the '20s are: the chapter 15 of *Psychology* (1887) called "Aesthetic Feeling"; a review of Bernard Bosanquet's *A History of Aesthetics* (1893); "Imagination and Expression" (1896); "The Aesthetic Element in Education" (1897) and "Art in Education" (1911).

Between what we call *piecemeal* aesthetics, on the one hand, and *systematic* aesthetics, on the other, we have the rise of Dewey's *systematic* aesthetics in the decade of 1920-30. What happened in this period? Regarding our purposes, two hallmarks of the development of Dewey's aesthetics should be highlighted: first, the deep involvement in the field that he showed in *Experience and Nature* (1925). Chapter 9 of this book ("Experience, Nature and Art"), which prefigured several issues of *Art as Experience*, constitutes his first methodical approach to aesthetics. In the second place, two important reviews that Dewey wrote in 1925-26 refer directly to aesthetics. One of them was on Whitehead's book *Science and the Modern World* and the other, on Albert C. Barnes's book *The Art in Painting*. The latter, entitled "Art in Education – Education in Art," is an essential source to understand how Dewey conceives the necessary ties between aesthetic experience/art and education.⁴ This review, in our opinion, is crucial because it shows how these topics are intertwined in Dewey's mature work. In this direction, he enthusiastically points out the ties between art and education through the use of a correct method, which is the core of Barnes' proposal:

Method means or is intelligence at work; denial of the existence of any attainable method signifies, therefore, continuation of the present chaos and impotency of aesthetic appreciation: that is, continued non-performance of that educative function from absence of which our civilization is suffering so disastrously. I shall not obtrude my own opinion as to the worth of the method. But the existence of the Foundation and the book which presents its leading ideas of method are a challenge. They assert that aesthetic appreciation inspired and directed by art is a rightful and imperatively urgent demand of the common man; they assert that method, intelligence, may be employed not just by a few critics for the delectation or information of a small circle, but so that everyone may be educated to obtain what art in paintings has to give. They make the latter assertion by proffering in general and in detail a method, showing it in operation. They raise therefore a problem of immense importance in education, a problem intimately and vitally connected with the greatest weakness in existing education, a weakness disastrously affecting every phase of contemporary life (*LW* 2: 16).

We will resume those issues in the next section.

5 Barnes' influence on John Dewey's Aesthetics

Pragmatist philosophy, particularly James' *Psychology* and Dewey's *Democracy and Education*, played a central role in the formation of Albert C. Barnes' thought. It can be said that before meeting Dewey and becoming friends with him, Barnes

4 See Campeotto and Viale, 2017.

was deeply inspired by pragmatism in general, and by Dewey's philosophy of democracy, education and experience in particular.⁵ According to Masamichi Ueno,

One of the motives behind Barnes becoming interested in Dewey's theory was that Barnes felt repulsion towards cubism in general [...]. Barnes published "Cubism: Requiescat in Pace" in *Arts & Decoration* in January 1916, criticizing cubism as academic, repetitive, mediocre and dead. Barnes believed that art should be linked to experiences that are continuously reconstructed. This assertion prompted him to approach Dewey's theory of experience, while making it hard for him to accept cubism (UENO, 2016, p. 106).

Conversely, Barnes' started having a deep influence on Dewey's philosophy after he opened the doors of his art collection to the philosopher. About this influence Steven C. Rockefeller states:

Dewey, who had long enjoyed poetry and had no ear for music, set out at this time to deepen his appreciation of painting, and he found Barnes immensely helpful [...] Dewey enjoyed studying the art in Barnes' collection, and in 1926 they travelled to Madrid, Paris, and Vienna together visiting museums and artists. Some of Dewey's colleagues were critical of him for being so indulgent toward his wealthy cantankerous friend. However, he found Barnes to be possessed of good critical judgment in matters of art and to be a stimulating influence as he worked to clarify the nature of aesthetic experience and to give it a central place in his philosophic vision (ROCKEFELLER, 1991, p. 345).

Regarding the intellectual relationship between the two men and Dewey's lack of interest in art before meeting Barnes, Lawrence J. Dennis reports two important testimonies from that time. The first belongs to one of Dewey's co-workers at Columbia University in the late 1910s, Bland Blanshard, who said:

I never supposed when I was working with Dewey that he had any particular interest in aesthetics at all [...] an interest which at that time I think was just beginning to grow in Dewey [...] His aesthetic interests were apparently in a very early stage then. With characteristic generosity, Dewey regarded Barnes as rather an authority on art (BLANSHARD in DENNIS, 1972, p. 328).

The other outstanding source is Thomas Munro, former student of Dewey at Columbia University and Associate Director at the Barnes Foundation. According to

5 The most important associates of Barnes and Dewey at the Barnes Foundation, Lawrence Buermeyer, Thomas Munro and Mary Mullen, mentioned as their main philosophical sources Dewey's philosophy of experience and psychology, James' psychology, and Bertrand Russell's and George Santayana's thought. ROBINS, 2015, p. 36-42. UENO, 2016, p. 109-110.

Munro, Dewey used to speak about art “only very rarely and very casually when I was his student [...] [Barnes] learned nothing about visual art from Dewey, so far as I know, and Dewey didn't claim to know anything about it” (MUNRO in DENNIS, 1972, p. 328).

Speaking about the visits to the European museums that he used to make with Barnes and Dewey in the 1920s, Munro says:

Barnes would lecture to his staff and guests on the approach to art in terms of the analysis of form. Dewey on those trips didn't talk very much. He listened. He knew and he said frankly that he didn't know much about the visual arts. He had little interest in most types of music. What he knew of art was in literature. There his tastes were not very esoteric or sophisticated [...] I think he enjoyed literature without stopping to analyze or theorize about it very much in terms of aesthetic form (MUNRO in DENNIS, 1972, p. 328).

In an article published in 1949, Barnes himself reports a fact which, in his opinion, awakened in Dewey a very early interest in arts. According to the art collector, Dewey's first approach to art is not so much traceable to the visual arts as it is to music, particularly after a conversation between the two friends about Beethoven's Fifth Symphony:

Dewey's writings previous to the event just cited bear little indication that he had given particular attention to the philosophy of art or to the esthetic experience per se. The music may, or may not have been the beginning of his active interest, but certainly, from that date on, Dewey's visits to our gallery were more frequent and our discussions in front of paintings were always the outstanding feature. As time went on, his remarks showed that he was trying to perceive not only the objective indications of the experience of a particular painter, as revealed by the form, but the individuality of that experience as determined by a consideration of its relations to the tradition of the painting as a whole. He supplemented this by attending the summer class conducted by a member of our staff in the principle galleries of Europe (BARNES, 1949, p. 4).

Barnes is quoted several times throughout Dewey's main work on aesthetics, *Art as Experience*, and five of the seven plates of the first edition display works of art exhibited at the Foundation. In the preface Dewey reserves a special word of thanks to Barnes, which shows the latter's direct engagement in drawing up the book:

My greatest indebtedness is to Dr. Albert C. Barnes. The chapters have been gone over one by one with him, and yet what I owe to his comments and suggestions on this account is but a small measure of my debt. I have had the benefit of conversations with him through a period of years [...] *The influence of these conversations, together with that of his books, has been a chief*

factor in shaping my own thinking about the philosophy of aesthetics (LW 10: 7-8, our italics).

Barnes not only helped Dewey with the book, but he was also directly involved in *William James' Lectures*, a compilation of those given by the philosopher at Harvard in the winter and spring of 1931, and which constitute the first core of *Art as Experience*. In a letter sent to Corinne Frost, dated 27th October 1930, Dewey says to the friend: "I shall be in Paris tomorrow; Mr. and Mrs. Barnes—of the Barnes Foundation—the finest collection of pictures of the U.S.—came over with me. *He is helping me with my Harvard lectures*" (Dewey, 1930, *our italics*). The period between October 1930 and March 1931, while Dewey is engaged in preparing the lectures, shows an intense exchange of correspondence between the two friends, in which Dewey often gives his impressions to Barnes, asks for advice and keeps him up to date the friend on his work.⁶

One letter, dated 9th March 1931, is particularly crucial to understand Barnes' influence over Dewey:

Thanks for your helpful contributions. I made two lectures out of the material of Form [...] and I shall probably not give a talk on criticism, that of course I'll include in the book, and have a chance to use your suggestions and those of further conversations and letters. And of course your memorandum will help keep me to the main theme in handling other topics. *I keep your book by my side and make frequent use of it* (DEWEY to A. C. Barnes, *Correspondence II*, N: 04292, 1931.03.09, *our italics*).

On February 20th, Dewey told Barnes about the sequence of lectures he was going to deliver in Harvard. The following statement from that letter is particularly worth quoting: "In the lectures as given I'm not going to do much more than get an assemblage of material and ideas [...] they are to be dedicated to you when they come out—I'm telling you, not asking permission" (DEWEY, *Correspondence II*, N: 042838, 1931.02.20). Four days later, the reply of Barnes is equally meaningful, especially because it bears clearly the mutual influence on one another:

You should not joke like that—saying the lectures are to be dedicated to the man who has acknowledged publicly that all he has ever done in that line is to apply what he learned from you and which anybody else can learn who will expose himself to the milieu and keep awake (BARNES in Dewey *Correspondence II*, N: 04284, 1931.02.24).

Finally, we take Dewey's own words about the influence of Barnes on his philosophy. In 1948, in his reply to the criticism of the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce⁷ (who

6 This point is partially analyzed in the "Textual Commentary" of *Art as Experience*. See LW 10: 374-384.

7 CROCE, 1940.

sustains that *Art as Experience* is an idealistic book and, in some ways, a plagiarism of his own philosophy of art) Dewey writes that "I do not think that I exaggerate in saying that I owe more on the books on the plastic arts written by the man to whom my book is dedicated, Albert C. Barnes, than to all the *official* treatises on art composed by philosophers" (LW 15: 99).

We have showed through different sources Barnes' unquestionable influence over Dewey's philosophy, particularly on his aesthetics. Which is that influence specifically? Barnes's ideas in 1920 were grounded in two axes: pragmatist philosophy, on the one hand; art and aesthetics, on the other. In our view, Barnes was one of the persons that more clearly grasped the connections between pragmatism and aesthetics and he undoubtedly did so before Dewey. It was under Barnes' influence (which we can trace to one of his letters written in 1919: "You hold a seminar at Columbia on life itself and its aesthetic phases" (HEIN, 2017, p. 62) that Dewey started to reformulate his philosophy which, since that time, began to have aesthetics as a core. Thus, the philosophical conception that links them is that of the continuity between ordinary and aesthetic experiences. Dewey sustains this *Barnesian* thesis as one of the grounds of *Art as Experience*.

I have tried to show in these chapters that the esthetic is no intruder in experience from without, whether by way of idle luxury or transcendent ideality, *but that it is the clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normally complete experience*. This fact I take to be the only secure basis upon which esthetic theory can build (LW 10: 52-3, *our italics*).

The conception of continuity between ordinary and aesthetic experiences entails two philosophical ideas shared by Dewey and Barnes. These are, on the one hand, that we should begin the analysis of art through a *detour*, i.e. putting aside the finished works of art and trying to capture the objective elements that they express; and on the other hand, the need of method to understand "to see as the artist sees" (BARNES, 1925, p. 7), or in Deweyan terms, to understand the difference between mere recognition and perception (LW 10: 59).

The two issues are undoubtedly interconnected and they both derive from the conception that art is the result of a process in which the artist is intelligently and actively engaged by selecting and ordering the objective materials of art, so as to bring his experience to a conclusion. In order to understand *that* particular experience and to grasp the quality of the artist's work, the beholder must create his own aesthetic experience, going through a similar process of selection and organization. In Dewey's words:

Because perception of the relationship between what is done and what is undergone constitutes the work of intelligence, and because the artist is controlled in the process of his work by the grasp of the connection between what he has already done and what he is to do next, the idea that the artist does not think intently and penetratingly as a scientific inquirer is absurd. A painter must consciously undergo the effect of his every brush

stroke. [...] he has to see each particular connection of doing and undergoing in relation to the whole. To apprehend such relation is to think (*LW* 10: 52).

To learn how to perceive the qualities of a work of art it is necessary to adopt an objective and scientific method of study, based mainly on Dewey's psychology and philosophy of experience, as well as the theories of the English formalists Clive Bell and Roger Fry.⁸

To see as the artist sees is an accomplishment to which there is no short cut, which cannot be acquired by any magic formula or trick; it requires not only the best energies of which we are capable, but a methodical direction of those energies, based upon scientific understanding of the meaning of art and its relation to human nature (BARNES, 1925, p. 7).

Consequently, visualization of the Dewey-Barnes relationship could be a first step in reassessing the transformation of the American philosopher's mature work.

6 Conclusion

Although Dewey's aesthetics needs to be reexamined and reformulated, it is far from getting old. The pernicious gap between ordinary and aesthetic experience, which Dewey pointed out as a product of dualistic philosophies, is still in very good health. The tendency to reduce aesthetics to fine arts as finished products is also the contemporary mainstream. What is the best way to recover Dewey's aesthetics as a medium to criticize the present? In our view, a good strategy could be the attempt to understand the transformation of his mature philosophy from 1920, when he set aesthetics at the very center of his oeuvre. In other words: what is required is a combination of a historical approach and a systematic one explaining the genesis of Dewey's aesthetics. We have attempted to take a step in this direction with the present article.

For the historical approach it is essential to highlight the relevance of Dewey's correspondence, especially the letters that he exchanged with Albert C. Barnes. The combination of both approaches—historical and systematic—will undoubtedly set the influence of Albert C. Barnes at the heart of Dewey's mature philosophy not only in relation to aesthetics (that we have analyzed briefly in this article) but also considering the ties between aesthetics and education. In Barnes' words:

Art is no trivial matter, no device for the entertainment of dilettantes, or upholstery for the houses of the wealthy, *but a source of insight into the world, for which there is and can be no substitute*, and in which all persons who have the necessary insight may share (BARNES, 1929, p. v-vi, *our italics*).

8 See BARNES 1940; GRANGER, 2006, p. 52-53; 2018a, and 2018b.

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