



# John Dewey's Quest for Unity: The Journey of a Promethean Mystic (Prometheus Lecture)

*Richard M. Gale*

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In this appreciation of John Dewey's enormous contribution to American philosophy, Richard M Gale argues that what makes Dewey's philosophy unique and exciting is his attempt to synthesize what Gale calls 'Prometheanism' with Dewey's unique brand of mysticism. As Gale points out, Dewey celebrated human beings as Promethean creators of meaning and value through the active control of nature. But at the same time, Dewey created a synthesis whereby a sort of mystical unifying experience results from the subject's active engagement with the environment through inquiry. Paradoxically, the active subject becomes passive in this synthesis to achieve unification with a shared spiritual reality, which Dewey expressed as a 'common faith'. Gale goes on to show that for Dewey artistic creation is the paradigm of this synthesis. In a work of art, both artist and all who appreciate the creation are united in a shared experience that is the result of an active, creative engagement with the environment. But this synthesis also holds for our efforts to gain knowledge and act morally. This in-depth analysis of one of America's great philosophers will make a valuable addition to the libraries of students and scholars of John Dewey and American philosophy.

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