

Practicing Freedom and Emancipating Practices: Foucault's Pragmatism and Dewey's Genealogies [Part I]¹

*Praticando Liberdade e Emancipando Práticas: Pragmatismo Foucaultiano
e Genealogias Deweyanas [Parte 1]*

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Abstract: The aim of this essay is to show how Foucault's critical engagement with the actual circumstances in which he was entangled, in effect, *carries forward* Dewey's own critical project. Dewey and the other pragmatists might have been awaiting (as Richard Rorty suggests) Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and other contemporary thinkers, but the latter can now assist the students of Peirce, James, Dewey, and other pragmatists in the efforts of these students to put pragmatism to work in our world. In particular, what Foucault enables us to do in this context is to read Dewey, precisely as a pragmatist, better than we would be able to do without reference to Foucault's archaeologies, genealogies, and problematizations. This becomes manifest if we focus on experience and thought. Thinking itself is, for Foucault no less than Dewey, experiential, whereas experience is not utterly devoid of thought. Accordingly, the experience of thinking and the thoughtful engagement with historical experience are linked to what Foucault calls "practices of freedom."

Key words: Pragmatism. Pluralism. Experience. Aesthetics of existence. Thought. Critique. Subjectivity. Agency. Enlightenment. Kant.

Resumo: *O objetivo deste ensaio é mostrar como o engajamento crítico de Foucault, com as atuais circunstâncias em que ele estava enredado, com efeito, leva adiante o projeto crítico de Dewey. Dewey e outros pragmatistas podem ter esperado (como Richard Rorty sugere) Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze e outros pensadores contemporâneos, mas o último pode agora assistir estudantes de Peirce, James, Dewey e outros pragmatistas nos esforços destes estudantes para colocar o pragmatismo para trabalhar em nosso mundo. Em particular, o que Foucault nos permite fazer neste contexto é ler Dewey, precisamente como um pragmatista, melhor do que poderíamos fazer sem*

1 My original intent was to deal with both Dewey's genealogies and Foucault's pragmatism. As it turned out, however, I devoted almost all of my attention to the respects in which the later Foucault assists the contemporary realization of Deweyan pragmatism. Hence, I was reminded of what William James wrote in a very different context: One of his projects was "too much like an arch built only on one side" (1979, 5; emphasis omitted). Prof. Ivo Assad Ibri, the Editor of *Cognitio*, has graciously granted me the opportunity to build the other side of this arch. So, while Part I of this essay is devoted primarily to Foucault's pragmatism, Part II will focus on Dewey's genealogies.

referência às arqueologias, genealogias e problematizações de Foucault. Isto se torna manifesto se o foco é sobre experiência e pensamento. Pensamento em si mesmo é, para Foucault não menos do que para Dewey, experiencial, enquanto experiência não é totalmente desprovida de pensamento. Portanto, a experiência do pensamento e do engajamento pensativo com a experiência histórica estão relacionados ao que Foucault chama “práticas da liberdade”.

Palavras-chave: Pragmatismo. Pluralismo. Experiência. Estética da existência. Pensamento. Crítica. Subjetividade. Agência. Esclarecimento. Kant.

[...] hoping to twig/ From what we are not what we might be next”²
W. H. Auden

Introduction

At this particular juncture in our intellectual history, the prescience of the pragmatists is nothing short of stunning. The respects in which Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead anticipated subsequent developments constitute a noteworthy fact (cf. BERNSTEIN, 1992a; also COLAPIETRO, 2006). Given the comparative neglect of the pragmatic tradition by so many mainstream philosophers and, in countless instances, the wholesale ignorance (I am disposed to say the *studied* ignorance³) of the contemporary relevance of this philosophical movement (cf. FAIRFIELD, 2011, 63), it is more accurate to say these pragmatists anticipated than influenced these developments. In 1982, just two years before Michel Foucault’s death, Richard Rorty went so far as to claim: “James and Dewey were not only waiting at the end of the dialectical road which analytical philosophy traveled, but are waiting at the end of the road which, for example, Foucault and Deleuze are currently traveling” (1982, xviii). It is no part of my purpose to endorse this claim, at least without qualification. My aim rather in recalling on this occasion Rorty’s remark is simply to underscore just how prescient the pragmatists were or, at least, appeared to be in the judgment of a widely read student of Western philosophy. Though often somewhat removed from us in their philosophical style, the pragmatists are deeply akin to us in their philosophical sensibility.⁴ In tracing the origins of the tale of modernity and

2 W. H. Auden (1979, 240). Cf. Michel Foucault’s self-disclosure: “My way of being no longer the same is, by definition, the most singular part of what I am. Yet God knows that there are ideological traffic police around, and we can hear their whistles blast; go left, go right, here, later, get moving, not now [...]. The insistence on identity and the injunction to make a break *both* feel like impositions, and in the same way” (*EW* 3, 444; emphasis added). Or, as he more famously insisted: “Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order.”

3 It is often a point of pride among certain contemporary students of Continental thought to be wholly ignorant of American pragmatism and, more broadly, American philosophy.

4 “It is difficult not to notice,” William James wrote in 1904, “a curious unrest in the philosophic atmosphere of our time, a loosening of old landmarks, a softening of oppositions, a mutual borrowing from one another of systems anciently closed, and an interest in new suggestions, however vague, as if the one sure thing were the inadequacy of the extant school-solutions. The dissatisfaction with these seem due for the most part to a

its discontents – the story of radical critiques of modernist assumptions – we must go further back than the poststructuralist reorientation taking place in the closing decades of the twentieth century; we must go at least as far back as the origins of pragmatism, including the Peircean critique of the Cartesian framework (see, e.g., BERNSTEIN, 1971, 6).

This is, as Rorty suggests, nowhere more apparent than in Dewey's demonstrable anticipation of Foucault's later thought (see also RABINOW, 2011). Though their thought was rooted in very different soil and flowers in quite divergent forms,⁵ Dewey was *in effect* a genealogical thinker (see especially STUHR, but also KOOPMAN), while Foucault was in his critical engagement with the historical present deeply akin to a Deweyan pragmatist. Given these and other affinities, then, there should not be anything startling in speaking of Dewey and Foucault in the same breath (indeed, the very title of Rabinow's recent essay – "Dewey and Foucault: What's the Problem?" – implies that the links between these thinkers are anything but difficult to discern). Given the relevant dates – John Dewey (1859-1952) and Michel Foucault (1926-1984) – it should also not be a surprise to learn that, in important respects, Dewey anticipated Foucault.⁶ He was, as Rorty suggests, waiting at the end of a number of paths blazed by Foucault in his own manner.

But my aim in this paper is *not* to try to demonstrate this. If anything, I would like to move in the opposite direction: I want to show how Foucault's critical engagement with the actual circumstances in which he was entangled, in effect, *carries forward* Dewey's own critical project. Dewey and the other pragmatists might have

feeling that they are too abstract and academic. Life is confused and superabundant, and what the younger generation appears to crave is more of the temperament of life in its philosophy, even tho it were at the cost of logical rigor and of formal purity. [...] We are all biased by our personal feelings, I know, and I am personally discontented with extant solutions, so I seem to read the signs of a great unsettlement, as if the upheaval of more real conceptions might result, less clipped, straight-edged and artificial" (*EER*, 21).

5 This is a point all respondents (Márcio Alves da Fonseca, Salma Tannus Muchail, and Lucia Santaella) properly stressed when I first present this paper at the International Meeting on Pragmatism (November 7, 2011). I am indebted to them in this and various other respects. If this revised version of my paper is better than the original draft, it is in large measure due to their thoughtful responses and helpful suggestions as well as incisive questions.

6 In her beautifully articulated and deeply insightful response to my paper, Prof. Lucia Santaella suggests that: "The approach [taken by me in this comparison] reminds us of Borges' intellectual fiction entitled 'Kafka and his precursors' (*Other Inquisitions*, 1952), in which Borges claims that writers create their precursors." She goes on to explain that: "This means that the relationship between 'precursors' and 'successors' is much more complex than one might suppose. Borges' reversed chronological order reveals the naïve presuppositions that guide the usual findings of influence of one author upon another in the linear order of time." To complicate matters even more, I am disposed to suggest that the relationship of Foucault to Dewey is simultaneously that of successor, precursor, and contemporary. The thrust of their thought is, in any event, to disrupt the smooth flow of linear time, to turn the present upon itself in such a manner that the significance of the past might be reimagined and, as a result, certain possibilities for the future might be resurrected.

been awaiting Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and other contemporary thinkers,⁷ but the latter can now assist the students of Peirce, James, Dewey, and other pragmatists in the efforts of these students to put pragmatism to work in our world. In particular, what Foucault enables us to do in this context is to read Dewey, precisely as a pragmatist, better than we would be able to do without reference to Foucault's archaeologies, genealogies, and problematizations (FLYNN, 2005, Chapter 7).⁸ Of far

7 "On my view, James and Dewey," Rorty suggests in his Introduction to *Consequences of Pragmatism*, "were not only waiting at the end of the road which analytic philosophy traveled [cf. BERNSTEIN, 1992a], but are waiting at the end of the road which, for example, Foucault and Deleuze are currently traveling" (1982, xviii). At the conclusion of "Method, Social Science, and Social Hope," an essay included in this volume, he further suggests that: "The reason why it may appear that Foucault has something new and distinctive to add to Dewey is that he is riding the crest of a powerful but ill-defined movement which I have elsewhere described as 'textualism' – the movement which suggests, as Foucault puts it at the end of *The Order of Things*, that 'Man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever brighter on our horizon'" (1982, 207-208). In addition, this may appear to be so since "Foucault is attempting to transform political discourse by seeing 'power' as not intrinsically repressive – because, roughly, there is no naturally good self to repress" (208). Rorty is however quick to point out that "Dewey [...] had already grasped both points. Foucault's vision of discourse as a network of power-relations isn't very different from Dewey's vision of it as instrumental. Dewey [moreover] had learned from Hegel what Foucault learns from Nietzsche – that there is nothing much to 'man' except one more animal, until culture, the meshes of power, begin to shape him into something else." Rorty stresses that: "These remarks are not meant to downgrade Foucault – who seems to me one of the most interesting philosophers alive – but just to insist that the discovery of things like 'discourse,' 'textuality,' 'speech-acts,' and the like have radically changed the philosophical scene" (ibid.). "Although Foucault and Dewey were trying to do the same thing, Dewey seems to me to have done it better, simply because his vocabulary shows room for unjustifiable hope, and an ungroundable but vital sense of human solidarity" (ibid.). For my part, however, I do think there is something new and distinctive about Foucault beyond the trappings of textualism. In addition, I see Foucault's project bound up with hope. This is nowhere more manifest than in the interview with him conducted by Didier Eribon in 1981 ("Practicing Criticism"): "There's an optimism that consists in saying that things couldn't be better. My optimism would consist rather in saying that so many things can be changed, fragile as they are, bound up more with circumstances than necessities, more arbitrary than self-evident, more a matter of complex, but temporary, historical circumstances than with inevitable anthropological constants [...] You know, to say that we are much more recent than we think isn't a way of taking the whole weight of history on our shoulders. It's rather to place at the disposal of the work that we can do on ourselves the greatest possible share of what is presented to us as inaccessible" (KRITZMAN, [ed.], 156).

8 Foucault came to see his own work in terms of this threefold distinction. In *The Use of Pleasure* (i.e., volume two of *The History of Sexuality*), Foucault observes: "There is an irony in those efforts one make to alter one's way of looking at things, to change the boundaries of what one knows and to venture out a ways from there." Then he adds: "Sure that one has traveled far, one finds one is looking down on oneself from above. The journey rejuvenates things, and ages the relationship with oneself." But what is most significant for our purpose is how Foucault came to see the moments of his own project: "I seem to have gained a better perspective of the way I worked – gropingly, and by

greater significance, what Foucault assists us in accomplishing is realizing more fully, *here and now*, the critical function of Deweyan pragmatism, the cutting edge of the pragmatist orientation.⁹ That is, recontextualizing Deweyan texts from a Foucaultian perspective helps us *to use* those texts, as instruments of critique and ultimately resources for creativity (cf. Joas), more effectively than if we confine ourselves to the writings and example of Dewey and his disciples. So, my aim is not to focus on how Dewey anticipated Foucault, but on how Foucault helps us put Dewey *to work* in the present – not only *in*, but also *on*, the present.¹⁰

1. Practices of Freedom

The task of thought is, for these two thinkers, not so much to represent¹¹ as to illuminate present actuality, for the sake of transforming, in the name of freedom, our practices, institutions, and indeed our psyches themselves.¹² Thought needs to be

means of different or successive fragments – on this project [The History of Sexuality], whose goal is a history of truth. It was a matter of analyzing, not behaviors or ideas, nor societies and their 'ideologies,' but the *problematizations* through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought – and the *practices* on the basis of which these problematizations are formed" (11). But this mode of analysis is integrally connected to other genres of inquiry: "The *archaeological* dimension of the analysis made it possible to examine the forms themselves; its *genealogical* dimension enabled me to analyze their formation out of the practices and the modifications undergone by the latter" 11-12; emphasis added).

- 9 "History becomes 'effective,'" Foucault suggests, "to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being – as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. 'Effective' history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting" (BOUCHARD [ed.], 154; cf. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 130-31; 206).
- 10 "Dewey did emphasize," Richard J. Bernstein notes, "the prospective and future oriented dimension of thinking, and he was aware of the ways in which history and tradition are always effectively shaping what we are in the process of becoming. But his central concern was with the living present, with facing our present conflicts and problems with honesty and imagination, and with finding concrete ways in which to reconstruct experience where free communication, public debate, rational persuasion and genuine sharing are integrated into our everyday practices" (1986, 272). Cf. my "Entangling Alliances and Critical Traditions" (COLAPIETRO, 1998).
- 11 "Both [Dewey and Foucault] agreed," Paul Rabinow points out, "that thinking – or inquiry – were not fundamentally about the representations of a situation; either those produced by a contemporary thinker or as an exercise directed at historical materials" (2011, 11). Regarding the crisis of representation, however, see Winfried Nöth, 2003; Lucia Santaella, 2003.
- 12 "We must," Foucault insists, "free ourselves from the sacralizations of the social as the only reality and stop regarding as superfluous something so essential in human life in human relations as thought. Thought exists independently of systems and structures of discourse. It is something that is often hidden, but which always animates everyday behavior. There is always a little thought even in the most stupid institutions; there is always thought even in silent habits." The function of criticism is, more than anything else, to flush thought

pressed into the service of autonomy, otherwise it tends to serve present regimes and structures in their brutal efficiency and indifference, above all, their hostility and indifference to the longings, aspirations, and commitments of historically situated subjects in their “impatience for liberty” (Rabinow [ed.], 50). What unites Dewey and Foucault as much as anything else is *their advocacy of thought*, in anything but an innocent or innocuous sense, indeed, in a sense forcefully identified by Dewey in *Experience and Nature*. There he stresses:

Let us admit the case of the conservative; if we once start thinking no one can guarantee where we shall come out, except that many objects, ends and institutions are surely doomed. Every thinker puts some portion of an apparently stable world in peril and no one can wholly predict what will emerge in its place. (LW 1, 172; cf. DELEUZE, 1988, 116-19).

For Foucault no less, once thinking starts in earnest much is put at risk, much is indeed doomed. As conceived by both of these thinkers, then, thought is not impotent or ineffectual. Its power, mobility, and ubiquity call for not only our recognition but also our solicitude.

To attain or, at least, to approximate my objective, I must take pains to identify affinities between these two thinkers, including of course their shared appreciation of the cutting edge of human thought (cf. Foucault in KRITZMAN [ed.], 155). This hermeneutic task is however allied to a philosophical undertaking bearing on the diverse modes of philosophical engagement. There is no one manner of engaging in philosophy. Even when one is apparently doing intellectual history in an innocent (or uncommitted) manner, one is in effect foregrounding certain traditions, styles, and forms of philosophy. Doing so is, however, ultimately subordinate to the task of making a case for a distinctive manner of philosophical engagement – a case made in the name of Dewey no less than that of Foucault. The point (at least, *my* goal) is thus not simply to compare two philosophers, but ultimately to endorse their overlapping vision of critical engagement. What is at stake is, hence, *not* the extent to which two thinkers from different traditions overlap, but the implications of this for us, here and now.

These implications are multifarious. Moreover, there is a plurality of construing or highlighting these implications. For our purpose, however, the accent falls most decisively on freedom (not least of all freedom of thought¹³). This is certainly in accord with the emphases encountered in Dewey’s writings and Foucault’s.

Their overlapping vision of critical engagement is bound up with what Foucault identified as “practices of freedom.” He distinguishes rather sharply, perhaps

ought and to try to change thought: it is “to show that things are not as self-evident as one believed, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such. Practicing freedom is a matter of making facile gestures difficult” (KRITZMAN [ed.], 155).

- 13 “The only freedom that is of enduring importance is,” Dewey suggests in *Experience and Education*, “freedom of intelligence, that is to say, freedom of observation and of judgment exercised in behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worth while” (LW 13, 39). The framing and pursuit of such purposes is, however, freedom in its most concrete sense.

too sharply, between these practices in an inclusive sense and emancipation (or liberation) in the strict sense. In "The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom", for example, Foucault discloses his misgivings about revolution and his preoccupation with practices of freedom. This disclosure is worth quoting at length:

I have always been somewhat suspicious of the notion of liberation, because if it is not treated with precautions and within certain limits, one runs the risk of falling back on the idea that there exists a human nature or base that [...] has been concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression. According to this hypothesis, all that is required to break these repressive deadlocks and man will be reconciled with himself. [...] I think this idea should not be accepted with scrutiny. I am not trying to say that liberation as such, of this or that form of liberation, does not exist: when a colonized people attempts to liberate itself from its colonizers, this is indeed *a practice of liberation in the strict sense*. But we know every well, and moreover in this specific case, that this practice of liberation is not in itself sufficient to define *the practices of freedom that will still be needed* if this people, this society, and these individuals are to be able to be able to define admissible and acceptable forms of existence or political society. This is why I emphasize practices of freedom over processes of liberation; again, the latter indeed have their place, but they do not seem to me to be capable by themselves of defining all the practical forms of freedom. (*EW* 1, 282-83; emphasis added).

Not only does liberation in the strict sense need to be distinguished from these other practices, but also an understanding of liberation in terms of a fixed human nature and one in terms of an uncompromisingly historicist conception of human life also need to be distinguished. The main focus of the later Foucault is on practices of freedom (the very care of the self to which he devoted such painstaking, critical attention being an example of such a practice).

This crucial distinction is in effect drawn by one of the characters in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* when that character insists: "Freeing yourself [from slavery] was one thing, claiming ownership of that freed self was another" (95). Freeing oneself from slavery or oppression is *liberation* in the strict sense; the sustained, focused, and often disciplined efforts to claim ownership of that freed self are, in contrast, *practices of freedom*.

In his own manner, Dewey too draws this distinction. "There can be," he notes, "no greater mistake [...] than to treat freedom [*from* constraint and coercion] as an end in itself. It then tends to be destructive of the shared cooperative activities which are the normal source of order" (*LW* 13, 41). Such freedom is more a means than an end, though certainly not a *mere* means: "For freedom from restriction, the negative side, is to be prized only as a means to a freedom which is power: power to frame purposes, to judge wisely, to evaluate desires by consequences which will result from acting on them ..." ¹⁴ (*ibid.*). Liberation in the strict sense is the process

14 It certainly must seem to readers, especially ones unfamiliar with Dewey's thought, that freedom *from* is for him a mere means. But this text is misleading in this regard, since his conception of the means-ends continuum is that means are ends-in-the-making and, in turn, ends serve as means for the guidance of an activity. Separating means from ends

of throwing off the constraints and oppression imposed by others; it is largely (if not exclusively) negative, since it involves freeing oneself *from* domination by others. Attaining the freedom *to* frame and realize one's own purposes, to re-craft one's life as a work of art, is, in contrast, a positive or constructive undertaking.

To be free to act out one's impulses or desires means coming to the realization that one has been subjected to regimes of power about which one is, at this point in our discussion, oblivious and, hence, over which one is powerless. "Natural impulses and desires constitute," Dewey suggests, "the starting point. But there is no intellectual growth without some reconstruction, some remaking, of impulses and desires in the form in which they first show themselves" (ibid.). Such reconstruction requires inhibition. To be free to act *out* one's impulses and desires provides one with an opportunity to act on those impulses and desires; only by doing so, does the self move in the direction of claiming ownership over itself. Acting on oneself in this fashion is, at bottom, what Foucault means by *a practice of freedom*. It is at once a somatic and intellectual undertaking, inseparably so. It is also at once an ethical and political (thus, a deeply personal yet – at least – potentially communal) endeavor. Nothing could make ethics more irrelevant than to divorce it from politics, just as nothing could make our intellectual exertions more insignificant than serving them from human embodiment.

Philosophy is, I want to urge, either itself such a practice or in the service of such practices. This means, among other things, that critique is in the service of creativity,¹⁵ thought in its most vital form is in the service of transformation in its most arduous form (self-transformation or self-overcoming). Practicing freedom in an effective sense however requires emancipating practices, including ones such as philosophy and any number of the other humanities. In general, then, practicing freedom *means* emancipating practices from some of the unduly constraining features of especially the institutionalized forms of these shared practices. Not least of all, there is inscribed in virtually all of the practices we share a foreclosure of possibilities, a deadening restriction of human imagination to sanctioned options. "*Creative activity* is," Dewey insists, "our great need; but criticism, self-criticism, is the road to its release" (LW 5, 143, emphasis added; cf. Hans Joas). Too often, creativity eschews criticism and thereby dissipates itself, while criticism is exercised in the name of everything but the enhancement of creativity. As clichéd as this expression has become, both

in such a way as to invite us to think of some means as utterly devoid of intrinsic worth and some ends as completely severed from practical guidance is, in Dewey's judgment at least, to fall prey to one of the most destructive dualisms in traditional thought.

- 15 Márcio Alves da Fonseca, one of the commentators on the version of this paper presented on November 7th, 2011, at the 13th International Meeting on Pragmatism (PUC-SP), posed the question whether Dewey's conception of critical engagement is truly akin to Foucault's. This is an important question, albeit to which a straightforward, unqualified reply is possible: Dewey's understanding of critique is as inclusive and radical as is Foucault's. Of far greater importance, his relentless critique of inherited practices and established institutions is no less far-reaching and deep-cutting than Foucault's critical engagements. I am indebted to Márcio Alves da Fonseca for his gracious remarks and incisive questions and, in particular, for this question regarding a possible difference between how Dewey and Foucault conceive and, indeed, in their own lives exemplify critical engagement.

thinkers are above all else devoted to *opening spaces of thought*, thereby multiplying opportunities for self-overcoming. As it turns out, heuristic clearings are almost always bound up with actual places (cf. FLYNN, 2005, especially Chapters 5 and 8 as well as the Conclusion), but today I will not have any time to explore this important point.

As indispensable aids in emancipating practices and (in other respects) practicing freedom, recourse to *experience* and devotion to *thought* are, arguably, as critical – indeed, vital – as any other means of assistance. Thought in its most vital form is an interrogation of experience, while experience even in its most opaque forms is an invitation to think through what has been lived through. It is thus upon experience and thought that I will mainly focus on this occasion. These commonplaces (these *topoi*) provide us with surprising opportunities for appreciating affinities and marking differences between Dewey and Foucault. Of course, everything turns upon the meaning of these seemingly simple, but actually quite freighted words. What Foucault in concert with Dewey enables us to accomplish is how to attend properly to the experience of thought – also how to think cuttingly about experience. In reference to Nietzsche, Foucault suggests, “knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting” (BOUCHARD [ed.], 154; cf. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 130-31; 206). In this (as in some many other respects), Foucault was a Nietzschean.¹⁶ In his own way, however, Dewey's instrumentalism encompasses thought as an instrument to be used in this fashion (cf. KRITZMAN [ed.], 250). Thought in their hands is, indeed, a surgical instrument facilitating precise cuts, sometimes made for diagnostic purposes, other times for reparative ones. But it is first and foremost an instrument, whose uses are variable and plural. This realization invites an aside.

2. An Aside Regarding Pluralism

So, please allow me an aside regarding pluralism. Dewey and Foucault were, after all, as radical pluralists as they were historicists, as sensitive to the stifling effects of the monistic disposition as they were intolerant of the authoritarian tendencies so deeply engrained in our cultural inheritance. They were both committed to doing justice not only to the varieties of human experience but also to the possibilities of diverse discourses.

They tended to equate philosophy with critique¹⁷ and I have stressed this facet

16 In response to a question regarding the source of misunderstanding surrounding his work, Foucault insisted that he was in the worst position of anyone to address this question (KRITZMAN [ed.], 250). But, then, he added: “I am simply Nietzschean, and I try to see, on a number of points, and to the extent that it is possible, with the aid of Nietzsche's texts – but also with anti-Nietzschean theses (which are nevertheless Nietzschean!) – what can be done in this or that domain. I'm not looking for anything else but I'm really searching for that” (251). When one recalls Nietzsche's own indebtedness to Emerson, and in turn Dewey's relationship to Emerson, what might first look like a source of divergence (Foucault's debt to Nietzsche's thought) turns out to be an instance of kinship, if once or twice removed.

17 While this is obvious in the case of Foucault, it is not evident in that of Dewey, at least to those who have only a passing familiarity with his vast corpus. In *Experience and Nature*, he states his position succinctly and forcefully when he asserts that: “philosophy is and can be nothing but this critical operation and function become aware of itself and

of their projects. In making this case (ultimately, the case for a distinctive form of critical engagement, hence of philosophical intervention), I do not want to be heard as claiming that this is the only way or even necessarily the most important way of doing philosophy.¹⁸ This was not true of either Dewey or Foucault; it is also not true of the uses I am putting these thinkers on this occasion. My claim is, in any event, more modest: it is simply that this approach is, especially at this historical moment, a legitimate and fruitful way of taking up the task of philosophical thought (more about thought in due course).

It would not be amiss to tarry a moment (if only for emphasis) on two facets of pluralism. The *first* facet is the one just stated: the approach I am advocating is far from being the only one.¹⁹ The *second* facet was already implicit in my suggestion that reading Foucault assists us in using Dewey, as Dewey desired his thought to be deployed. *No tradition is sufficient unto itself*. For an adequate understanding of the unconscious, psychoanalytic theorists must look beyond the resources of their own traditions; for such an understanding of language, analytic philosophers must look beyond the wherewithal of the family of traditions on which they, consciously or not, draw. For a truly pragmatic understanding of such topics as experience, conduct, and practice – also such matters as reconstruction, democracy, and indeed philosophical inquiry reconstructed in a pragmatic manner – contemporary pragmatists must turn

its implications, pursued deliberately and systematically. It starts from actual situations of belief, conduct and appreciative perception” (LW 1, 302). These situations are “its data, its subject-matter.” The function of philosophy, so conceived, is to enhance our freedom in selecting, appropriating, and identifying what is worthy of our attention and solicitude, our espousal and commitment (ibid.).

- 18 Though I will return to this point in the Conclusion of this essay, it is noteworthy here to stress that, in Foucault’s judgment, “Kant seems to have founded the two great critical traditions between which modern philosophy is divided” (KRITZMAN [ed.], 95). One of these is preoccupied with addressing “the question of the conditions in which true knowledge is possible.” The other is preoccupied with “another type of question, another kind of critical interrogation”: its concern is to confront the question, “What is our present? What is the present field of possible experiences?” The former can be conceived as “analytics of truth,” while the latter can be identified as “an ontology of the present, an ontology of ourselves” (ibid.). Of course, one might urge that these two traditions have not completely run along parallel lines, but have intersected in certain pivotal figures (including Dewey and Foucault!). I myself would urge such an interpretation of the history of thought since Kant. But what is, for the moment, critical for our purpose is that one’s commitment to one of these traditions does nothing to invalidate the commitment of other’s to the alternative tradition. There is, in other words, an irreducible plurality of philosophical traditions, two of which are the ones identified by Foucault in the text being cited here.
- 19 As John E. Smith stressed at the conclusion of his Presidential Address to the Eastern Division of the APA (reprinted in SMITH, 1983), the task of truly initiating a serious dialogue among the representatives of the different philosophical traditions represented in this Association “can happen only if everyone is prepared to abandon two claims; first that any single approach to philosophy is the only legitimate one, and secondly, that those pursuing philosophical inquiry in any fashion other than one’s own are ipso facto not engaged in philosophy at all” (SMITH, 1983, 241-42). He immediately adds: “The first of these claims concerns respect for philosophy and the second respect for persons” (242).

to the texts of Wittgenstein, Austin, and Quine no less than those of Peirce, James, and Dewey, to the insights of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Merleau-Ponty no less than those of Royce, Mead, and Lewis; to the work of feminist and critical race theorists no less than the work of those who are devoted to the most painstakingly careful exegesis and the most philosophically fecund appropriation of what is sometimes called classical pragmatism.²⁰ No tradition, certainly not pragmatism, is sufficient unto itself. If one is a pragmatist, a practical sense of one's fallibility encompasses an acute sense of the inherited limitations (in some respects, the quite debilitating limitations and even severe deficiencies) of one's philosophical inheritance (that is, the shortcomings and occlusions of the pragmatic tradition itself). So, when Thomas Flynn suggests that Foucault's "notion of practice 'provides the key to understanding the correlative constitution of subject and object'" (172), pragmatists ought not to hear this primarily as corroboration of their own approach, but ought to study how Foucault gets down and dirty with the details of the practices in and through which subjects and objects are correlatively constituted. Moreover, the allegedly weakest part of both Dewey (see, e.g., BERNSTEIN, 1966, 176ff., and 1971, 197-98) and Foucault (see SAID and FLYNN) might turn out to be a surprisingly rich resource. This is their understanding of subjectivity and agency. They both start not with an antecedently given self, but focus on a historically emergent subjectivity. In other words, they start with the experience of activity, not a trans-experiential subject posited as a condition for the possibility of experience. In brief, experience explains subjectivity and indeed agency, rather than the reverse.

3. The Experience of Activity: Subjection, Resistance, and Agency

The title of one of Dewey's essays – "The Vanishing Subject in the Psychology of James" – might be taken to refer to a development not only in James but also Continental thought in the second half of the twentieth century (cf. COLAPIETRO, 1990). But, of course, subjectivity does not simply disappear. It however does cease to play the same role and to occupy the same status in philosophical discourse as it did for so much of the modern epoch. Experience and thought need to be disentangled from the role and status traditionally accorded to subjectivity.

For Dewey, James proved to be indispensable in accomplishing just this. In general, Dewey was deeply Jamesian, far more than even many students of his thought appear to realize.²¹ This is nowhere more apparent or important than in his thoroughgoing acceptance of the Jamesian principle of "immediate empiricism."²² Things are, according to this principle or postulate, what they are *experienced as*. This is not

20 I take Nathan Houser, Andre De Tienne, and Elizabeth Cook to be (in reference to Peirce) examples of the former (painstakingly careful exegetes), while Richard J. Bernstein, John J. Stuhr, and John Lysaker to be (in reference to American thought more generally) examples of the former. This is not to overlook the philosophical creativity of Houser, De Tienne, and Cook, or the painstaking erudition of Bernstein, Stuhr, and Lysaker.

21 This is evident in his autobiographical essay ("From Absolutism to Experimentalism" [LW 5, 147-60]). It is also evident in a number of his commemorations of James (e.g., "William James and the World Today" [LW 15, 3-8] and "William James as Empiricist" [LW 15, 9-17].

22 Dewey's "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism" (1905)

an uncritical acceptance of, or naïve acquiescence in, empirical data. It is rather a courageous attempt to confront things as they are experienced by us in our dealings or entanglements with them. It does not preclude the possibility of distinguishing between veridical and illusory perception or between an accurate and a misleading account of what things actually are,²³ but rather insists upon tracing such distinctions to the functions, fulfillments, and frustrations discoverable in experience itself.

So much of philosophy has turned and continues to turn on the dismissal of what things are experienced as, dismissals proffered in the name of that which allegedly transcends experience (e.g., reason, reality, or simply logic). Our experience in general and our experience of activity, in particular, are among the most important matters derisively dismissed by traditional philosophy. But what if we take seriously what activity is *experienced as*, if we attend carefully to our experience of activity? This means starting with an ongoing stream of activity, not an antecedently fixed source of exertion. That is, it means starting with a distinctive form of process, not a sovereign form of subjectivity. As I have already implied, subjectivity is not a privileged principle of explanation but a problematic phenomenon calling for an explanation. So, at the outset, we turn our attention primarily to a somewhat inchoate form of activity rather than a fully determinate form of subjectivity.

Included among the pieces in William James's *Essays in Radical Empiricism* is one called "The Experience of Activity" (his Presidential Address in 1904 to the American Psychological Association).²⁴ This essay is very useful for our purpose, since it assists us in appreciating, at once, Dewey's debt to James and (of far greater significance) critical features of the pragmatist conception of human experience. Our experience of activity is very often an experience of resistance (JAMES, *ERE*, 84). Though often a fluent, unimpeded series of exertions, our activity is not infrequently a stuttering, even stymied affair. In truth, the most fluent activity meets some degree of resistance, however negligible and imperceptible, whereas the most thoroughly impeded or obstructed flow of activity can be even more intense and concerted than the most efficacious and smooth. Indeed, Peirce would go so far as to say there is no effort – thus no activity – without resistance, just as there is not resistance without effort. We come to an awareness of ourselves as centers of experience first and foremost as loci of resistance to the impositions, intrusions, usurpations, seductions, and simply insistences of others (see, e.g., PEIRCE, *CP* 1.320, 1.332). Human subjectivity is not an original datum but an emergent function (see, e.g., DEWEY, *LW* 1, Chapter 6). The *I* takes shape and acquires a consciousness of itself only as the result of a series of oppositions to the *not-I* (only as the result of being opposed and frustrated in its exertions and gropings, aspirations and endeavors): the ego owes its emergence

23 In terms of the postulate in question, what things actually are is discoverable only in reference to what things experientially are. Experience is itself an instance of actuality (albeit one in which a various threads of possibilities are interwoven in the very fabric of actuality), while actuality is a disclosure of experience.

24 John Dewey was profoundly influenced by William James but also Charles Peirce. The influence of James on Dewey is nowhere more apparent or profound than in reference to our experience of activity. For this reason as well as the clarity and force with which James states and defends his thesis in this essay, I draw upon a Jamesian rather than Deweyan text.

to the obstacles encountered in what does not originate with, or depend on, the ego (see, e.g., PEIRCE, *CP* 1, 1.325, 1.334). In other words, the subject only emerges in the course of experience. This means that subjectivity is not the presupposition of, but a distillation from, experience.

Though Royce was critical of the position being championed on this occasion by James, James took his address as an opportunity to voice emphatic agreement with his cherished colleague. "Life, says our colleague [Royce], is full of significance, of meaning, of success and of defeat, of hoping and of striving, of longing, of desire, and of inner value. It is a total presence that embodies worth. To live own our lives better in this presence is the true reason why we wish to know the elements of things [...]" [JAMES, *ERE*, 94]. More guardedly, we might say: our lives are worthwhile simply because they provide opportunities for striving and because striving in turn holds out the possibility for self-overcoming.

I am appealing to James simply to bring into focus the experience of activity and hence the experience of resistance interwoven with every more complex form of human experience. The relevance of this to my topic is that Foucault came to see his own work, from *Mental Illness and Psychology* to *The History of Sexuality*, as an attempt "[t]o study the forms of experience [...] in their history" (RABINOW [ed.], 334; also see FLYNN, 2005, 3). He "wondered whether [...] it would not be possible *to consider the very historicity of the forms of experience*" (4; emphasis added). But the forms of experience, in Foucault's sense, are as much as anything else forms of resistance opening an uncharted field of hitherto unimagined possibilities. Experience here includes the experience of thought itself (cf. BERNHAUER, 46ff.) Despite his misgivings about phenomenology (cf. Gutting), Foucault no less than James and Dewey attended painstakingly to the promptings and pressures of his own experience. As a result, he was drawn time and again to think about the *experience* of thought itself (cf. DELEUZE, 1988, 116). Since thought is, *for Foucault*, "the very form of action" (*EW* 1, xxxv; also see FLYNN, 2005, 5), and since our experience of activity (or action) is *ipso facto* an experience of thought, his work has at its center not merely a history but also a celebration of thought, primarily as striving and indeed struggle. Our experience of activity itself provides us with an interior sense of the acting subject as a resistant figure. Centers of activity, hence loci of resistance, are (however belatedly and qualifiedly) *acknowledged* by at least the later Foucault (see, however, Rabinow's reservations regarding this designation [2011]).

In any event, we do not need a *theory* of subjectivity or agency to have recourse to a conception of ourselves as subjects and actors. Our experience of ourselves vis-à-vis others, also our experience of the self as ineluctably folded back upon itself (cf. Deleuze), provides us with a working understanding of human agency in its most critical form – a center of resistance but also a source of improvisation and thus creativity (DEWEY, *LW* 1, 135-36, 168-90). One might acknowledge such facts without elaborating a theory of such facts. Hence, when such an informed and sympathetic expositor of Foucault as Flynn identifies "Foucault's unresolved problem" as "that of accounting for the human *agency* that responsible resistance requires" (259), I hesitate. It is one thing not to get around to articulating an account of agency, quite another to be unable to do so given what else one has asserted. Flynn, Charles Taylor, Edward Said, and a number of others incline toward the latter, whereas I lean toward the former. The situated, decentered subject is not obviously bereft of the measure

of resistant, effective agency required to either say “No” to certain usurpations or “Yes” to the body and its pleasures. What Foucault’s critics are trying to salvage is a conception of agency capable of saying “No” in certain contexts (most notably, those of oppression and usurpations) and “Yes” in other contexts (most importantly, those of erotic experimentation and disciplined inquiry, at least when innovative possibilities insinuate themselves in the ongoing stream of our actual engagements).

Be this as it may, let us consider the role of experience in the writings of Dewey but especially in those of Foucault. Please note: this is the role of experience itself and only secondarily that of the concept (or our understanding) of experience. It is one thing to make the concept of experience central to one’s philosophical writings; it is another to make the substance of what we have lived through the primary focus of philosophical concern.²⁵

Foucault’s attempt to dethrone the father took the form of decentering the subject (in struggling against Jean-Paul Sartre, he was avowedly pitting himself against the philosophy of the subject).²⁶ Analogously, Dewey’s indefatigable resistance to certain defining preoccupations of the modern epoch drove him to have a deep ambivalence toward the central role accorded to human subjectivity during this historical period. In an interview bearing the title “An Aesthetics of Experience,” the interviewer Alan Sheridan suggests: “It will come as a surprise to no one that people said several times: there is no subject in Foucault’s work. The subjects are always subjected, they are the point of application of normative techniques and disciplines, but they are never sovereign subjects” (KRITZMAN [ed.], 50). Foucault’s reply is of the utmost importance for an accurate understanding of his nuanced position:

A distinction must be made here. In the first place, I do indeed believe that there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere. I am very skeptical of this view of the subject and very hostile to it. I believe, on the contrary, that the subject is constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation, or liberty, as in Antiquity, on the basis of course, of a number of rules, styles, and inventions to be found in the cultural environment. (KRITZMAN [ed.], 50-51).

The rejection of the sovereign, foundational form of subjectivity is not equivalent to the rejection of subjectivity in every sense whatsoever.²⁷ Experience is, among other

25 In his magnum opus, *Experience and Nature*, John Dewey writes of philosophy: “Empirically pursued it will not be the study of philosophy but a study, by means of philosophy, of life-experience” (LW 1, 40). The subject matter of philosophical inquiry is here explicitly identified by him with life experience.

26 After suggesting that “we have to create ourselves as a work of art,” Foucault points out: “it is interesting to see that Sartre refers the work of creation to a certain relation to oneself – the author to himself – which has the form of authenticity or inauthenticity. I would like to say exactly the contrary: we should not have to refer the creative activity to somebody to the kind of relation he has to himself, but should relate the kind of relation one has to oneself to a creative activity” (EW 1, 263). In these remarks, we clearly see Foucault’s advocacy of an aesthetic of existence and his rejection of the philosophy of the subject.

27 “There are some ideas,” Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out, “which make it impossible for us to return to a time prior to their existence, even and especially if we have moved

things, a process of subjectivization, that is, a process in which human subjectivity emerges in one or another of its historically distinctive forms.

In the thought of Dewey and Foucault, then, nothing is more central than the turn toward experience – the return, time and again, to experience in all of its opacity, elusiveness, and recalcitrance but (at the same time) its luminous, inescapable, and re-interpretable character. All too often, the appeal to experience in traditional philosophy has been made for the sake of securing a foundation for knowledge. Moreover, the technical, philosophical sense of experience has failed to capture the broader, human significance of that term. Finally, the host of oppositions in and through which *experience* has traditionally been defined (e.g., the opposition between reason and experience, that between experience as invincibly private and reality as inherently public, and that between the experience to which the scientific inquirer deliberately appeals and the experience through which human beings ineluctably live) has effectively deprived us of a sufficiently practical understanding (a truly useful conception) of human experience. On all three of these scores, however, Dewey and Foucault emancipate the practice of philosophy by recovering an understanding of experience requisite for the enhancement of our lives, not primarily the exigencies of theory.

4. The Centrality of Experience

Among the most salient affinities between Dewey and Foucault, the one most worthy of our attention is, on this occasion, a rather surprising one, since this point of intersection is so clearly characteristic of Dewey and so apparently absent in Foucault (at least, absent on a superficial reading). What could be more central to Dewey's project than his understanding of *experience* and, in turn, what could be more peripheral to Foucault's preoccupations, especially given his rejection of phenomenology (however, see Gutting), than the notion of experience? So, it might seem to some of you that I am forcing the Foucaultian approach into a Deweyan mold and thereby into a Procrustean bed. But I am aided here by such expositors of Foucault as Lawrence Kritzman, Thomas Flynn, Gary Gutting,²⁸ and even Gilles Deleuze. "*Foucault was concerned, above all else,*" Kritzman suggests in "Foucault and the Politics of Experience," the introduction to his anthology entitled *Politics Philosophy Culture*, "*with the idea of experience*" ("Introduction," xviii; emphasis added). But, as Thomas Flynn notes

beyond them, and subjectivity is one of them" (1964, 154). The work of Dewey and Foucault bears witness to the realization that, on the one hand, we have moved beyond the idea of subjectivity and, on the other, we cannot for just this reason return to a time before that in which this idea seized thought and in effect defined an epoch.

- 28 In "Foucault's Philosophy of Experience," Gutting identifies "an immediate obstacle to any claim that experience is a pervading theme of Foucault's thought." This is related to some of the deepest oppositions in his intellectual life. "His own analysis of the recent history of French philosophy drew a sharp distinction between the 'philosophy of experience' dominant through phenomenology and existentialism and the 'philosophy of the concept' that he associated with the history and philosophy of science of Gaston Bachelard and Georges Canguilhem" (2002, 74). But, as Gutting himself suggests, everything turns on how the term experience is understood and for what purposes the word is being invoked. In Foucault's case, the meaning and use of this term is, to a great degree, dissociable from its significance and function in both the existential and phenomenological movements.

more recently, “despite Pierre Macherey’s insistence that the concept of experience stands ‘at the center of all of Foucault’s thought,’ [“*Aux sources de l’Histoire de la folie*,” *Critique* 42 (August-September 1986, 764)], the notion of experience has not been studied in the detail it deserves” (FLYNN, 2005, 5). Of the utmost relevance to the topic at hand, Deleuze stresses that “*To think is* [for Foucault] *to experience*, to problematize. Knowledge, power and the self are the triple foundation of thought” (DELEUZE, 1988, 124; emphasis added). Thinking itself is experiential, whereas experience is not utterly devoid of thought (see, e.g., KRTIZMAN [ed.], 155).²⁹ I want to go so far as to insist that experience – not any concept of experience but *experience itself* – is, at least, as central to Foucault’s various projects as to Dewey’s philosophical writings. It might even be the case that Dewey’s very late misgivings about using the word *experience* (LW 1, 361; cf. RORTY, 1982, Chapter 5) have no counterpart in Foucault’s repeated insistence upon the relevance of his experience for his work as a philosopher.

Foucault could not be more explicit about this. “Every time I have tried to do a piece of theoretical work,” he divulged, “it has been on the basis of experience; always in connection with processes I saw unfolding around me. It was always because I thought I identified the cracks, silent tremors, and dysfunctions in things I saw, institutions I was dealing with, or my relations with others, that I set out to do a piece of work” (EW3, 458). So conceived, a piece of work “each time was partly a fragment of autobiography” (ibid.). Elsewhere, he makes this point (if possible) even more bluntly: “[...] I haven’t written a single book that was not inspired, at least in part, by a direct personal experience” (EW3, 244). In yet another place, he connects thought and experience. Gilles Deleuze helps us to see not only this connection but also the center of Foucault’s project. In *Foucault*, he asserts: “In truth, one thing haunts Foucault – thought. The question: What does thinking signify? What do we call thinking?” is the arrow first fired by Heidegger and then again by Foucault” (116). Then he goes on to note: Foucault “writes a history, but a history of thought as such.” And then Deleuze glosses the pivotal term in the most succinct manner: “*To think means* [for Foucault] *to experiment and to problematize*” (ibid.).

It is however essential to see how Foucault himself forges the link between thought and experience. “By ‘thinking’, I mean an analysis of what one might call the intensifying venues of experience, where are articulated one [of these venues] with the others [...]” He identifies these venues as, first, “forms of possible knowledge; second, the normative matrices of comportment for individuals; and, finally, modes of virtual existence for possible subjects” (FOUCAULT, 1983: quoted in RABINOW, 2011, 11). In short, knowledge, power, and subjectivization in their complex interplay. In yet another place, Foucault suggests: “The study of the forms of experience [in their historicity] can [...] proceed from an analysis of ‘practices’ – as long as one qualifies that word [practices] to mean the different systems of action insofar as they

29 In one of his most important essays (“The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy”), Dewey notes that: “In the traditional notion experience and thought are antithetical terms” (MW 10, 6). In his reconstructed conception of human experience, however, experience is short through with inference: “There is, apparently, no conscious experience without inference; reflection is native and constant” (ibid.). For him, “thought is an intrinsic feature of experience” (6; cf. Foucault in KRITZMAN [ed.], 155).

are inhabited by thought as I have characterized it [thought]" (RABINOW, [ed.], 335). He goes so far as to assert, even the most stupid institutions and practices are not utterly devoid of thought in his sense (Kritzman), For Foucault as for Dewey, the subject matter of philosophical thought are the diverse forms of human experience in the fateful conjunction of their historical contingency.

In an autobiographical essay ("From Absolutism to Experimentalism" [1930]), Dewey disclosed: "Upon the whole, the forces that have influenced me have come from persons and from situations more than from books – not that I have not, I hope, learned a great deal from philosophical writings, but that what I have learned from them has been technical in comparison with *what I have been forced to think about because of some experience in which I found myself entangled*" (LW5, 155; emphasis added). These are not, I urge, incidental biographical facts about these two thinkers; they are rather defining features of their philosophical authorship.

The first point to stress at this juncture is that what we need to appreciate is the role or work of *experience itself* (not the conception or reconceptualization of experience) in the projects of these thinkers. Experience matters and it does so for both of them profoundly, pervasively, and critically. Indeed, both philosophers accord experience a status and centrality unsurpassed by what other thinkers have granted to it. Both do so explicitly, emphatically, and consistently. As a provisional definition, I am disposed to suggest that, for Foucault no less than Dewey, experience is that with which we as historical actors must come to terms. If we are sufficiently honest, experience tends to outstrip our understanding. In Dewey no less than Foucault, recourse to experience is made for the sake of confounding (not confirming) our categories and indeed our selves. Implicit in this definition is the contention that our actual experience virtually always outstrips our cognitive resources and categorical frameworks. To ask a Heideggerian question, what are poets for? To suggest a Deweyan answer, poets remind us that we are before even the most commonplace and thus familiar objects and events bereft of the linguistic means needed to give *telling* expression to our actual experience. He makes this point nowhere more effectively than in *Art as Experience* (LW 10). Familiarity breeds not so much contempt as credulity or, worse, neglect (DEWEY, MW 10, 23). But the issue concerns experience itself more than expression (cf. SMITH, 1983). The recurrent question generated by the ongoing course of our entangled engagements is time and again, what is going on? What is taking place? The locus of this question is primarily the present. Allow me to untangle some of the threads here and to consider them provisionally apart from one another.

Human experience is far from exhausted by the forms it assumes in our epistemic practices. The epistemological obsession of professional philosophy has indeed resulted in a grossly impoverished understanding of human experience in its full sweep and, hence, variable forms. The role of experience in the acquisition of knowledge is unquestionably critical, but also only a fragment of what experience is. The differential perspective of the theoretical inquirer must be seen for what it is, a defining feature of a specific context standing alongside other identifiable contexts (cf. SMITH, 1981).

In the judgment of both Foucault and Dewey, we need to stress the *agonistic* character of human experience, the extent to which experience is always a struggle, not least of all an implicit challenge to our cognitive resources, our inherited unders-

tanding. Experience, at least experience in its vital and dramatic form, drives home the realization that we *do not know what we are doing*. Our capacity to presume otherwise is a testimony to not only the anxiety generated by being at a loss as to know how to respond to *these* events in *this* situation but also how effectively our habits inure us from feeling the slap of anxiety's tale.

For Dewey and Foucault, experience is primarily an opportunity, even an impetus, for self-transformation. In one place, Foucault stresses: "[...] it's not at all a matter of transporting personal experiences into knowledge. In the [early] book [on psychiatry], the relationship with the experience should make possible a transformation, a metamorphosis, that is not just mine but can have a certain value, a certain accessibility to others, *so that the experience is available to others to have*" (EW 3, 244). Dewey will insist even more emphatically on the possibilities for nothing less than "a community of experience" (see, e.g., *Art as Experience*). Returning to Foucault, however, it is instructive to recall that, in response to the question, "In detaching yourself from a certain style, have you not become more of a philosopher than you were ever before?", Foucault declared: "I admit it! The philosophical study I performed in *The Order of Things, Madness and Civilization*, and even in *Discipline and Punishment* was essentially based on a certain use of a philosophical vocabulary, game, and experience, to which I was [...] completely devoted. However [...] it is certain that now I am trying to detach myself from this form of philosophy; but I do this precisely in order to use it as a field of experience to be studied, mapped out, and organized so that this period, which to some people might seem to be a radical non-philosophy is, at the same time, *a more radical way of thinking the philosophical experience*" (KRITZMAN [ed.], 243). "*My books are for me experiences, in a sense that I would like to be as full as possible*. An experience is something that one comes out of transformed" (EW 3, 239; emphasis added). So, it is no exaggeration when Foucault characterizes his authorship in terms of "experience books, as opposed to truth books or demonstration books"³⁰ (EW 3, 246).

Of course, everything turns (as I have noted above) on how *experience* is understood. It is all too often simply assumed that the structure of our experience is that of a confrontation between a subject and an object (or array of objects). The problem with doing so is that such a assumption fails to foreground the extent to which experience is a process of subjectivization, that is, the very process itself by which subjects are engendered. Worse than this, the assumption actually precludes considering experience as a process of *subjectivization*, for it in effect takes the subject as given. Subjects are however engendered in the course of experience itself and the failure to attend to the historically specific ways in which contrasting forms of human subjectivity are constituted entails a debilitating impoverishment of critical intelligence. In any event, the dominant framework of the modern epoch in terms of which experience is interpreted as the opposition between subject and object [this framework] is only one way of making sense out of our experience. Other frameworks are not only possible but also preferable in some respects (DEWEY, LW 1).

30 "[T]he book," Foucault stressed, "worked toward that transformation. To a small degree, it was even an agent to it. That is what I mean by an experience book, as opposed to a truth book or a demonstration book" (EW, volume 3, 246; emphasis added).

Just as the writing of Foucault's books was a continually reconfigured series of transformative experiences³¹ for him, reading them has been such an experience for many of us. For most of us, alas, the *experience* of reading Dewey compares unfavorably to the experience of reading Foucault or, for that matter, Nietzsche, James, Santayana, and a long list of more consummate philosophical stylists. When Foucault describes his encounter with Nietzsche's texts, many of us are prompted to recall our own encounters with Foucault's writings. What we find in Foucault and Nietzsche's writings is felt to be largely missing in Dewey's.

For most of us, the experience of thinking is bound up with that of reading. Moreover, this link is critical for any candid engagement with such a genealogical pragmatist as Dewey or such a pragmatic genealogist as Foucault.

Despite sympathy with aspects of Dewey's project, Stanley Cavell stresses the "inadequate philosophical and literary means" Dewey brings to the devotion of ends (to repeat) to which Cavell himself is committed. "I remember, when first reading what others called philosophy, my growing feeling about Dewey's work, as I went through what seemed countless of his books, that Dewey was remembering something philosophy should be, but that the world he was responding to and responding from missed the worlds I seemed mostly to live in [...]" (1990, 13). In particular, Cavell missed in Dewey's texts "the heights of modernism in the arts, the ravages of the century's politics, the wild intelligence of American popular culture" (ibid.). Cavell discerned in Dewey a heroic (at least, an indefatigable) *struggle to overcome philosophy philosophically*. But he missed in Dewey adequate care for the literary (or aesthetic) means for engaging effectively in this struggle. Cavell observed that he was not alone (he mentions Henry Aiken, Abraham Kaplan, and Morton White in this connection) in feeling about Dewey "the lack his work's power as well as the importance of its claims for philosophy" (14). The aesthetic character of a philosophical text is, from Dewey's strictly philosophical perspective, no negligible matter.

The experience of reading Foucault, far more than that of reading Dewey, is just that – *an* experience and it is an experience in precisely the sense given to this expression by Dewey in *Art as Experience* and other writings. The reconceptualization of experience was undertaken by Dewey for the sake of the revitalization of experience itself, more simply, for the *having* of experiences of a more intense and radiant character. The experience of reading philosophers (the experience afforded – that elicited and sustained – by engagement with their texts) is hardly a trivial or negligible matter. The literary or aesthetic qualities of philosophical texts are, for some of us at least, not severed from their strictly philosophical importance and force. Dewey himself appreciates this when he notes that "philosophy performs for some exactly the same office that the fine arts perform for others. There is," he stresses, "a kind of music of ideas that appeals, apart from any question of empirical verification, to the minds of thinkers [...]" (DEWEY, *LW*8, 38). Where others hear noise, some of us not infrequently hear music.

31 I am aware that "transformative experience" is in Foucault's lexicon a pleonastic expression, but since his characteristic emphasis on experience as transformation is not necessarily part of everyone's working understanding of this commonplace term, I perhaps can be permitted this redundancy for the sake of emphasis.

The experience of reading, in particular that of reading philosophical texts, is admittedly a narrowly circumscribed fold within a vast field. But what is often missed is that the received understanding of human experience is also altogether too narrow (see, e.g., Dewey's "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy" [*MW* 10]; also John E. Smith's "The Reconceptualization of Experience in Peirce, James, and Dewey" [1983, Chapter 1]).

In the context of Dewey and Foucault's projects, experience is not so much that to which we appeal to secure knowledge as that by which we as situated subjects are wrenched from our habitual security (or presumption). While this is more dramatically true of Foucault, it is also demonstrably true of Dewey. Experience is often a resource for resolving disputes; arguably, its function in generating unprecedented controversies and exposing concealed conflicts is more important than being such a resource.

The *experienced* mountaineer, equestrian, or mechanic is the individual who, in reference to some recognizable form of human endeavor, possesses practical experience (experience derived from engagement in the endeavor and, moreover, facilitating the individual's ability to respond effectively or creatively to unexpected difficulties). We ignore their guidance at our own risk. Even so, "practical experience" is an ambiguous expression, not least of all because practice vis-à-vis theory suggests a variety of meanings. In one sense, however, *all* of the predominant forms of human experience (including theoretical investigations) are *practical* since they involve us as practitioners, i.e., more or less adept participants in some recognizable form of a shared practice, such as a seminar discussion, religious worship, experimental investigation, textual interpretation, political debate, therapeutic exchange, and erotic play. While the range of our experiences is arguably wider (perhaps potentially much wider) than that of our practices, that range roughly coincides with the vast spectrum of shared practices in which human agents form and reform their singular identities. While our skills and expertise are forged in the crucible of these practices, these crucibles themselves might be subjected to deliberate alteration. In other words, these practices might themselves be emancipated from their historical fixations and the often sanctioned disregard of relevant experience. The forms of practice, like those of experience, are not to be determined *a priori*, but rather historically. While the formal elaboration of abstract possibilities might be helpful in determining these forms, no amount of formal speculation can replace critical attention to our historical experience (cf. PEIRCE, *CP* 1.655).

5. Another Aside: The Seductions of Formalism/The Betrayal of Experience

As another aside, then, please allow me a word about formalism. "It would be interesting," Foucault once suggested, "to study formal thought and the different kinds of formalism that ran through Western culture during the 20th century" (KRITZMAN [ed.], 18). "That is how I would situate the structuralist phenomenon: by locating it within the broad current of formal thought" (*ibid.*). Structuralism is best conceived as an instance of formalism, but its significance is only ascertainable by situating it historically, proximately in the context of the twentieth century and, presumably, in that of a much wider periodization. When Foucault discloses that his interest is in analyzing the forms of historical experience, however, it is imperative to realize

that these are *historically* emergent and mutable forms of human experience. The conditions for the possibility of experience in general and the specific forms of epochal experience (e.g., the distinctive experiences of, say, the *modern* subject or the *ancient* Epicurean), in particular, are not *a priori*: they are historical conditions. As conceived by Foucault, the philosophical disclosure of these historical conditions is itself a historical intervention, an act accomplished by a historical actor for the sake of the possible transformation of the inherited forms of human experience, activity, and practice.

In the autobiographical essay from which I have already quoted ("From Absolutism to Experimentalism"), Dewey confessed: "my development has been controlled largely by the struggle between a native inclination toward the schematic and formally logical, [on the one hand,] and those incidents of personal experience that compelled me to take account of actual material," on the other (*LW* 5, 150). Dewey no less than Foucault was (at least) occasionally seduced by the power of elegant schema³² and logical forms to capture the vagaries of experience, but they were acutely aware of their own susceptibility in this regard. In succumbing to such seductions, they (I would suggest) saw themselves betraying their commitment to experience. The allure of purely formal thought must ultimately be resisted, so that the fulfillments of experientially oriented thought might be obtainable. The forms of not only experience but also formalism itself are, through and through, historical. It is to experience and history to which we must (re)turn to render the objects of our inquiry intelligible. But the relevant sense of experience is (in the case of Dewey) not that of the dominant traditions of empiricism in Anglophone philosophy and (in the case of Foucault) not that of the central movements in Francophone philosophy reigning when he commenced his studies at the École Normale Supérieure (especially existentialism and phenomenology but also Marxism and psychoanalysis). Both Dewey and Foucault were in effect rescuing the word experience from its technical philosophical distortions and returning it to its irreducibly contested, complex significance. Experience is by its very nature a site of contestation, an occasion for disagreement. In the first instance, at least, the appeal to experience does not dissipate, but intensifies disagreements and disputes. But it also provides resources for beginning to adjudicate humanely and reasonably upon those controversies. "Respect for experience is," as Dewey notes in a very late manuscript, "respect for its possibilities in thought and knowledge as well as an enforced attention to its joys and sorrows" (*LW* 1, 392), its fulfillments and frustrations. "Respect for the things of experience alone brings with it," he insists, "such a respect for others, the centres of experience, as is free from patronage, domination, and the will to impose" (*ibid.*). While these centers of experience are themselves decentered (while they are not accorded the primordial and foundational role ascribed to them in the modern epoch), they are, by either Foucault or Dewey, hardly eliminated. They are rather situated and, thereby, circumscribed in overlapping fields of experiential engagement.

32 Can one imagine a more elegant schema than the one devised by Foucault in *The Order of Things* to organize the seemingly disparate of the inherently complex discourses such those analyzed in this work?

6. The Return to Experience

Accordingly, we must, time and again, return to experience, freeing ourselves from the snares of formalism. In a more trivial sense, I must at this juncture return to the topic of experience, since what I have said about it thus far is inadequate for our purpose.

For Dewey and Foucault, the *forms* of experience are, as I have stressed above, irreducibly historical. Whatever Dewey's temperamental inclination toward abstract schemas and Foucault's intellectual fascination with the formalist tendencies in contemporary thought, Dewey strenuously countered his native impulse and Foucault historically situated these formalist tendencies themselves. Their unblinking focus was on dynamic forms in their contingency, historicity, and interplay, not abstract forms arrayed in some allegedly immutable order. The characteristic emphasis is on transition, transformation, transversality, transposition, and a host of other processes qualified by the prefix *trans-* and, almost as significantly, ones modified by the prefix *re-* (e.g., reconstruction, renewal, recovery, reparation, and renegotiation). But the point around which everything turns is their insistence on experience as transformation (or metamorphosis). The very point of their thought is "to experience something that permits a change, a transformation of the relationship we have with ourselves and with the world where, up to then, we had seen ourselves without problems – in short, a transformation of the relationship we have with our knowledge" (*EW* 3, 244). (Though these are Foucault's words, they might have been Dewey's. Indeed, if one made the effort, I would bet that closely similar words could be readily found in Dewey's writings.) "The idea of limit-experience that wrenches the subject from itself is what was important to me. [...] [H]owever boring, however erudite my books may be, I've always conceived of them as direct experiences aimed at pulling myself free of myself, at preventing me from being the same" (*EW* 3, 242). Rather than conceiving experience as a text, he is here conceiving books (at least his own books) *as experiences*. "The experience," Foucault notes, "through which we grasp the intelligibility of certain mechanisms (for example, imprisonment, punishment, and so on) and the way in which we are enabled to detach ourselves from them by perceiving them differently will be, at best, one and the same thing. *That is really the heart of what I do*" (*EW* 3, 244; emphasis added).

Another facet of experience calls for our attention. Experience is for Foucault no less than Dewey *communicable*.³³ "A experience is," he stresses, "something that one has completely alone but can fully have only to the extent that it escapes pure subjectivity and that others can also [...] at least encounter it – and go through it themselves" (FOUCAULT, *EW* 3, 245). There is, however, a difference here worth noting. For Foucault, the communicability of experience appears to depend on fictionalization (cf. O'LEARY, 19ff.). "An experience is," he suggests, "always a fiction: it's something that one fabricates oneself, that doesn't exist before and [by virtue of this fabrication] will exist afterwards" (*EW* 3, 243). He readily acknowledges that this entails "the difficult relationship with truth," but seems to take this relationship to be asymmetrical.

33 But here we also encounter one of the most fundamental differences between Dewey and Foucault. Dewey is far less of a nominalist than Foucault. This has important implications for how they understand the communicability of experience, but (alas) these are implications that I cannot treat on this occasion.

For he asserts that “the difficult relationship with truth” is one in which the truth “is bound up with an experience that is not bound to it and, in some degree, destroys it” (ibid.). But, in the interest of economy, we must leave unexplored the extent to which truth destroys experience or, in turn, experience destroys truth. In contrast, Dewey is not disposed to cast experience as a fiction. The distinction between fiction and its opposites is one to be drawn and, indeed, redrawn only in reference to experience itself. While he appreciates the extent to which our experience is structured by imagination, he rather prosaically would contend that imagining experience itself (or *an* experience) to be a fiction is not only hyperbolic but also misleading.

Despite such rhetorical differences, there is even here a shared concern. For an animating concern with creative action implies (in the judgment of both thinkers) a playful preoccupation with the possibilities of experience, not excessive anxiety over the limits of permissibility. Professional philosophers are all too often disposed to elevate their discipline into a juridical discourse alone possessing the inherent authority to determine (say) whether epistemic claims are warranted, putative meanings are truly significant, etc. In truth, however, very little (if indeed anything at all) can be determined on high. The consistent council of (at least) the consistent pragmatist is that almost everything needs to be determined *on the ground*. This can only mean on the ground of our historically evolving and evolving practices. Affirming the primacy of practice, in a consistent and emphatic manner, entails painstaking attention to the actual shape of our shared practices, hence their irreducible historicity and opportune alterability. As Wittgenstein instructed, we have not so much to think as *to look and see* – and, as much as anything else, we have to look carefully at the actual contours of human practices in their myriad forms. What Alasdair MacIntyre has said about sociological imagination (a term he borrows from C. Wright Mills) and professional philosophy – our institutionalized discipline is all too often deficient in sociological imagination (1985) – I am even more inclined to claim regarding ethnographic and, more generally, anthropological imagination. What such imagination allows us, at least, to glimpse is the irreducible heterogeneity of human life and, inseparably connected to this, not a fixed range of anthropological constants but an expansive array of mostly unimagined possibilities.

Endowed with such imagination, the varieties of human experience are too manifest to overlook. But, apart from thought, the functions of our experiential appeals are all too easy to miss, especially since the appeal to experience has historically been made for the sake of purposes eschewed by Dewey and Foucault. What, then, are these thinkers *doing* when they are appealing to experience? What are they trying to accomplish? As anti-foundationalists, they are obviously not attempting to secure a foundation on which to build the edifice of knowledge. But what *are* they trying to do?

Let me suggest here that they are turning experience back upon itself for the sake of practicing freedom and emancipating some of the practices in which they were enmeshed. “Ultimately there are,” Dewey suggests, “but two philosophies. One of them accepts life and experience in all its uncertainty, mystery, doubt, and half-knowledge and *turns that experience upon itself to deepen and intensify its own qualities* [...]. This is the philosophy of Shakespeare and Keats” (LW10, 41; emphasis added). The other in effect *refuses* to accept life and experience – and thus devotes itself to the task of transcending or eradicating in a thoroughgoing manner (if only in principle) just these defects or traits of our existence and experience.

Though both thinkers are (I am urging) engaged in this process, their engagement dramatically reveals a difference. For Dewey, turning experience upon itself for the sake of deepening and *intensifying* its qualities is a task to be taken up, ever anew. Though intensification is, for him, one of the values inaugurating and guiding this process, intensity assumes a more extreme and even more central role in Foucault's conception of practices of freedom. One crucial difference between these two thinkers is their different valuations of experiential intensity. This might be primarily a temperamental difference, though one having rather far-reaching philosophical implications. Dewey appears to be by temperament a Humean (i.e., an individual for whom the tranquil emotions ought to be accorded a more central place than the violent ones), whereas Foucault was unmistakably a Dionysian. "It's true," he confesses, "that a glass of wine, of good wine, old and so on, may be enjoyable but it's not for me" (KRITZMAN [ed.], 12). The reason is that, for Foucault, "[a] pleasure must be incredibly intense. But I think that I am not the only one like that" (12-13).

7. Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll (as Well as Other Forms of Avant Garde Music)

Before concluding, allow me to touch upon three topics central to Foucault's experience and, by implication, to his thought, though ones quite far from Dewey's personal experience or philosophical interests. Among other things, these topics allow us to mark the difference between Dewey and Foucault regarding intensity of experience – and to do so in a concrete manner.

"Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll" is not only the title of a rock song but also an expression celebrating a life style. Successful professionals, not just wayward youths, have structured their lives around a passionate preoccupation with sex, drugs, and music, especially music relentlessly exploring possibilities beyond anything yet realized. In response to Pierre Boulez's observation that "there exists a tendency to form a larger or smaller society corresponding to each category of music," so that there comes to be "a dangerously closed circuit among this society, its music, and its performers" (KRITZMAN [ed.], 315), Foucault noted: "I believe that one cannot talk of the 'cultural isolation' of contemporary music without soon correcting what one says of it by thinking about circuits of music" (316). Then he immediately turns to rock music:

With rock, for example, one has a completely inverse phenomenon. Not only is rock music (much more than jazz used to be) an integral part of the life of many people, but it is a cultural initiator: to like rock, to like a certain kind of rock rather than another, is also a way of life, a manner of reacting; it is a whole set of tastes and attitudes.

Rock offers the possibility of a relation which is intense, alive, 'dramatic' (in that rock presents itself as a spectacle, that listening to it is an event [or an experience] and that it produces itself on stage, with a music which is itself impoverished, but through which the listener affirms himself; and with the other music [or forms of music], one has a frail, faraway, hothouse, problematical relation with an erudite music from which the cultivated public feels excluded. (ibid.)

If philosophy is to address, first and foremost, the problems of ordinary women and men as they arise in everyday life, not as the technical problems of professional philosophers (*MW* 10, 46), then critical attention certainly needs to be paid to such

cultural phenomena and personal passions as sex, drugs, and music. In his preoccupation with such matters, Foucault proves himself to be a better pragmatist than most Deweyans.

"Foucault particularly responded to," Gary Gutting notes in an insightful essay, "the limit-experiences of twentieth-century avant-garde French literature" (2002, 75). But he goes on to assert, rather surprisingly, "whatever the role of limit-experiences in Foucault's life, the fact is that, apart from the early literary essays [on French avant-garde authors], they are hardly ever central to his writings" (77). But Gutting appears to have been misled by the fact that Foucault does not so much make limit-experiences the focal objects of his theoretical analyses as he draws upon them as resources for conducting these analyses. That is, they are mainly the lenses through which, not the objects at which, he looks. Regarded in this way, the central role of limit-experiences in Foucault's life is inseparable from their role in his thought. This is nowhere more evident than in his erotic involvements, drug use, and musical sensibility.

In an interview granted to Foucault's biographer James Miller, Leo Bersani recalled: "I felt there was [in Foucault] some sort of European version of glamorizing certain things, or of aestheticizing them." But then he added: "At the same time, he was one of the only French intellectuals who, when he came to America, seemed able to open his eyes. And what he opened his eyes to was the whole California and San Francisco gay scene, and drugs" (MILLER, 261-62). Bersani then suggests that Foucault was as much intellectualizing (or theorizing) this experience as glamorizing or aestheticizing it: "And all this meant something to his mind. It was not simply a matter of having a good time. You know, a lot of French come over, go out, they're a bad boy, they go home – and it doesn't mean anything. But that wasn't true of Foucault. These were important experiences: The life of his body was important to the life of his mind" (262). For the details of the life of his body and its pleasures, along with suggestions for how these bear upon the life of Foucault's mind, I encourage the reader to consult James Miller's *The Passion of Foucault*. As illuminating as a discussion of our own might have proven, space simply does not allow it.

In an interview shortly before his death, Foucault confessed:

I think that I have real difficulty in experiencing pleasure. I think that pleasure is a very difficult behavior. It's not as simple as that [*Laughter*] to enjoy one's self. And I must say that's my dream. I would like and I would hope I'll die of an overdose [*Laughter*] of pleasure of any kind. Because I think it's really difficult and I always have the feeling that I do not feel the pleasure, the complete total pleasure and, for me, it's related to death. (KRITZMAN [ed.], 12).

Whether hyperbolic or not, he insists, "*the* real pleasure would be so deep, so intense, so overwhelming that I couldn't survive it" (ibid.). It is in this context that he discloses his reliance on drugs as means of obtaining something approximate to "the real pleasure": "There is [...] the fact that some drugs are really important to me because they are the mediation to those incredibly intense joys that I am looking for and that I am not able to experience, to afford by myself" (ibid.).

As aids for the enhancement and intensification of his experience, different drugs fulfilled different functions. "We can easily see," Foucault informs us in another text

(“Theatrum Philosophicum”), “how LSD inverts the relationship of ill humor, stupidity, and thought: it no sooner eliminates the supremacy of categories than it tears away the ground of its indifference and disintegrates the gloomy dumbshow of stupidity; and it presents this univocal and acategorical mass not only as a variegated, mobile, asymmetrical, decentered, spiraloïd, and reverberating, but [also] causes it to rise, at each instant as a swarming of phantasms-events” (BOUCHARD [ed.], 190). “Opium,” Foucault goes on to observe, “produces other effects: thought gathers unique differences into a point, eliminates the background and deprives immobility of its task of contemplating and soliciting stupidity through its mime” (191). This drug “establishes a ground that no longer stupidly absorbs all differences, but allows them to arise and sparkle as so many minute, distanced, smiling, and eternal events” (ibid.). “[I]n a state deprived of drugs,” he contends, “thought possesses two horns: one is perversity [...] and the other ill humor.” In states induced by drugs, however, we experience “the sudden shift of the kaleidoscope, signs that light up for an instant, the results of the thrown dice, the outcome of another game.” Such experience is, for Foucault, connected with thought. “Thinking does not provide consolation or happiness. Like a perversion, it languidly drags itself out; it repeats itself [...] At the moment when chance, the theatre, and perversions enter into resonance, when chance dictates a resonance among the three, the thought becomes a trance; and it becomes worthwhile to think” (191-92). Though this is put forth in a review of Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* as well as *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze himself adds as a note to this rhapsody, “What will people think of us?” (191, n20). But, for such thinkers, the life of the body is integral to the life of the mind and that of the chemically altered body subserves the life of a philosophically inventive mind.³⁴

The *experience* of music is, finally, also of singular importance for this singular thinker. In an interview conducted shortly before his death, he noted:

it’s a fact that in my personal life music played a great role. The first friend I had when I was twenty was a musician. Then afterwards I had another friend who was a composer and who is dead now. Through him I know all the generation of [the composer] Boulez. It has been a very important experience for me. First, because I had contact with the kind of art which was, for me, really enigmatic. I was not competent at all in this domain; I’m still not. But I felt beauty in something which was quite enigmatic for me. There are some pieces by Bach and Webern which I enjoy but what is, for me, real beauty is a ‘phrase musicale’ that I cannot understand, something I cannot say anything about. I have the opinion, maybe it’s quite arrogant or presumptuous, that I could say something about any of the most wonderful paintings in the world. Anyway, I have written something about Boulez. What has been for me the influence of living with a musician for several months. Why it was important even in my intellectual life. (KRITZMAN [ed.], 13).

In this regard, a late text entitled “Contemporary Music and the Public” (a discussion in 1983 between Foucault and Pierre Boulez) is also an important source. In this

34 In reporting such views, I am not necessarily celebrating or endorsing them. I am far from Puritanical in my attitude toward drugs (in fact, I think most, perhaps all, drugs, should be decriminalized), but I am also acutely mindful that the use of drugs can quickly lead to devastation of various forms.

discussion, Boulez identifies “an irrefutable truth” – namely, the truth that “[j]udgment and taste are prisoners of categories, of pre-establish schemas which are referred to at all costs. Not, as they [the defenders of these received categories] would have us believe, that the distinction is between an aristocracy of sentiments, a nobility of expression, and a chancy craft based on experimentation: thought versus tools” (KRITZMAN [ed.], 321). It is not this at all. “It is, rather a matter, of a listening that could not be modulated or adapted to different ways of inventing music” (ibid.). “I am certainly not going to preach,” Boulez adds, “in favor of an ecumenicism of music, which seems to me nothing but a supermarket aesthetic, demagoguery that dare not speak its name and decks itself with good intentions the better to camouflage the wretchedness of its compromise. Moreover, I do not reject the demands of quality in the sound as well as in the composition [...]” (321). He concludes by making a point worth of Foucault: The relations among all these phenomena [pertaining to music] [...] are so complex that applying rigorous parallelisms or groupings to them is impossible” (322). But, then, the point of listening to music concerns not the rigorous forms of understanding but the always somewhat inchoate modes of experience: what matters is not conceptual order and precision but experiential intensity and involvement. Hence, one is (Boulez suggests) tempted to say: “place your bets, and for the rest, trust in the *air du temps*. But, please, play! Play! Otherwise the infinite secretions of boredom!” (ibid.). Though the words are Boulez’s, the sentiments are, in no small measure, Foucault’s own. It is, at least, impossible for me to imagine that Foucault himself would not, in most respects, heartily endorse these views. But he would likely be far more ecumenical in his judgments regarding music. After all, he did insist:

One cannot speak of a single relation of contemporary culture to music in general, but of a tolerance, more or less benevolent, with respect to a plurality of musics. Each is granted a ‘right’ to existence, and this right is perceived as an equality of worth. Each is worth as much as the group which practices or recognizes it. (KRITZMAN [ed.], 316)

The limit-experiences provided by music and (more generally) the arts as well as our erotic involvements and various drugs reveal not only the severe limits within which we tend to live our everyday lives but also the equally constricted scope of the philosophical imagination.

The means by which, and moreover the contexts in which, experience can be turned upon itself for the sake of deepening, intensifying, and transfiguring its qualities are, of course, myriad. But the three discussed all too briefly in this section are especially noteworthy, not least of all because they tend to be ignored by students of pragmatists. Is the link between the Puritan and the pragmatist anywhere more evident than in the tendency on the part of Deweyans and other pragmatists to ignore sex, drugs, and music as critical resources for the dramatic enhancement of our lived experience? However this might be, the task of widening, deepening, and intensifying the values inherent in our experience tends to be unduly abstract and academic insofar as this task is not directed to the concrete possibilities woven into the fabric of our everyday experience.

Conclusion

Philosophy as envisioned and practiced by Dewey and Foucault was, thus, an attempt to turn experience upon experience for the sake of enhancing its qualities, including *intensifying* those qualities. Despite differences regarding limit-experiences as resources for the intensification of experience, both Dewey and Foucault are committed to turning experience upon itself for the sake of enhancing (including intensifying) the qualities of experience. Please note that this is, by implication at least, the task of philosophers no less than poets and other artists. The process of turning experience upon itself is essentially an imaginative one, holding out the promise of an effective conjunction between aesthetic experience and philosophical reflection. It makes the work of the philosopher akin to that of the artist. Philosophy is lived in the imagination.³⁵ Or, better, it contributes to living *in the world* imaginatively. We as *philosophers* are encouraged by Dewey and Foucault to live imaginatively *in* the world [Cf. Peirce]. To live in one's own imagination is to live at a distance from the actual world. In contrast, to live imaginatively in the world is to immerse oneself more deeply and fully in the world. For such philosophers as Dewey and Foucault, the presumed authority to issue juridical edicts about the obligatory and the permissible gives way to the playful disposition to explore a truly present possibilities aesthetic existence. Juridical presumption is displaced by aesthetic playfulness. With Delmore Schwartz, we may say: In dreams begin responsibilities. While an oppressive sense of responsibility can effectively destroy our capacity to dream, the anarchical power of dreams can generate an abiding sense of responsiveness to what calls for our solicitude and nurturance.

In the end, as in the beginning, there is self-overcoming. There are, at every juncture, open-ended processes of self-overcoming, some of which might evolve into practices of freedom, alongside of and entangled with historical movements of genuine emancipation. Even our most authoritative and sanctioned practices admit of assuming the form of practices of freedom. In reference to the practice of philosophy itself, the example of Dewey no less than that of Foucault suggests nothing less.

The experience of the practitioner, especially when the practice in question is that of the philosopher or artist, is hardly irrelevant to how a practice is taken up and, indeed, handed on. The self-overcoming of practitioners cannot but have ramifications for the self-transformations of the practices in which those practitioners are implicated. Time and again, philosophers and artists are thrown back upon themselves and thereby forced to consider seriously, What am I about? To *have* an experience in Dewey's sense can mean to be caught up short, to be forced to realize we are more or less at a loss. Doubt in the full-bodied pragmatic sense is primarily not a cognitive uneasiness but an agential disorientation. We are at a loss to know how *to go on* (as Wittgenstein so memorably notes in his *Philosophical Investigations*), so

35 In "Philosophy and Civilization, Dewey suggests: "In philosophy we are dealing with something comparable to the meaning of Athenian civilization or of a drama of a lyric. Significant history is lived in the imagination of man, and philosophy is a further extension of the imagination into its own prior achievements" (LW 3, 5) and, I would add, the conditions for those achievements.

much so that we are driven to the realization that do not know what we are doing, not infrequently are even at a loss as to *who* we are.

Such doubts need not be debilitating. They indeed might be emancipating. In any event, there are more things not only in heaven and earth but also in philosophy itself than have been dreamt of by these philosophers. They would be quick to admit this. They were aware that the critical genres of philosophical discourse hardly exhaust the array of possibilities, also that the creative possibilities for philosophical thought imagined by them were only first steps on a long journey. It is, given the prominence of critique in their texts, all too easy to miss the function of critique itself. Philosophy as a juridical discourse must make room for *philosophy as a creative undertaking*, an imaginative discourse in which improvisational utterances have as central a place as they do in the musical performances of Charlie Parker, Theolonius Monk, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane. But the *agon* of philosophy itself means that philosophers committed to transforming their discipline into adventures of ideas, enactments of creativity, practices of freedom must do so in the teeth of unyielding opposition from entrenched colleagues: those committed to creative activity must make room for themselves. Sovereigns hardly ever cede their authority or privilege. It must be wrested from their desperate clutches. Here is indeed a form of the method of tenacity!

The sovereign forms of philosophical discourse hardly seem to allow for genuine opportunities for significant transformation. But critical attention to our actual history suggests otherwise. In particular, Foucault interprets our present situation to be the result of Kant's divided heritage. On the one hand, Kant in "his great critical works ... laid the foundation for that tradition of philosophy that poses the question of the conditions in which knowledge is possible, etc." (KRITZMAN [ed.], 95). On the other hand, "there is in modern and contemporary philosophy another type of question, another kind of critical interrogation." We encounter at the center of this tradition the question: "What is our present? What is the *present field of possible experiences*?" (emphasis added). Whereas the former tradition is caught up in the task of articulating "an analytics of truth," the latter tradition is animated by a concern to offer nothing less than "an ontology of the present, an ontology of ourselves." One may opt for either, but Dewey no less than Foucault (despite considerable attention to the alternative tradition, that of "an analytics of truth") devoted himself, especially in their later years, to critical thought.

What is this present field of possible experiences and, moreover, how might we seize the present as the realization for some of these possibilities? Toward what end, for what purpose? The answer for Dewey is at bottom Emersonian, and for Foucault it is Nietzschean (that is to say, it is also Emersonian). "And life itself confided," wrote Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "this secret to me: 'Behold,' it said, 'I am that which must always overcome itself. Indeed, you call it a will to procreate or a drive to an end, to something higher, farther, more manifold but all this is one, and one secret'" (117). And that secret is the interminable process of self-overcoming. In his less dramatic, more prosaic manner, Dewey asserts: "The end is no longer a terminus or limit to be reached. It is the active process of transforming the existent situation. [...] [T]he ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim of living. [...] Growth is itself the only moral 'end'" (*MW* 12, 181).

Existential and cultural self-overcoming are facilitated by philosophical and (more generally) intellectual self-dissatisfaction.³⁶ One must possess not only the courage of one's convictions but also (as Nietzsche insists in *The Gay Science*) the courage to interrogate, in a relentless and radical manner, one's convictions.

The task confronting us, then, is to ascertain just what is the present field of possible experiences and to explore this field here and now, for the sake of unrealized possibilities, transformative experiences. This is what Foucault (at least, in part) means by *an aesthetics of existence*. Though there is not in Dewey's writings an equivalent expression, the form of life to which he is pointing might also be appropriately designated as an aesthetics of existence. *Thought* as an exploration and indeed exploitation of such possibilities takes aim at the heart of the present (cf. HABERMAS, 1986; DEWEY, *MW* 14, chapter 23³⁷).

Thought in this sense is bound up with the unthought and even the impermissible (in some sense, the unthinkable, that which it is not permissible to conceive or imagine), just as experience is bound up with the unrealized and the un-lived. (While the examined life is not worth living, the un-lived life is hardly worth examining.) Of the myriad forms assumed by human learning, the more arduous, disconcerting, and disorienting ones are especially relevant here. The most vital forms of human learning are instances not of strict adherence to socially sanctioned protocols, but of extemporaneous performances in which social risks are inextricably intertwined with personal ones. In any event, to learn is, as the anthropologist Tim Ingold suggests, to improvise a movement along a way of life. This idea is simple enough. But, as Dewey warns, we ought not to confuse the simple with the easy. Human learning is ineluctably an improvisational process in which painstaking training is part of the price to be paid for improvisational facility (or fluidity). To learn to think differently, actually to become otherwise, is the very point of philosophy, at least for some philosophers.

36 In a review of Jean Daniel's *Ere des ruptures* (Paris: Grasset, 1979) entitled "For an Ethic of Discomfort" (*EW* 3, 443-48), Foucault concludes by noting: "Impossible, as one turns these pages not to think of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's teaching and of what was for him the essential philosophical task: never to consent to being completely comfortable with one's own presuppositions. Never to let them fall peacefully asleep, but also never to believe that a new fact will suffice to overturn them; never to imagine that one can change them like arbitrary axioms, remembering that in order to give them the necessary mobility one must have a distant view, but also look at what is nearby and all around oneself. To be very mindful that everything one perceives is evident only against a familiar and little-known horizon, that every certainty is sure only through the support of a ground that is always unexplored. The most fragile instant has its roots. In that lesson, there is a whole ethic of sleepless evidence that does not rule out, far from it, a rigorous economy of the True and the false; but that is not the whole story" (*EW* 3, 448). In her response to the version of my essay presented at the 13th International Meeting on Pragmatism, Salma Tannus Muchail raised a question, in conjunction with Foucault's understanding of experience, regarding his relationship to Merleau-Ponty (see GUTTING 2002). Part of my answer to this question is implicit here.

37 This chapter is entitled "The Good of Activity." In it, Dewey notes: "morality is a continuing process not a fixed achievement. Morals means growth of conduct in meaning; at least it means that kind of expansion in meaning which is consequent upon observation of the conditions and outcome of conduct" (*MW* 14, 194).

The word *pragmatist* conveys to some nothing more than an unprincipled opportunist. But, insofar as Peirce, James, Dewey, and Mead are within the range of referents of this word, it might with greater justice designate the historically critical and thoughtfully responsive opportunist. In other words, the pragmatist is a thinker who takes aim at the heart of the present for the sake of transforming, as much as possible, this actual time as an opportune occasion for some transformative undertaking. Such a thinker is truly an opportunist, one who (in James's words) refuses to be dissatisfied with "a temporarily *useful* eccentricity rather than the definitively triumphant position" (*VRE*, 395, note #8; cf. SEIGRIED, 288; emphasis added). The emphasis decidedly falls on the improvisational act and not the definitive accomplishment, on the delicately attuned response to a unique situation and not the absolutely authoritative reply to some allegedly timeless question. But the candid opportunist realizes, unblinkingly, that, "The world's trial [is] better than the *closet solution*" (PERRY, II, 265).

Our strivings are never more than strivings; moreover, our accomplishments are always partial, precarious, and improvised, and, finally, the willingness to take up anew the task of self-overcoming a sign of vitality no less than an exercise of courage. Thus, at least, spoke Dewey and Foucault on the secret of life. So, too, spoke e. e. cummings.³⁸

in time of daffodils(who know
the goal of living is to grow)
forgetting why,remember how

in time of lilacs who proclaim
the aim of waking is to dream,
remember so(forgetting seem)

in time of roses(who amaze
our now and here with paradise)
forgetting if, remember yes

38 The homes of James and Josiah Royce were on the west side of Irving Street in Cambridge, MA, while that of Edward Cummings was on the east note far from those of his two more famous colleagues at Harvard. Cummings was a member of the Department of Sociology before becoming in 1900 a minister devoted to "social issues." His son Edward Estlin Cummings would become the famous poet "e. e. cummings." In a letter from Royce to James dated June 21, 1901, i.e., a decade before E. E. entered Harvard College, the philosopher wrote to his friend and colleague: "The neighborhood thrives. Mrs. Gregor's adorable child was the principal visitor as I left. [...] [Edward] Cummings has grown in importance immensely. All sorts of carriages with distinguished people stop at his door to consult him. Estlin has almost reached fighting age" (412). In terms of philosophical revelations rather than such personal associations, this letter concludes by Royce revealing: "As for thoughts, of late, I seem to myself to be on the track of a great number of interesting topics in Logic. Those lectures of poor C. S. Peirce that you devised will always remain quite epoch-marking for me. They started me on such new tracks" (422). The lectures in question were ones entitled "Reasoning and the Logic of Things" (February 10th through March 7th, 1898).

in time of all sweet things beyond
whatever mind may comprehend,
remember seek(forgetting find)

and in a mystery to be
(when time from time shall set us free)
forgetting me, remember me

Actually, forget me. But *do* remember Dewey *and* Foucault. Above all, remember them because they help us to appreciate that the goal of living is to grow, the aim of waking is to dream, the here and now holds within itself innumerable possibilities for incomparable fulfillment, the fixation on finding too often precludes the allurements of seeking, and the transcendence of time is itself a movement in – and through – the flux of time. In their quite different ways, these are thinkers who remember in the most timely manner “Yes” – who realize in their marrow that the torpor of existence is shattered when life answers “Yes” to life (cf. JAMES WB, 149),³⁹ when an urgent demand, however subtly express, is met by a passionate response, however crudely enacted. Their affirmations of embodiment, temporality, historicity, and thought can help to emancipate not only our discursive practices but also our all too constraining conceptions of human emancipation. John Dewey and Michel Foucault make facile gestures increasingly difficult and the difficult task of claiming ownership of one’s freed self essentially experiential (cf. MORRISON): they make an untutored impatience for liberty into “a patient labor”⁴⁰ and, in turn, that patient labor into an incomparable adventure of thought. They divulge the thought hidden “even in our most stupid institutions” and “even in silent habits,” for the sake of remaking these institutions and habits. In these regards, then, the pragmatic character of Foucault’s own thought no less than the genealogical cast of Dewey’s project cannot be gain-said. On this occasion, however, my concern has been to bring into focus Foucault’s pragmatism, not Dewey’s genealogies. As much as Dewey anticipated the trajectory of the later Foucault’s thought, Foucault assists us in realizing Dewey’s project in the present. In other words, Dewey’s prescience is matched by Foucault’s pragmatism.⁴¹

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39 Of course, the Dionysian celebration of life can unwittingly be a destructive manner of living.

40 At the conclusion of “What Is Enlightenment?” Foucault confesses: “I do not know whether it must be said today that the critical task requires work on our limits, that is, a patient labor giving form to our impatience for freedom” (RABINOW, [ed.], 50).

41 While Dewey’s genealogies do not match Foucault’s, they are in their own way worthy of careful consideration and critical assessment. Part II will focus primarily on his genealogies.

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