

POWER AND PURE EXPERIENCE: A METAPHYSICS OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

What we want and what we need is education, pure and simple, and we shall make surer and faster progress when we devote ourselves to finding out just what education is and what conditions have to be satisfied in order that education be a reality and not a name or a slogan. It is for this reason alone that I have emphasized the need for a sound philosophy of experience.

John Dewey (LW 13:62)

With this call for a philosophy of experience, Dewey concluded his short book called *Education and Experience*. In this book, he responded to an ongoing debate between traditional and progressive schools over the meaning of experiential education. The debate was waged along long-established lines. Worried that child-centered, experiential education was destroying any sense of the value of inherited institutional practices, traditionalists accused the progressives of a lack of instructional discipline. Progressives, from their side, accused traditional institutions of constraining the natural and spontaneous development of the child. Echoes of this debate linger today, not only in the debate over proper methods of schooling, but in the larger political wars between liberals and conservatives. What is first, the preservation of culture, or the liberation of the individual?

Hoping to dissolve the either-or dichotomy between the two camps and to find new ground for experimentation into democratic modes of education, Dewey laid out a task for philosophers of education. He proposed that the camps could make no progress on the question of experiential education because they lacked the language to talk about experience. What was really at issue in the debate over progressive, experiential education had little to do with whether or not a child should be educated experientially—

experiential education in its most basic sense is a redundancy. The traditionalists and the progressives were both right—and wrong. Education is both traditional and progressive; it must both preserve culture *and* liberate individuals through the reconstruction of experience.

By turning to experience, Dewey offers the possibility of talking about the differential *continuities* between the individual and culture and between liberation and preservation. These continuities can be thought of as of the vague “and” that floats between the two terms; the article that both separates and unites the concepts, articulating a relationship between them. The “and” is a lived relationship; it is experiential—experience includes individuals *and* as cultures; it is in need of transformation *and* in need of preservation. But the “and” here is too vague—what is this “and” that connects these concepts?

To make an inquiry into this question, we need tools, one of which is a description of experience such that the individual and culture, progress and conservation, can be seen as continuities on an immanent plane, as interests marked out and differentiated within a rhizomatic field. It is doubtful that theorizing experience could solve the question of the priority of the individual or culture, of liberation or conservation—history shows that the intractability of this problem is built into the problem itself. The hope that drives the present theorizing of experience is that attention to the qualities of experience can begin a different sort of conversation, one that allows for more intelligent discussion about the meaning, outcomes, and institutions surrounding the slogan of education in a democratic culture.

For those who have grown weary from breathing the bad air of the debate

between progressive and conservative education, perhaps thinking about the characteristics of experience can offer a way of rethinking the assumptions that perpetuate these warring views. The turn towards a theory of experience transforms and revitalizes inquiry because it makes it more attuned to existing habits, practices, and modes of reflection. Instead of perpetuating an endless argument over the ultimate ends of education, we might begin to ask a developmental and contextually grounded question: what sorts of experience should we preserve or create?

Dewey bore no illusions that turning to experience would offer the hope of the elimination of disagreement. The hope was smaller: that the disagreement would take place on the same field of play, at least offering the possibility of intelligent communication and experimentation. By locating the problem of education within experience, the argument becomes experimental instead of intellectual, a matter of histories, practices, and forms of life. It becomes an argument for educators—for craftsmen of experience.

So far, so good. But what, exactly, does it mean to make a turn to experience? How do we know when we've made such a turn? The problem is this: if education names an ongoing process of the reconstruction of experience, what is meant by "experience" must be understood. No matter the ends of education, an experiential education cannot be put into practice without an adequate conception of "experience." And one of the features of experience is that it is constantly changing—outrunning our conceptions.

For this reason, meaningful continuation of a Deweyan project of experiential education needs ongoing work. The educational purposes that we choose will depend upon our ways of understanding the meaning of experience. A metaphysical question

recurs, rising out of our need for intelligent modes of education: in order to identify the features of experience worth preserving and worth changing, we must confront the question “what is the nature of experience?”

So, what does experience look like today? My dissertation combs over Nietzsche’s metaphysics of power and James’ metaphysics of pure experience with an ear for this question. I hope to make the case there is some value to be found. James’ metaphysics of experience and Nietzsche’s metaphysics of power offer us perspectives on reality that allow us to make our educational practices more intelligent. Each of these views carves out a reality in which the educative effects of social institutions are emphasized, and the experience which these perspectives create is a consequential one for democratic social education. In short, the encounter with the metaphysics of James and Nietzsche *gives us an experience* that teaches us to look towards the educational effects of experience.

A further claim I’d like to explore is that James and Nietzsche’s metaphysics teach us about the role that metaphysical views play in creating an educational environment. I intend to make the case that philosophers ought to make a return to a kind of metaphysical articulation of the meaning of experience. This return to metaphysics is a return with a central and transformative difference. There is great value in articulating the meaning of experience in democratic culture if these meanings are evaluated by their effects on education rather than on intellectual, theoretical, or purely rational grounds. That is, the value of a metaphysical view can be determined by the possibilities it creates for the democratic production of meaningful experience.

Finally, from the perspective of the educator, whose job, in some sense, is the

creation and transformation of experiences, it makes sense to approach the issue of education metaphysically. The educator, whether we use the standard example of the classroom teacher or a large institution like Wal-Mart, Exxon, or the interstate highway system, works in and through the medium of experience. An education operates at the level of life itself, transforming habits and modes of being. Despite its philosophical baggage, perhaps there is no better word for the medium in which educators work than “reality” The task of education is so complicated, rich, and meaningful that metaphysical inquiry—inquiry into the general characteristics of the educational medium—is a helpful tool for educators and their critics.

In the first chapter, I look at how a dualistic metaphysics that separates ideas from practices and ends from means continues to structure the way educational institutions are built and the relations between politics and education. I use differences between a Socratic pedagogy and a Platonic approach to education to compare two different paradigms for thinking through the relation between education and the ends towards which it works. I suggest that by moving towards an experiential view of education, educational practices might be made more democratic in an immediate way, and relationships between educational practices and the larger task of producing a democratic culture might be redrawn in more meaningful ways.

In the second chapter, I draw on the ideas of James and Nietzsche to develop in greater detail a concept of experience. I suggest that prior ways of understanding experience have handcuffed the development of a democratic approach to education, the renewal of life by transmission. The inability of educational institutions as well as the wider culture to provide adequate conditions of growth have led to and are reinforced by

conceptions of reality that separate out knowledge from affect, ends from means, use from value, and faith from reason. Since intelligent educational practices require working through all of these aspects of experience, developing a model of reality that does not pit these aspects in opposition, but makes them relations immanent to experience is important for educational practice. To this end, I argue that what it means for an education to be experiential is that it be attuned to six related categories, each of which cuts under and through the oppositions that dualistic metaphysics employs: experience is eventuating, relational, physiological, perspectival, ethical, and herculean.

In the third chapter, I show how this conception of experience can be useful for thinking about forms of education that operate not only in the schools but also in the wider social body. I take up specifically the phenomena of war and religion as educative functions in the cultural plane, looking at how the metaphysics of experience may allow more democratic deployments of these functions. The metaphysics of experience does not take war and religion not as unified concepts that we might affirm or reject. It instead focuses attention on how these functions differentially create different sorts of experiences for different people across the social body. This sort of analysis of war and religion allows for more concrete and plural analyses into the particular forms of life they produce and stifle. This analysis is the work of bringing intelligence to the educative function of war and religion in a democratic way by creating an attunement to the variety of ways of life that might be lived and provoking experimental encounters across these forms of life.

In the fourth chapter, I look at the implications of the metaphysics of experience for schooling. I focus here on two levels of education, the question of how a democratic

school operates at the institutional level and the question of how a teacher might teach more democratically at the level of the classroom. I argue that if education is conceived as the production of democratic experience, then we might see the schools as autonomous sites for experiments into new ways of living. Instead of judging schools according to standards that may or may not bear a relation to the problems that the school community faces in ordinary life, we might look at the schools as specific sites of intervention into the problems that the community itself faces. I look at the KIPP (Knowledge Is Power) schools from this perspective, arguing that such a conception of schooling revalues the teachers, parents and students that are involved in schools, empowering them as agents instead of seeing them as victims. Finally, I consider how the metaphysics of experience might configure the task of the classroom teacher as one of developing “an art of the wild,” looking at how such an art might provide possibilities for making both teachers and students aware of the ways in which their own experiences of education are influenced and shaped. This awareness may provide ways in which classroom teachers can find avenues for resisting the diminution of experience that is common in schools.

In sum, this dissertation will attempt to make a case that metaphysical speculation can be an instrument for renewing commitment to democratic education. Whatever conclusions I draw are, perhaps, more suggestive than conclusion, more provocative than determinative, more experimental than argumentative. These choices have been made, however, because of my own sense that education is more a matter of breaking, openings, and inviting than a matter of finishing, refining, and completing. Life, to be sure, demands both. But the schools today and the culture at large seems to me to be much too finished, much too sure of itself, much too clear about its own concepts and directions. If

this is the case, then perhaps what is needed most for the growth, development, and renewal of life is a little less direction, a little less knowledge, a little less guidance. If this dissertation can contribute a bit of perplexity to the place, time, purpose, and ends of democracy and education, then its pedagogical purpose will have been served.

CHAPTER I

FROM INSTRUMENTAL EDUCATION TO EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

Education as Means to Democratic Ends

Two features mark the question of education today. On the one hand there is vast agreement that education is somehow “broken”. It is “failing”. It needs to be “fixed”. On the other hand, there is hardly any consensus about what this supposed failure means. It is a strange situation. How is it that people of all sorts of backgrounds, political ideologies, parents, teachers, students, administrators, philosophers, school boards, races, classes, and genders agree that education is failing but disagree so vehemently about what exactly the nature of the failure is, how to go about solving it, and what a way of education that is not failing might look like?

I suppose I could take up this problem as well, adding my voice to the cacophony of perspectives. But I am not sure how useful one more voice and one more perspective on the failure of education would be. Instead of looking for a solution, I am interested in examining the *problem*: what is it that has produced the particular shape that problem of democratic education takes? Why is it that education appears as a failure? How does the *problematization* of education as a failing vehicle of democracy function to structure and delimit the way in which education is conceived and practiced in contemporary democratic culture?

Failure is defined negatively by Oxford's dictionary, as a lack of success (Abate, 1998). Failure, then, is a relational term, indicating that some positive success has not

been achieved. To see a thing as a failure is to see a thing as lacking in respect to a purpose that it ought to achieve. In other words, it seems that in order to have clearly defined failure, one must have a clearly defined purpose or "standard". A brief look at some examples will show what I mean. In rock climbing, a poorly placed nut fails if it does not hold a climber's fall. Its failure is in relation to its intended purpose: to protect the climber. A tire fails if pierced by a nail: unable to hold air, it cannot achieve its purpose of allowing a car to roll smoothly. A course of treatment fails if it does not produce health in the affected body. Failure thus implies a clear standard of success. It is made possible by a clear purpose or standard that "sets the bar" against which the failure is made out. It implies that we know what it is that is expected of the object, person, or system that is at work. In other words, having a clear goal is a precondition of failure.

However, such instances of failure do not translate well to the case of democratic education. In education the intuition of failure seems to come without any connection to explicit goals or purposes. It denotes instead a sense of malaise, a kind of general social melancholy that colors reflection on education and educational practices. Unlike our nut, tire, or treatment plan, instances in which the meaning of failure occurs clearly and can be tied to an already existing standard or activity, for education the problem is to find goals, standards, or ideas according to which our vague sense of failure might be settled and be made sensible, tranquil, and intelligible—known, if never fully dissipated. In other words, the failure of education is different from the failure of a tire. It is vague and pervasive: something like a social mood in which we live. Our various projects, plans, and practices do not work to solve the problem of the failure of education but are instead colored and motivated by this problem. Education works *because* it is failing.

If this is the case, if the thought that education is failing is a necessary condition of any action that it may take or any purpose it may pursue, then the solution to the problem of a failing educational system cannot lie solely in tying education to new purposes. If the failure is prior to the purpose, then constructing a purpose for this failure can only provide a false sense of intelligibility with the respect to the failure of education. What might be more useful is to address the question of how it is that education came to be seen as failing from the outset. What might education be if we do not begin from a premise of its failure but from somewhere else entirely?

The present analysis of democratic education is an attempt to transform the melancholy mood that surrounds reflection on a failing educational practice by looking at the habits of thought that inform and maintain such a mood. The implications of such a change will be dealt with in further chapters, but I have found that turning my eye towards the critical problem of the mood of education changes the place, the time, the function, and the possibilities of the relation between democracy and education, dissolving old seemingly ineradicable tensions and opening new and stimulating horizons.

The line of thought that funds the gloomy atmosphere surrounding education seems to run like this. 1) There is a society that is better than the one we presently inhabit. 2) Education is the primary means to this society. 3) Since the society we want does not exist, the means to that society—education—must be to blame. Such a line of thought is full of presumptions. Most basically, and most important for present purposes, this line of thought conceives education as subordinate to general ideas about what the proper society should be. It assumes that the sort of society that education ought to

produce can be made clear, that there is a “we” who knows the sort of society we want from education, that there is a single society that ought to be produced, and that the function of education is to produce it. In other words, a standard or set of standards according to which education is judged to be successful or failing lies *outside* of the vast multiplicity of educational experiences, and still the failure of those ideals to be realized is placed upon education.

I can make this point more clearly by turning to an example. Take the Colorado River. There are many ways to interact with the river. But a way of interacting directly through an experience of the river can be distinguished from interacting with the river as a means to ends that lie outside of the experience of the river. A river guide has, perhaps, this first sort of interaction with the river. Her livelihood depends upon a complicated, contextual, and habitual response to the river. She comes to know it as a various and living phenomenon, and her habits of body and mind are rewritten according to its flow, so much so that she becomes a translator, a communicator, of the river’s demands, patterns, history and modes of life. A master river guide does not take you down the river; she gives you a rich and intense experience of it, one that engages the creative, embodied, emotional, and historical aspects of experience. She is able, by means of this experience to give an intimate experience of the river: to educate. After such an experience, one leaves the river with an appreciation of its life: the multiplicity of its power.

Most who relate to the Colorado River do so in a way that provides no intimacy with it or direct experience of it. Take the city of Las Vegas. Just as the raft guide’s life is absolutely dependent upon the Colorado River, so is the life of the city dependent upon the river. This relationship of dependence however is fundamentally external, for the ends

of the city of Las Vegas have very little to do with the interactions it makes with the river; they are external to the experiences that make it possible. Though life in Las Vegas uses the resources that the Colorado River provides at almost every moment of every day, it is possible to go about life in Las Vegas without having any experience of the river. In this sort of relationship, since there is very little shared experience between the city of Las Vegas and the Colorado River, the resources of the river are used, but in such a way that the relationship between the river and the city are almost entirely ignored. Though their lives are tied inextricably, the city of Las Vegas and the Colorado River develop with almost complete disregard for their fundamental interdependence. The relationship between Las Vegas and the Colorado River is one of absolute interdependence and yet it is one that is almost totally lacking in shared experience. The interaction has no possibility of consummation; it is external in form.

Such is the problematic externality of the relationship between education and democratic ideals. On the one hand we have infallible ideals: Freedom! Justice! Equality! On the other hand the school system: mechanical, unequal, unfree. The ideals twinkle and burst before us: Las Vegas rising out of the desert, promising hope, glory, risk, riches. But these bright ideals also cast a shadow. The logic is impenetrable from a certain point of view: our social ideals cannot be wrong; it must be the means of implementation that we can't quite get straight. But the power that lights those ideals is borrowed from a source that it draws on daily but hardly remembers. Education is the water and light—the very power that makes democratic ideals possible. If these ideals are fading in their power, if the Las Vegas lights are dimming, if education is unable to keep up with the demands placed upon it, then perhaps the problem lies not just with the power source, but with the

blind expansion of the democratic dream. My intent in the following chapters is to reverse this logic. Yes: the Colorado River is and constantly will be a failure with respect to the development of Las Vegas. So, too, will education continue to fail, unless, perhaps, we find the possibility of forging a more intimate relationship between democratic ideals and the educational practices they both serve and guide. This is the way into an analysis not just of how the failure of democratic education may be made into a success, but of the prior question of how the relation between democracy and education came to be problematized as one of failure.

Let me begin this analysis by offering a different way to problematize the situation of democratic education: what if the problem with education were not that it fails to achieve the society that a certain “we” imagines, but that it does so too well? What if the problem were that education has been enormously successful in its quest to produce a certain type of human life, to implement a certain sort of knowledge, to produce a certain type of future? What if the problem were not that education sometimes fails, at the margins, to produce the sort of citizen it sets out to create, but that it too often succeeds? What if educational institutions are such effective instruments for the achievement of social values that they produce a people who see the value of their lives in dead terms: as means to ideals that are all too sure, all too certain, all too mechanical, no matter how “liberal” or “democratic” they claim to be? What if the problem were not that education is broken, but that it *too successfully* prepares our students for the future of today, instead of—and herein lies the uncanny nature of the problem—the future of tomorrow?

To put the point another way, if education is the instrument through which the

future is produced, perhaps a certain amount of uncertainty with respect to the ends, means, and processes of education is healthy. After all, the future belongs much more to itself than it does to the present; when it arrives, it always arrives as a stranger. For this reason, a bit of perplexity, perhaps even brokenness, ought to be a matter of course for education—it is a sign that it takes the future seriously, which is to say that it preserves the element of chance and uncertainty that marks off its difference from the present. Which brings us to the reformulation of our problem: how to distinguish between the failures that are working and the failures that are not.

When Dewey called education the laboratory of democracy, he made use of a metaphor drawn from science meant to invoke the notion of education as an experimental process. There are limits, however, to the metaphor of the laboratory. A scientific laboratory is designed to select a very narrow aspect of experience in order to experimentally test and produce a very narrow and precise sort of knowledge. Successful education, however, must engage with the whole of experience. Its experiments cannot eliminate wildness, change, chance, or multiplicity, and the results it produces cannot be evaluated in the same way that a scientific law might be tested or evaluated. The purpose of education is not only to produce inert facts and knowledges, but also vital, autonomous, and intelligent lives. The value of these lives cannot be taken if the wildness of experience is eliminated, for the very mark of vital and self-reliant intelligence is that it be able to make transformative encounters with the aspects of experience that are not yet—and perhaps will never be—described as known or knowable.

Indeed, if I reflect back on my own education, I can say that my education has been more or less a success in part *because* this education has produced a great degree of

perplexity as to the foundations, intents, aims, and directions of my education. When I refer to this perplexity, I do not mean to denote a subjective and contingent property of an individualized experience, I mean to indicate the ways in which an objective and valuable sort of perplexity has been actively and effectively educated into me. In this sense, though the confusion is my own and is felt with that peculiar urgency that we designate with the all-too-technical term “subjective”, seen from the point of view of the institutions and practices that have produced this experience and even labeled it as my own, this confusion has actually constituted my own very awareness of that education. This confusion has made me want to be a teacher, to reflect on education, and to transform it. I refer to the “personal” source of this present work not because the idiosyncrasies of my personality are necessarily facts that bolster my argument, but because I want to emphasize that whatever critical purchase I have (or do not have) on the problems of education arise out of a particular education, particular interests, and a particular temperament—not a mind, but a life. Perhaps by describing some of the events that have produced this habit of perplexity, what I mean will be made more evident.

Although I have been actively and consciously involved in my education, it was very rarely that I fully understood the purpose of the events that were unfolding around me. This confusion is not constrained by the too-neat division between school and society. I have been told that the place of education is in the schools or in the university. But I have found that many if not most of my most valuable educational experiences—and some of my most stultifying mis-educations—have taken place outside of the purview of the places that we most readily identify as “educational” institutions: schools, colleges, and the like. I studied Latin in school but I cannot read it. I learned Spanish in

the streets of Paraguay and cannot forget it. Was I taught how to pay attention by my teachers or by the television set? Did I learn how to obey the rules from my kindergarten teacher or from my parents or from the police? “Learning” seems to be a dubious way to distinguish the activities that happened inside school from those that happened outside of it. My habits are like my ears: they cannot be closed upon leaving the doors of the school, nor are they opened wider upon entering it. I have been confused with regard to the place of my education.

This confusion also has a temporal dimension. As a young student, I did not know why my education had to serve the future and distant stranger of the adult life that had been imagined for me. Now, as the “educated adult” looking back on his schooling days, I can see the ways in which my education has chosen the life that I live, but I also chafe at the edges of the life I have been educated into. Further, as I approach the end of my formal education, it is clear that my own life continues to change, grow, adapt, and decay. The graduation dates and certificates I have received mark in no clear fashion the temporal boundaries of an educated life. I can mark no precise point where an educated self can be distinguished from an immature self. There have been shifts of emphasis, to be sure, but my education has had no clear end and no clear beginning. Many lessons I learned are still waiting to find a place for their application. I have been perplexed with respect to the time of my education.

The confusion of my education extends to the question of community as well. Who has been in charge of my education? As a child, I felt tensions between the habits of school and the habits of family life. This opposition has been further complicated by the fact that each school has multiple teachers, each parent, grandparent, and brother different

dreams. Outside and beyond those complicated communities, I have the shared experiences of friendship and the unique relation of marriage to thank for my education. But I also learned from those whom I did not count as friends or lovers, from those who I did not admire, from those against whom I set my life in opposition. They, too, have been great teachers. Off of the top of my head, I can list a few other influences: the grocery store and the movie theater, books, bicycles, sports teams, coaches, doctors, the United States Government, Christianity, paganism, Walt Whitman... I could continue. I have been confused with respect to the communities, things, ideas, histories, and events that educate me.

Every teacher knows that the experience of confusion can be deadly to the educational experience or it can animate that experience, depending upon how such ignorance is put into play. As I have already indicated, my purpose in bringing forth this confusion is not necessarily to allay it, for confusion taken in the right ways is essential to education, experience, and also democracy. Indeed, I would like to suggest that one of the crucial problems with education is that there is not enough genuine *perplexity* with respect to education. The meaning, place, time, and space of education is known *too well* and connected *too certainly* with values that are held to be necessary. Education is too readily identified with a certain set of institutions and practices, and this identification works to homogenize educational possibilities as well as to tranquilize and circumscribe the radical educational possibilities that experience in its ordinary forms may hold. Indeed, confusion, ignorance and uncertainty—the certain blindnesses that are a necessary and ineliminable feature of the finite and contingent forms of life we live—can be put to work in ways that enable the production and spread of democratic habits instead

of being put to work in for warring factions motivated by empty names and slogans.

When education is subordinated to the project of fixing values and knowledges instead of seen as a site of negotiation and production of values and knowledges, it is *badly* instrumentalized. Putting the educational machine to work in the service of certainties impedes the intelligent discussion of what education is and how it happens. It badly instrumentalizes because this sort of education works for the goals of the present and does not take into consideration the demands that the future places upon the present. These demands are always unknown and therefore require an education that reaches beyond certainty, or perhaps falls short of it. A badly instrumentalizing education is depicted by Jacques Rancière book, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, and its main feature is the substitution of *too much* understanding from those who would guide education for the understanding of those subject to it:

Unfortunately, it is just this little word, the slogan of the enlightened—understand—that causes all the trouble. It is a word that brings a halt to the movement of reason, that destroys its confidence in itself, that distracts it by breaking the world of intelligence into two, by installing the distinction between the groping animal and the learned little man, between common sense and science. From the moment this duality is pronounced, all the perfecting of the ways of *making understand*, that great preoccupation of men of methods and progressives, is progress toward stultification. The child who recites under the threat of the rod obeys the rod and that's all: he will apply his intelligence to something else. But the child who is *explained to* will devote his intelligence to the work of grieving: to understanding, that is to say, to understanding that he doesn't understand unless he is explained to. He is no longer submitting to the rod but rather to a hierarchical world of intelligence ... thus the child acquires a new intelligence, that of the master's explications. Later he can be an explicator in turn. He possesses the equipment. But he will perfect it: he will be a man of progress. (1991, p. 8)

Through a badly instrumentalized education, hierarchical habits of domination get set up in the name of progress, knowledge, understanding, and enlightenment. If these values refer to and justify a hierarchical system where the masters of culture are juxtaposed over

and against the groping and blind animal child, then such values lead not to education but to domination. The unknown and essentially wild, if fragile, future that the child represents is tranquilized in the name of patient and thorough explanation, cautious and thorough education, knowledge, enlightenment, and truth. The knowledge of the present becomes the disciplinary rod: its power functions mentally, experientially, and psychologically, instead of physically, but these modes of power do not change the ends in view: to obey the moral and epistemic authority of the educational apparatus.

As Rancière notes, this form of the reproduction of social authority is perhaps more insidious than that of the rod, for its disciplinary methods work in the name of progress and enlightenment instead of under the categories of punishment and reward. The disciplinary subject becomes more complex, more precise, and with it the forms of power. Rancière's analysis is not anti-enlightenment; it identifies that with the enlightenment a new regime of power is established, with new techniques, symptoms, and modes of discipline. With the enlightenment, then, comes not just a new set of values, but a new set of educative functions, a new set of instruments for controlling, producing, and liberating the human animal. Enlightenment values are neither good nor bad in themselves. What determines the value of these values is the quality of the relations that are set up in their name. The values of words like progress, knowledge, understanding, enlightenment—even democracy and education—are not determined in advance by logical argument or by definition. These values are determined by the systems of education and the forms of power that they both engage and produce: the practices they select and the forms of life that they make possible.

A badly instrumentalized education, then, is not one that is ineffective in

producing results, but that the results it produces are not educational—that is, they do not lead to growth. The ends that it produces diverge from its means of production. It claims to pursue democratic ends, but implements hierarchical structures. It claims to produce experimental intelligence, but actually draws firm boundaries between the known and the unknown. It claims to create active and engaged citizens, but actually produces passive, docile bodies. It claims to work on behalf of maturity, but actually infantilizes.

For this sort of education, the ends of education are conceived outside of the question of the means, methods, and institutions that make up actual educational practices. Any number of ends may therefore be imagined and used as disciplinary authorities motivating the continued, frenetic production of these ends. Education is preparation for civic responsibility. Or it is a matter of the preservation of certain disciplines of knowledge. Or it is the preparation of the child for entrance into the work force, as a way of maintaining the conditions of economic production. Or it is an instrument of social or racial justice. Or it is a way of stimulating or reducing the possibility of class warfare. Or it is a set of institutions charged with the task of maintaining a position of global and economic superiority over other areas of the globe. Or it is a way of preserving and maintaining a certain attitude towards religious texts. Though the ends to which these instrumental educations are put are different and sometimes incompatible, they share a common denominator: the thought that education is a sort of thing that is done by a specific set of public and private institutions to young people before their habits fully ossify in order to achieve specific and well-defined social interests.

The externality that characterized the experience of the badly instrumentalized

education is a mark of the lack of attention to the immediate experience of the educational subject. Such an education subordinates experience to political, vocational, or moral ends, the value of which is not referred back to the possibilities immanent to the educational experience, but determined according to ends conceived externally to the educative experience itself. Education is not seen as the laboratory in which democracy is produced, but as a factory that churns the variety, multiplicity, and wildness of experience into a democratic product.

By constantly dividing means and ends, such processes of indoctrination cannot help but produce habits that are antithetical to the notion of experimental action that is the criterion of genuine experience. As Dewey writes, “A unified mind, even of the business type, can come into being only when conscious intent and consummation are in harmony with the consequences actually effected. This statement expresses conditions so psychologically assured that it may be termed a law of mental integrity,” (LW 5:68). Such mental integrity is a rare commodity in the world at large, and the educational task is enormous. The present economic crisis both results from this division and is indicated by the lack of intelligent approaches to the crisis. It is indicated by confusion over the very location of the economy, whether it resides in “Main Street” or on “Wall Street.” It is indicated by whether the appropriate measure of the economy is taken by the dividends of corporations or by the development of social life. It is indicated by the battles between investors working to salvage their portfolios and the vast social consequences of the corporate entities that make up those portfolios. On the one hand the economy is an empty game of interest rates, stock values, and credit futures, on the other it is a massive and equally empty system of “jobs,” each equally interchangeable, each more or less

meaningless, its means of production long distanced from its effects. In the end, both Main Street and Wall Street are empty concepts—explain to me which one, again, was Appleby’s and which Wal-Mart? Which the empty game and which the workplace? Which the site of meaningful community experience and which the raging, rapid, tiresome and hurried site of non-experience?

That the difficulty of connecting ends with means in the wider society mirrors the disconnect between ends and means in the schooling system should come as no surprise because the schooling system is not independent of wider social habits. To see the schools as a means to the solution of this problem is, again, to merely reinforce the prevailing habit. What is needed is a new perspective on education, a new habit of seeing and producing the relation between democratic ends and the educational means that produce those ends. It is towards the development of this habit that this dissertation aims.

Education as the Renewal of Life

In opposition, then, to conception of education as means to democratic ends, I offer an alternative way of thinking about education. The point of view that this dissertation will attempt to clarify and defend takes education to name the primary challenge of individual and social life. This challenge is the forging of meaningful growth out of the ongoing encounter with changes that undermine meaningful experience. Dewey’s definition of education as “the renewal of life by transmission” captures this process well. Organisms, both individual and social, use whatever tools they have at their disposal to maintain and renew their lives. This interactive and experiential process of individual, social, and environmental renewal is the most basic meaning of education.

When an encounter with forces, powers, and experiences fails to attain the maintenance and renewal of life, it can be called mis-educative. To be sure, the renewal of life often demands instrumental modes of education. Experience shows that one of the most powerful means of the maintenance renewal of human life is the instrumental adaptation of experience to fixed and cherished values. But, as this dissertation will attempt to show in various ways, just as essential to the renewal of life is the adaptation of fixed and cherished values to new, fragile, and emergent possibilities. An education that is honest to the whole of experience with its grounds *and* its breezes, its trees *and* its pollinations must be as receptive to emergent possibilities as it is to established truths.

In order to distinguish such an education from the dominant instrumental conception of education, which subordinates processes of growth to external and relatively stable values and knowledges, I will name this conception of education *experiential* as a way of indicating that it is receptive to the entirety of experience.

An experiential education conceives education as fundamental to culture, as *both* the instrument through which a culture functions *and* the means by which a culture is achieved. On this account education happens *through* the flourishing of the multiplicity of experiential interactions among individuals, classes, races, genders, sexualities, geographies, languages, cultures, arts, bodies, and minds that is the mark of a democratic culture. An experiential account of education still sees education as an instrument of social progress, but makes the relationship between ends and means the primary object of inquiry, rather than taking political ends as given and making education into a means toward those ends. This way of understanding education, then, changes the sorts of questions that we ask about education, tying the effectiveness of the inquiries that are

made back into educational processes by making them more concrete, power-oriented, and attuned to the complex, contextual, and temporal nature of experience.

The instrumental paradigm of educational thought tends to tie educational inquiry into concerns about how well certain educational processes succeed or fail to produce certain *whats*: political or economic ideals or forms of life. An experiential account of education is attuned to *hows* and *which*. It asks how education happens, which forms of education work to privilege particular forms of life, how certain educational processes lead to forms of liberation or oppression, which experiences are seen as educative or mis-educative, and how to transform experiences from mis-educative experiences into educative experiences.

Conceived experientially, then, education is more than—and less than—an instrument of progress, if progress is conceived teleologically as the transmission of certain knowledges or the implementation of a certain set of values. It is more than the values, knowledges, and habits it teaches. Its task is to reach beyond the given and understood aspects of experience into a vague and yet-to-be known future. But experiential education is also, for this same reason, *less* than an instrument of progress: education, if done right, is essentially uncertain about the progress it is making. Indeed, it looks to understand exactly how notions of progress undermine or make possible forms of experience by taking the experience of education as primary and looking to the forms of possible progress that may arise from that experience. In short, experiential education *happens* through a full engagement with the habits of social life, which are as thickly embodied, sensed, and felt as the texture of experience. The challenge that this happening presents to intelligence is not necessarily how to interpret this happening in relation to a

set of political ideals. The challenges that the happenings of education present are specific, local, and pragmatic: how can *this* situation, this event, this encounter, this interaction be turned towards the ends of the renewal of life? And the radical contingency of these situations, events, and processes cannot be forgotten. Education, growth, and renewal require making forays into the unknown, and the make of such a foray is its essential riskiness, the fact that one may *not* come out of the encounter having been renewed, having grown, having been educated, having made progress.

Indeed, ignorance, bias, perplexity, pain, fear and confusion are just as essential to the thriving relation between organism and environment as knowledge, truth, trust, friendship, and pleasure. An education that looks to sustain the rich intensity of the well-lived life does not seek to eliminate these qualities of experience on behalf of what are taken as certain or foundational values, no matter how enlightened or progressive these values may be, but instead attempts to weave together what is decided and determined with what is sensed, felt, and otherwise embodied into a livable, but never totalized, whole. Instead of taking values or knowledges as the ends of education and setting up institutions and practices that serve these ends, an experiential education locates the ends of education immanently to the experiential plane. It understands education as a matter of the living, experimental, embodied, and social negotiation of experienced events—not as the production of a pre-determined form of life.

Such an experiential view of education presents radically different implications for the way in which societies ought to be ordered. Though these implications and possibilities are different, they are not new. Indeed, it is possible to sketch out some of these implications more clearly by attending to the rough differences between Socratic

and Platonic forms of pedagogy.¹

Socrates practiced an experiential form of education. For the Socrates of the early dialogues, education, experience, and political life were not sharply distinguished. The collection of Socratic texts shows no overarching pedagogical telos. Acting sometimes as a torpedo-fish, as a lover, as a gadfly, and also as a martyr, Socrates constantly varied his persona according to the pedagogical situation posed in the encounter with a kind of experience. His teaching and learning were inseparable with his living. Socrates is attuned to encounters: the pious Euthyphro on his way to court, the all-too-sure Meno and the slave-boy in the market, the Apology at his own trial, the Symposium. His approach is radically situational. His teaching is not meant to reveal a secret he already knows. His methods vary according to the sort of person he meets, the time of day of the encounter, who is watching, who is not, and what is at stake in the conversation. If he has any overarching commitment, it is to the possibilities immanent to the encounter: joy, lust, hesitation, growth, perplexity, friendship, community, tragedy – philosophy.

For the Plato of *The Republic*, education was an instrument of the good, and the good was an object of reflection. Instead of taking the chance encounter as the site of education, Plato attempted to use education to organize experience as a whole according to the idea grasped in reflection. What society needs from philosophy, on a Platonic view, is not a set of encounters, but a steady compass, constant, principle, criterion, or ideal according to which it might be organized. It is the philosopher's task to find this orienting criterion, and it is education's task to orient social life according to the ideal. Thus,

¹ Of course, the differences between Socrates and Plato are vexed in many ways. I do not in any way pretend here to a scholarly or comprehensive account of the "true" Socrates or "true" Plato. I mean only to take them as well known figures whose differing temperaments and styles as philosophers can be seen fairly clearly, if roughly, in a casual reading of the Platonic texts.

instead of an array of sporadic encounters, we find in *The Republic* an architectonic and instrumental approach to pedagogy. Instead of a mode of education Socratically attuned to people, context, and situation, we find in the idea of the philosopher king an image of thought as sovereign over all interactions. Thought does not emerging out of, transform, and return to life; it appears as a ruler over life. Philosophy becomes king, and education the means through which authority finds its material basis. The philosophy and education that were integrated in the Socratic mode are separated and placed in a hierarchical relation.

It is not incidental that the *The Republic* appears after Socrates' death. The death of Plato's teacher is a constant reminder to Plato that the authority of philosophy—and of education—is not given in advance, is often inexplicable outside of a scene of interaction, and must constantly be renewed. *The Republic* is motivated to undo the contingency and tragedy of philosophy, and Plato's answer to this contingency and tragedy is to work out a way to secure this authority. The pure idea needs a method of control, a set of tactics, a way of implementing ideas, a bureaucracy that works to organize and harmonize society according to a guide or rule of thumb that is the philosopher's job to find and to teach. The philosopher's truth is never quite compelling enough; ears must be developed to hear it, and out of the fear of the powerlessness of the philosophical idea, an instrumentalizing education was born. Since the philosopher's idea was necessarily divorced from and prior to the contingent experiences of everyday life, a practice would have to fill the gap between the contingent world and the purely known ideal. Thus Plato transformed a Socratic pedagogy of the encounter into a technique of wholesale social control. The dispersed and plural harmonies of Socratic philosophy are made orchestral: subordinated

to the thought of a social whole with its single song.

By rejecting a situational approach to philosophy in favor of reflection on the absolute end of the social whole, Plato creates the classic problem for dualistic philosophy: the question of the relation between theory and practice. Instead of beginning with the assumption that the work of philosophy happens in and through interactive encounters, Plato begins with the theoretical thought of a pure idea and is then faced with the conundrum of how to “apply” the idea in a world of contingent change, vague processes, unwilling subjects, and ineliminable uncertainty. Philosophy is transformed from a pedagogical way of experience into a two-part question of how to found and ground ideas on the one hand and how to mold experience in the image of those ideas on the other. The founding and grounding is the work of philosophy and theory. The molding is the work of education and practice.

There are two effects of this division. On the one hand, the temporal, the embodied, the probabilistic, the experimental, and the vague, are placed into a subordinate position and made to work in service of the idea pursued in pure reflection. On the other hand, because philosophy no longer rises out of experimental encounters in community life, but instead is a pursuit of transcendental ideals, it becomes remote from practices. Therefore, “practice” becomes synonymous with a rigid and disciplinary form of implementation, while theory becomes the remote and arid pursuit of ideas. In the following conversation with Glaucon, Plato paints a picture of this method and the philosophy of education that would accompany it:

“...[E]ducation is not what the professions of certain men suppose it to be. The presumably assert that they put into the soul knowledge that isn't in it, as though they were putting sight into blind eyes.”

“Yes,” he said, “they do indeed assert that.”

“But the present argument on the other hand,” I said, “indicates that this power is in the soul of each, and that the instrument with which each learns—just as an eye is not able to turn toward the light from the dark without the whole body—must be turned around from that which is *coming into being* together with the whole soul until it is able to endure looking at that which *is*. And we affirm that this is the good, don't we?”

“Yes.”

“There would, therefore,” I said, “be an art of this turning around, concerned with the way in which this power can most easily and efficiently be turned around, not an art of producing sight in it. Rather, this art takes as given that sight is there, but not rightly turned nor looking at what it ought to be looking at, and accomplishes this object.” (518b-c; p. 197)

Instead of a Socratic, experiential encounter that puts knowledge into play with an excess of ignorance, or makes ignorance out of an encounter with an excess of knowledge, education becomes a means of implementing a set of ideas across the entire social body. On this model of pedagogy, the possibility of a Socratic encounter is radically undermined by the abyss placed between the philosophical intellect's knowledge of the eternal truth and the ordinary folks' blind, temporal, and embodied lived experiences. Instead of emerging out of a chance encounter among friends, philosophy is intuited by a divine, sovereign, and sacred mind, and the function of the art of education is to turn the social whole towards the truths divined by the philosopher. Since the truth on a Platonic model is accessible only from a privileged position, an art must be created that might cross the rift between the eternal and the temporal, between the universal and the contingent, between the sovereign authority and the masses subject to it. This art's function is to subdue, orient, and tame the primary chaos of the experiences of the individual and her community by means of enforcing the sovereignty of the eternal ideal. These tactics of control were called education. On this model, the relationship between education and the political ideal is one-sided. The transcendental and rational good intuited by the philosophy sets the law according to which the practical, contingent, and

ordinary practice of education is judged.

In the experiential encounter of Socratic philosophy, the arts of education, philosophy, friendship and politics are related immanently. Socrates is guided by the logic of the encounter. He only knows that he knows nothing. The participants in the Socratic texts are free to come and go as they please. All manner of social classes are brought into the dialogue. All manners and forms of knowing are blended. The *Meno* serves as an exemplary text. Meno asks: “Tell me Socrates, can virtue be taught?” Socrates reply opens the space for an experience, an encounter:

If you want to ask one of us that sort of question, everyone will laugh and say: ‘Good stranger, you must think me happy indeed if you think I know whether virtue can be taught or how it comes to be; I am so far from knowing whether virtue can be taught or not that I do not even have any knowledge of what virtue itself is.’ (71a; p. 59)

Often these words are read as ironic. How could Socrates, the philosopher of philosophers, not know what virtue is? To read these words ironically is to read Socratic pedagogy as a type of leading questioning, not unlike the sort of questions that prosecutors ask witnesses to get them to stumble into the account of the truth that is already known. But such a reading begs the very question that is at stake in the *Meno*. It assumes that the function of philosophy is to disseminate wisdom, to determine what virtue is, how it operates, and how to actualize it in citizens. In other words, it assumes a Platonic model of education.

The text of the *Meno* belies the Platonic model. Meno is bewildered and confused by Socrates—as Socrates is by Meno. Their encounter is one that stretches the limits of language and of conversation. Socrates asks Meno for what virtue is, and he is given “a swarm,” (72b; p. 60). Meno describes the effect of Socrates on him as “bewitching and

beguiling, simply putting me under a spell, so I am perplexed,” and he accuses Socrates of “practicing a kind of sorcery,” (80a-c; p. 68-69). After this moment of perplexity, Socrates takes the lead in the conversation, famously inviting the slave boy in for some mathematics. It is at this point that we begin to see the immanence of the Socratic, experiential education at work. Socrates’ teaching works only after making an encounter happen, only after the encounter with Meno exposes the fact that experiences often lead us beyond any positive conception of virtue or of knowledge. Socrates transforms the philosophical question what is virtue from its tame and sophisticated form into an actual real and living problem. Meno is angered and frustrated. Socrates is also confused. They experience a lack of virtue: the problem is exposed, an encounter is made, and here a specific form of pedagogy might appear.

And so Socrates reflects upon the encounter and what its specific lessons for the problem they have encountered together are. It is only on the basis of the shared experience of perplexity—an experienced form of the problem of virtue—that Socrates and Meno together can begin to make out the relevance and importance of the question at hand. Socrates says to Meno: “I do not insist that my argument is right in all respects, but I would contend that at all costs both in word and deed as far as I could that we will be better men, braver and less idle, if we believe that we must search for the things we do not know, rather than if we believe that it is not possible to find out what we do not know and that we must not look for it,” (86b-c, p. 76). Socrates constructs the lesson of epistemic virtue out of the shared experience of perplexity. It is essential that this lesson grow out of the encounter, and the way in which Socrates articulates the lesson indicates the necessity of this relation. Their shared experience creates an answer to the problem of

virtue: out of their perplexity induced by the lack of knowledge concerning virtue, a virtue is formed.

It is for this reason that at the end of the dialogue Socrates asserts that virtue is not knowledge and that knowledge cannot be the basis of state craft. Instead, he claims that that virtue “would be neither an inborn quality nor taught, but comes to those who possess it as a gift from the gods which is not accompanied by understanding,” (99e; p. 87). To translate into the language I have been developing, virtue emerges out of an encounter beyond the limits of understanding. The question of Socratic education is how to make such encounters possible, for it is on the basis of these sorts of encounters that knowledge, virtue, and forms of understanding that are all too well known are renewed. This is the virtue of philosophy: the promise of a pedagogy that works immanently through experience in pursuit of its renewal rather than externally beneath values and knowledges that are known all too well and are all too teachable.

Such immanence is divided and replaced in Plato by a transcendental account. Philosophy and education, reason and art, truth and politics work as a two-part, weighted dialectic. Philosophy means determining the elements of existence that are outside of the living flux and education means implementing, through the art of rhetoric, a political form that will allow us to live according to them. The true, the good, the rational, and the just—the most noble ends of human life—are equated with eternal being, with *what is*, and are placed in a position of regulative and administrative authority over that which is *coming into being*. Thus pedagogy becomes a matter of regulating and normalizing temporal events through recourse to ideal and eternal values, and the task of education as a political form of cultural renewal becomes one of unifying the polis by turning the soul

of every citizen towards the eternal features of reality, towards that which does not change. The pedagogical experience is split into the dual functions of recollection (knowledge gathering) and implementation (pedagogy). The mind retrospectively recollects the pre-existing forms of knowledge, and the unity of the social sphere is strictly administered according to the recollection of these universal forms.

This habit of thinking about how political education functions has been repeated and reinforced in many forms down through the history of philosophy. It found its most compelling modern incarnation in Kant's moral philosophy and is perhaps most clearly seen in his concept of autonomy, which draws an equivalence between freedom of the will and obedience to the universal law. For Kant, like Plato, success in education means guiding the soul according to principles that have been determined ahead of time.

“Everything in education,” writes Kant in his small treatise *On Education*, “depends upon establishing correct principles, and leading children to establish and accept them.” (2003/1899, p. 108).

Kant was a great admirer of Rousseau, whose *Emile* puts the *a priori* method of education to work in a modern context. To be sure, this more modern good is a more intimate “human nature” instead of the distant Greek *eidos*, but the basic pattern of thinking is still the same. The idea is to find a principle or idea that is free from contingency, chance, and change and to normalize behavior on the basis of that principle. When Rousseau writes in *Emile* that “our true study is that of the human condition,” he seeks the nature behind the culture, the free condition underneath our apparently accidental bondage. This nature is meant to serve as a critical guide for education and a social reform that aims at producing a universal sort of human creature. Here is

Rousseau:

We are born weak, we need strength; we are born totally unprovided, we need aid; we are born stupid, we need judgment. Everything we do not have at birth and which we need when we are grown is given us by education.

This education comes to us from nature or from men or from things. The internal development of our faculties and our organs is the education of nature. The use we are taught to make of this development is the education of men. And what we acquire from our own experience about the objects which affect us is the education of things.

Each of us is thus formed by three kinds of masters. The discipline in which their various lessons are at odds with one another is badly raised and will never be in agreement with himself. He alone in whom they all coincide at the same points and tend to the same ends reaches his goal and lives consistently. ... What is that goal? It is the very same as that of nature. ... Since the conjunction of the three educations is necessary to their perfection, the other two must be directed toward the one over which we have no power. (1979/1762, p. 38-39)

Though the modern conceptions of human nature and the sanctity of the individual are certainly very different from the Greek conception of Being, the long habit of thinking about the goals of education and cultural renewal still faces a metaphysical divide, forsaking the contingent, temporal, and eventuating for the natural, eternal, and static. The function of political education is to turn habits of living away from the contingency of situation and towards a vision of universal, enlightened mankind. In short, our critical practices of education and cultural renewal are thought to be instrumental practices guided by a foundational and metaphysical reality: a Being outside of becoming or a human nature that is prior to the contingencies of culture or experience.

Though metaphysical inquiry and criticism has fallen into disrepute in philosophical circles, this habit of thinking about the way education works is reflected and reproduced still today. Our explicitly educational institutions are, generally speaking, organized Platonically. Their function is to produce an ideal citizen, the forms of which are not intuited by an intellectual philosopher king, but are organized according to

various prototypes in the cultural imaginary. These archetypes seem to come in three main forms. First, there is the archetype of the liberal citizen, whose life is structured around reproducing the highest ideals of the existing culture, at least as manifested by the literary texts that the culture has produced. This image of the tolerant and enlightened democratic citizen funds the goals and practices of the liberal educational institution. Second, in opposition to this image, we find the archetype of the vocational citizen. This vocational image comes in two forms, one of which opposes the class of the liberal democrat, while the other opposes its ideology of leisure. The first vocational education is reserved for the lower and middle classes and is organized around cultivating habits that will allow this sort of citizen to serve the existing social order with a *techne* necessary to the ongoing production of the standard order of things, such as secretarial typing, collecting garbage, or working on a factory assembly line. The second vocational education is reserved for the upper classes and is organized around cultivating habits that will allow this citizen to accumulate as much capital in her lifetime as possible without upsetting the standard flows of capital.

While the institutions organized around these forms do indeed produce encounters, and sometimes lively ones, the institutions that produce them are often structured according to rigid hierarchies that make no room for the evaluation of whether or not experiences that take place in these institutions are educative in the experiential sense. The more urgent the need to produce an informed and engaged democratic citizen, or a soul suited to serve and/or profit from the marketplace, and the more certain and fixed the image of the proper democratic citizen becomes in the public imaginary, the more homogenous, moralizing, and authoritarian—that is, antidemocratic—our

educational institutions become. Indeed, the stress of school, the torrid pace of curricula, the number of tests that one has to pass as a child, the immense and stifling bureaucracy keep the practice of education hurtling by so quickly in pursuit of the goal of producing children who fit into society and harmonize with it that there is hardly time to reflect upon whether or not ours is a society worth fitting into, worth harmonizing with, and whether the vocational or democratic images of life that fund educational practices are even possible or desirable given the state of affairs. The divine act, virtue as a gift from the gods, or just plain experience itself of any meaning is not even possible in such a situation.

Such education is worse than Platonic; it works to implement from the top down a preconceived form of human life, but it takes this form from the most dominant aspects of culture rather than from a rational ideal. Education thus breaks, once and for all, with its task of renewing life, sacrificing its experimental and reconstructive possibilities to the undignified task of reproducing the social order. Democratic education becomes a mere slogan: a practice that reproduces the status quo, rather than one that aims toward growth. To imagine education as a system run by bureaucrats and educational officials for the ends of economic production is to deny the education its metaphysical capacity as an experience to creatively define itself.

When “education” is connected with that other sacred shibboleth “democracy”, our secular religion pays homage to the practices and institutions thereby designated. It should be expected that practices that are neither democratic nor educative look to adopt these names. These are powerful words, sacred totems of contemporary life, and like most if not all sacred totems, much of their charismatic power comes from the fact that

they are so vaguely defined that they can be allied with just about any endeavor, including ones that do not lead to the broad-scale enhancement of lived possibilities that is the real measure of progress in democracy. Such a state of affairs calls for conceptual work. How do we distinguish between the actual site of democratic education and practices that merely co-opt these powerful cultural totems in search of something else entirely? How do we distinguish between education as badly instrumentalized practice of implementing ideas and education as an experimental practice of growth?

This question was a central preoccupation of Dewey's. As a tool for working through the meaning of democratic education, he turned to a third powerful word in the American imaginary: experience. Decades after his famous *Democracy and Education*, he writes in a short text called *Education and Experience* that

What we want and what we need is education, pure and simple, and we shall make surer and faster progress when we devote ourselves to finding out just what education is and what conditions have to be satisfied in order that education be a reality and not a name or a slogan. It is for this reason alone that I have emphasized the need for a sound philosophy of experience. (LW 13:62)

Dewey's turn to experience was an attempt to step out of the sloganeering that is common in writing on education in order to meditate more clearly on what democratic education might look like. The slogans of his own day still persist: some urge for a "child-centered" education. Others want "more standards." Worries persist over whether education is "hard enough" to allow us to "compete" in a globalized economy. Others, of course, want no children left behind. In Dewey's day, traditionalists accused the progressives of a lack of instructional discipline. Progressives, from their side, accused the traditional school of constraining the natural and spontaneous development of the child. Echoes of this debate linger today, not only in the debate over proper methods of

schooling, but in the larger political wars between liberals and conservatives, each of these camps using education as a field for battle among various slogans.

Hoping to dissolve this warfare and to produce a conception of education that finds a sphere of autonomous experience beyond the sloganeering of the culture wars, Dewey turned to a metaphysical issue. His sense was that the political warfare over the meaning and ends of democratic education was tied up with a misguided conception of how experience works. Both traditionalists and progressives conceptualized experience as a means by which each camp could implement the ideal values that they already knew were right. Neither camp took the educational experience on its own terms as producing its own ends, questions, and problems, but conceived education as a mere tool or system for the implementation of predetermined knowledge and values. This instrumentalization of education was the both the condition and result of a larger cultural battleground, as the value of these institutions continue to be determined in terms of theoretically predetermined and often irreconcilable values posited outside of experience. For the traditionalist, these were the set of dominant cultural values and knowledges that had been accumulated through the Judeo-Christian tradition. For the progressives, the right values and knowledges were those that Rousseau located in the radical freedom of the natural and secular individual. For each of these camps, the educative value of any experience was strictly determined by its success or failure to live up to oppositional and even contradictory political ideologies.

Thus the debate over progressive, experiential education had little to do with how education might work as an autonomous site of the creation of democratic experience and more to do with how experience could be institutionally shaped in service of a set of pre-

existing political ideals. As Dewey wrote, education became a mere “name or a slogan”, a stand-in for a set of political values that would be written on the bodies and in the souls of the youngest members of the culture through an institutionalized educational experience. In this way, the school became identified by a simultaneous devaluation of experiential processes within the school—weary teachers need to work harder; bored students ought to pay more attention—and exaltation of political ends outside the school—creating the liberal, tolerant citizen, or the entrepreneurial capitalist ready to defend the economic superiority of the country. The very experiences marked out as *most* educational become the ones that *serve* ideals that are distant from the way those practices work and the experienced lives of the creatures which they take as their raw material. Such a conception of education marks only experiences of submission to ideals as properly educative.

Dewey hoped that a new theory of experience could aid in transforming subservient intelligence to experimental intelligence by shifting the reflection on education *away* from the Platonic question of whether an instrumentalized practice of education ought to serve a set of fixed ideals *towards* a more empirical, but perhaps equally ambiguous, Socratic sort of education. By turning a critical eye to primary, ordinary experience in all of its manifestations and independent of any relation of servitude, he hoped that cultural warfare could be diffused through a set of naïve pragmatic questions: Which sorts of experiences lead to further growth? Which ends does this growth serve? And, how can the experiences that lead to growth be used to critically reconstruct the experiences that either do not lead directly to growth or which militate against its possibilities? Here, surely, much disagreement would remain but the

disagreement would be oriented *away* from how experience might best serve hypostasized and militarized foundational values and the rigid and dogmatic practices they engender *toward* the rougher but more productive question of how raw experience in all of its fertile and multiple forms both educates and mis-educates.

At stake is the democratization of the field of politico-educational inquiry. Such a shift is quite radical. It reorganizes the sorts of institutions identified as educational, gives us a different perspective on what counts as good education and what counts as bad education, and perhaps most importantly brings questions that are normally reserved for an often abstract and technical field of political education down into touch with the workings of ordinary life. This democratization has two related effects. The first is that it brings the critical reflection on the values, practices, and interests that fund educational practices out of a specialized field oriented towards the narrow set of institutions that are marked off from the rest of society by the term “school.” The second is that it renews and reinvigorates the stock of critical insights on education by looking to the parts of experience that are not normally thought of as educational in terms of their educational effects, i.e. in terms of the growth and development of the habitual interactions that make up the plane of experience.

In other words, the perspective that Dewey gives us is one that locates its critical point of view from the standpoint of the possible convergence of three concepts: democracy, experience, and education. Put simply, the work of democratic education is no more and no less than the production of democratic experience. It requires re-imagining the relation between three of the most powerfully cathected concepts in contemporary culture, democracy, education, and experience, and for this reason it

requires ongoing philosophical work.

How to set out a critical opposition between a real education and an education that remains a name or a slogan is not self-evident, particularly given the commitment to the idea that education does just implement values, but is inherently and essentially a practice that invents new values. If the democracy as educative experience is not to become yet another slogan, it is necessary to attend to the complexity and essential indeterminacy of the problem it poses. It is not simply a matter of taking an idea of the nature of experienced reality and then sticking that concept together with an idea of education and another idea of democracy. The question to be determined is organic; it asks how these three terms can be critically reconstructed into a harmonized, experimental and critically functioning whole. Such is the work of the rest of the dissertation.

In this chapter I have suggested that despite claims to the contrary our educational system is neither broken, nor malfunctioning, but that it is working all too well. A faulty conception of the relation between values and practices has led to an instrumental conception of education that threatens to homogenize and level the plane of experience in the name of knowledges and values that remain disconnected with experience. This way of understanding education gives power over the educational experience to institutions and powers far from the immediate act of education: federal bureaucrats, global capitalism, corporate institutions, testing agencies such as the college board, even political philosophers and philosophers of education. It does so by mis-conceiving the practice of education in such a way as to make it subordinate to ends, values, and ways of life that are distant and unrelated to the teachers, students, and communities that are immediately involved in the situations, problems, and experiences that education attempts

to solve. Such a divided conception of education cannot be understood as a practice of involved in the intelligent production and rearrangement of values. To conceive education in this way is to make it into a subservient practice that works to reproduce dominant social habits. The failure of education has no necessary connection to a lack of knowledge standards, lack of money, boredom of students, laziness of teachers, or lack of democratic values. These occurrences are symptoms of a much more profound failure. The failure of education is a failure to empower the people, the students, and the communities directly and inextricably involved in education to take creative control over the production of democratic experience.

I have proposed, alternatively, that rethinking the relation between values and experience offers a more intelligent way to understand how education works. Yet many questions remain unanswered. How exactly does the idea of democracy as educative experience cause us to rethink the meaning of the institutions we presently identify as educational? How does it help us to be more intelligent about institutions or practices that are not now typically thought of as educational? If the value of values is not determined in advance but by and through the leading of one educational experience into another, what is meant by “educational experience”? And how the notion of “experience” not just one more fixed idea that education might be arranged to serve? These sorts of questions turn us towards the task of articulating more fully a way of understanding experience that allows us to depart from the dualistic idea of instrumental education, one that does not need or demand extra-experiential principles in order to address the practical and everyday issue of making social and educational goals.

Completing this task means spelling out more fully what is meant by experience

and how experience itself can be understood as an autonomous site of education, independent of values or principles that would stand outside of it. This is the goal of the next chapter: to craft a different way of viewing experience, one that brings us to the point of view of experiential education: a more intelligent relation between education, democracy, and experience.

CHAPTER II

A METAPHYSICS OF EXPERIENCE

As against this common identification of reality with what is sure, regular, and finished, experience in unsophisticated forms gives evidence of a different world and points to a different metaphysics. John Dewey (LW 1:47)

“Experience”: Some misconceptions

Already in mathematics, and still more in metaphysics, the effort of invention consists most often in raising the problem, in creating the terms in which it will be stated. The stating and solving of the problem are here very close to being equivalent: the truly great problems are only set forth when they are solved. (Bergson 1946/1941, p.58-59)

In the last chapter, I suggested that education has been often misconceived as a practice subordinate to the production of certain ends, goals, and values. I suggested that the habits of conceiving the relationship between educational experience and the ends that it works to achieve as a transcendental relationship have blinded us to the fundamental problem of education. Instead of understanding education directly and immediately as the production of experience, education is commonly seen as subservient system of schools, teachers, and students working towards privileged cultural ends. This way of understanding what education is and how it works blinds us to the possibilities inherent immediately in educational experiences themselves and works to maintain an unnecessary and often mis-educative separation between the actual various practices of education and the ends towards which they work.

In this chapter, I will offer an account of experience that allows for a more direct connection between democratic ideals and educational practices. I will do this in two

steps. First, I will use Nietzsche's criticisms of the dominant metaphysical split between the realm of ideas and the realm of contingent power to note how dualistic pictures of reality are both of product of and help to reinforce practices and institutions that divide the immediate experience of those involved in educational processes from the ends towards which such processes work. Second, I will combine Nietzsche's will to power with James' radical empiricism to develop an alternative way of conceiving experience that highlights the connection between the immediate experience of the educational situation and the less immediate, but no less pressing work of producing a democratic culture. Out of the conversation between these two most experiential and experimental of thinkers, writers, and educators, I will develop a conception of experience whose logics are guided by and developed through a Jameschean account of power and pure experience. In later chapters, I will indicate more specifically how this account of experience reconfigures ways of conceiving the relation between democracy and education in ways that empower communities to work intelligently through their problems.

In his *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, William James lays out the *Weltanschauung*² that orients his critical method, calling it "a world composed of pure experience," (1996/1912, p. 38). By locating the term "experience" at the center of his world-view, James created some problems for himself and for the pragmatic tradition that would build

² I have already equivocated. Is the metaphysics of experience a *Weltanschauung*? A world view? Is it a view on reality? Is it a way of understanding? Is it a form of criticism? Is it a frame of reference? A point of view? Thus the philosophical mind lays its traps, hoping to catch the wild world in a concept, like a skin to collect. I will, purposefully and often, switch between metaphors to try to dance between and around some common philosophical traps on my way to making my meanings. This dance (now that I have made it explicit, will it be seen as a performance?), will most likely perplex as much as it guides, but such perplexity is basic to what experience means. That one word never suffices to gesture towards the workings of the world is a fact of the world, one that my elaboration of the metaphysics of experience is meant to bring into view.

on his insights. In the wake of the dualistic philosophy that James was taking as a critical target, the concept of “experience” as used in philosophical discourse had come to refer to half of a divided world, the subjective half. As often happens in philosophy, which is as much poetry as science, many of James’ critics did not understand that the task that James was undertaking in developing a metaphysics of experience required changing the meaning of the word “experience”. So, despite the fact that James’ reconstruction of the term “experience” was meant to fragment the radically dualistic opposition between a subjective world of inner life and an objective world of concrete facts at the heart of modern philosophy, James and many of his inheritors were written back into this dualistic opposition and accused of putting forth a “subjective” world view.

Although a century of intellectual work has passed since James’ attempt to resignify “experience”, it remains the case that the phrase “metaphysics of experience” runs the risk of being misunderstood in exactly the same way that James himself was misunderstood. I choose to run these risks for two reasons, one polemical, the other practical. The polemical reason is that I believe that any moderately careful reading of James’ own text and of the work that Dewey did on experience in *Experience and Nature* and *Art as Experience* cannot conclude that by the term “experience” these philosophers were referring to the subjective phenomena of the individual mind. By using the word “experience” I stand beside these oft-misunderstood philosophers (and all philosophers who take up the difficult task of transforming meanings) in intellectual solidarity. Perhaps I can also push a few readers from outside of the pragmatic tradition towards their texts, despite the fact that they may appear at first glance to be proffering a philosophy that neglects half of the world.

The second, more practical, reason I use the word “experience” despite the risk of being misunderstood is that “experiential education” is a common term in education literature, particularly among advocates of progressive education. My sense, in reading through this literature, is that much of the confusion and misrepresentation of what “experiential education” looks like or might be goes back to this more fundamental problem of the meaning of experience. The debate over education also often breaks down along the lines of the dualism I hope to criticize through the metaphysics of experience. Experientialists are often seen as favoring a “child centered approach” because experience is seen as what happens inside the child. Educational realists are seen as favoring an “objective and standardized” approach, basing education on the “realities of the world” that lie outside of the child. This dualism is repeated outside the classroom in the battle over cultural values, “liberals” being construed as privileging “subjective” experiences that liberate themselves from the commitment that value requires, and conservatives being understood as clinging to fetishized and external “objective” values from the past.

Of course, as I explained in the first chapter, the nature of the problem of education, both in the school and more broadly, is not whether the standards of education be located in the developing organism or in an ideal metaphysical sphere of ultimate values. The problem requires an entirely different frame in order to be seen and developed, and the metaphysics of experience articulated here is an attempt to continue the development of this frame.

The way of thinking about education that my account is looking to displace can be seen in the way in which President Obama spoke about education in his recent speech to

Congress. This speech is representative of the way in which popular discourses around schooling tend to locate the site of power over education outside of the actual school communities. The schools are commonly theorized as victims to be saved, either by federal programs, by well-informed parents, by rigorous testing, by sums of taxpayer money, by religious or social values, by technology, by scientific research, or by infusing the schools with properly trained teachers. President Obama's (2009) recent speech to Congress speaks of the schools as a "system", whose proper function is made possible on the one hand by "lawmakers and educators" and on the other hand by "the participation of every citizen." The ends of this "system" are expressed in terms of the generation of knowledge, instead of in terms of the generation of experiences, and the value of the knowledge that is the end result of this "educational system" is conceived not in terms of the experiences that it produces, but in terms of its value in the global economy as a tradeable marketplace commodity: "In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity -- it is a prerequisite," (Obama, 2009) Education is here imagined not as plural and vital centers of democratic life, but as a subordinate system of schools that functions, with the aid of the powerful, to produce the answer to a problem that is only stated in economic terms. High rates of dropping out from "the system" are "a prescription for economic decline, because we know the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow."

Here we find a vision of schooling that has been totally subordinated to and by powers that are conceived externally to the school. There is a mention, in passing, of the responsibility of educators, but this responsibility is theorized as one of "making the

system work.” What is this system? If education is theorized in terms of the systematic production of high school and college diplomas, enrollments in vocational and technical schools, and the achievement of educational standards, then the power to create the meaning of education has been co-opted by the discourse of global economic competitiveness and by the corporations, federal education lobbyists, philosophers and scientists of education, and teachers unions who depend upon the perpetuation of the very institutions according to which the effectiveness of “the educational system” is judged. The sort of society that Paul Goodman described as an exaggeration is taken as a given fact:

Conceive that the man-made environment is now out of a human scale. Business, government, and real property have closed up all the space there is. There is no behavior unregulated by the firm or the police. Unless the entire economic machine is operating, it is impossible to produce and buy bread. Public speech quite disregards facts. There is a rigid caste system in which everyone has a slot and the upper group stands for nothing culturally. The university has become a mere training ground for technicians and applied-anthropologists. . . . If we sum up these imagined conditions, there would arise a formidable question: Is it possible, being a human being, to exist? Is it possible, having a human nature, to grow up? There would be a kind of metaphysical crisis. (1960, p. 133)

In other words, to imagine schooling as a system run by bureaucrats and educational officials for the ends of economic production is to deny the schools their metaphysical capacity as experiences to creatively define themselves. It is, essentially, to strip the experiences that happen in the school of their power by locating their conditions and ends in powers that lie far from the immediate experiences happening within the schools. To characterize the schools in this way is to ignore their communicative function, to deny their power not only to pursue democratic ends but, as communities in their own right, to produce, reconstruct, and re-imagine the possibilities (or lack thereof) of democratic experience.

The metaphysics that is offered here is intended to problematize education differently. It does not look to ground an educational agenda or fix an educational system; it is not foundational in this sense. Its intent is to draw attention away from the dominant metaphors that guide our thinking about what education is and how it works in order to bring the general features of *actual and living* educational experiences back into view. Perhaps it is best thought as a sort of metaphor-machine oriented towards what Bergson describes as “invention”: the production of new habits of relating to the world, new ways of encountering and working through problems. In this sense, what I offer here is indebted not only to the ideas of both James and Nietzsche, but also to their philosophical spirit, which to my mind is fundamentally inventive. Any reader that is not attuned to the effort of invention will miss the essential shift in perspective that is the challenge of this sort of metaphysics to produce. The metaphysical speculation that I here undertake with the help of James and Nietzsche is not best understood as providing an irrefutable argument for the true nature of the world. It is, instead best encountered as a pedagogy: an attempt to transform perceptions. I do not intend to offer “the correct” way of envisioning the nature of reality, but instead to offer a view of reality that shifts the nature of the relationship between education and democracy, making it more direct, more concrete, and indicating ways in which the control over this relationship might be put more directly into the hands of those people it most affects.

I am more interested, therefore, in beginning discussions, in tracking emergent possibilities, and in supporting new forms of experience than in drawing conclusions. I make no claim that this way of seeing reality is the only or even the best way of understanding what reality is or how it works in an absolute sense. I do think, however,

that this way of understanding experience allows us to reconsider the relation between democracy and education in a way that may lead to more intelligent constructions of the problem of democracy and of education. Whether, in actuality, this way of thinking about the nature of experience actually will lead to better outcomes for those who choose to see the nature of reality in this way remains to be shown in later chapters of this dissertation and perhaps in future and current experimental endeavors with which it is the intent of this work to inspire and resonate. I say all of these things as a way of heading off a certain type of reading of the metaphysical reconstruction that I here attempt. The effects of the reconstruction I here offer are not yet determined because the manner of conceiving experience that I here offer has only rarely—if ever—been tried in any wholesale fashion, though I will of course be drawing on similar attempts to revision the way in which we approach education. Thus the success of this account ought to be judged by the sorts of thoughts, experiments, and *experiences* that it spurs, rather than in the conclusions that it draws. I believe this form of judgment is consistent with both the conception of metaphysics that I here offer and the conception of democratic education that it works to invent, clarify, and inspire.

Defining Experience: Orienting the Metaphysical Inquiry

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple, or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed. In this sense it is opposed to recognition. (Deleuze 1994/1968, p. 139)

The first challenge in developing a metaphysics of experience is to give a definition of experience. The purpose of such a definition is to guide our attention

towards the phenomenon to be studied. This challenge is not straightforward, however, for what is at stake in the discussion is exactly this very question: what is the nature of experience. All metaphysics must admit to the problematic nature of its starting point. Critics of metaphysics always have two argumentative possibilities available. They can, on the one hand, deny that the account given has anything to do with the entity being described. So, a critic will always be able to make the claim that the account I am giving is perhaps adequate to some sort of phenomenon, but surely this phenomenon cannot be called experience, as experience is—and always should be—known by some other word or phrase: “a bundle of sense impressions,” etc. The other critical tack employs a similar strategy. The critic can always claim that a metaphysical account begs the question. That is, it assumes the very way of understanding reality that it attempts to demonstrate as true.

However, these critical strategies also have their assumptions. They assume that the purpose of giving a metaphysical account is to secure that account against all other possible accounts. Or to argue that such a way of conceiving the world is somehow “necessary” or logically compelling. This is not my purpose. My purpose in the following is to indicate the ways in which understanding the nature of experience in particular ways leads us towards certain ethical, political, and pedagogical outcomes—and away from others. The merits of the account developed herein do not stand or fall on their own terms, but in terms of whether and how they may allow those who encounter it to revision the possibilities and impossibilities involved in democratic education.

Understood in this way, to write a metaphysics is to produce, clarify, and deepen a set of ways of relating to the world. In this case, the manner in which these ways of

relating will be produced is through the articulation of the general features of an as yet unknown (but hinted at in certain ways) thing – process – activity – action – affect – stuff – world: when concepts multiply, for clarity's sake, let's stick to the term "experience." It is, then, to produce a sort of "knowledge" about the world, but the value of this knowledge cannot be expressed in terms of its adequacy to a pre-existing world, but instead in terms of the ethical and social consequences that follow from this way of knowing. In other words, the point of metaphysical knowledge is not to identify or represent the world. It is, as Marx expressed, to *change* the world by accentuating certain things, processes, and ideas and de-emphasizing others. Metaphysical accounts, then, are views, but they are also activities. They are selective and interested: their function is to carve out and emphasize certain aspects of life.

The metaphysics that follows is thus set by the political and educational problem identified in the first chapter: the challenge of understanding education in such a way as to make a more intimate relation between the immediate experiences of those involved in educational processes and democratic ideals. It is this demand that structures the way of inquiry and guides attention towards particular features of reality and away from others. To speak of the problem that motivates inquiry into the general features of experience is already to begin to explore the terrain of experience itself: one can tell a great deal about the general features of a mountain by the goal that motivates its exploration. Indeed, when speaking of the *experience* of the mountain, it is impossible to separate out the mountain itself from the way in which it is explored: a geologist finds a history of movement in its ancient stones, a botanist finds crusty lichens, a runner finds a heart beat and burning calves, the hiker her view.

To discuss methods of metaphysical inquiry, then, is to discuss a manner of experience: how uncertainty as to the features of reality is experienced, how metaphysical knowledge might itself produce the experience of the satiation of that desire, and what further experiences this satiation may engender. It is also to begin to give a positive account of what experience is because the terrain of habits that make up experience, viewed from the perspective of their potential and kinetic energies, is the same ground through which the waters of experience flow. The particular experience with which I am dealing here—the philosophical desire to understand the nature of reality—is muddy water that flows in a deep canyon. “All men by nature desire understanding,” Aristotle’s opening words to his metaphysics mark the headwaters of some strong currents of experience (1979, 12; 980a). Let’s give in to this desire for a bit, at least enough to catch the current. But let’s also take our time on its river, explore the eddies and currents, chart the drops, examine the canyon walls as they go drifting by. We might even find a swimming hole or two.

Since the time of Plato and Aristotle, it is fair to say that metaphysical speculations on the nature of being have carved deep canyons in experience, and though the idea that philosophy ought to provide metaphysical foundations for our practices has fallen into some disrepute, the effects of the history of human thought—and the institutions, habits, and practices that are indistinguishable from its historical course—continue to turn the “great flywheel of society.”

The suggestion that ways of exploring experience are intimately connected with the results of the exploration begins to undo the dualism that is a primary obstacle to the metaphysical view I here expose. Although it is a fact that the desire to understand is

experienced with the realities it articulates throughout the history of metaphysical reflection, in practice this reflection has often held the “reality” it hopes to understand, and the “desire” to understand reality apart. Reality was imagined as a kind of object, stuff, or substance solid enough to provide a foundation. It was taken to be different in kind from the more fluid process of inquiry, which empirically speaking has been a flowing, rocky, contentious, and often *failed* endeavor to draw meaning out of that indifferent substance. The gathering, changing, risking hypotheses, and drawing conclusions had to be thought of as different from the real because these flows could be *false*—and the real, no matter what other aspects it might have, could never be thought apart from the true. After all, the primary *function* of the concept of the real has been to provide a standard according to which a dividing line is drawn between right and wrong, between true and false, between sanity and insanity, between rock and river. The story that justifies metaphysics is something like the following: the reflective organism needs an accurate accounting of the environment it faces: or else—what? Chaos, psychosis, degeneracy, irrelevancy, instability, danger, death, fear. In this conception, metaphysics works like the police: it marks the boundary of civilized reality, saving us from chance encounters with the more degenerate, chaotic, and essentially *unknown* aspects of ourselves.

Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents* (2002/1930) is as good a marker as any of the emergence of a wide variety of intellectual efforts to read the boundaries between the known and the unknown aspects of experience as riparian scenes of vital interactions rather than as a stark contrast between hostile and unrelated opposites. More recently, the flows of globalization have further vexed the firm boundaries between the known and the

unknown, between the barbaric and the civilized, and between the foreign and the domestic. When a government that at one moment prides itself on offering a home to the tired and the poor, contemplates at another moment building a wall in the middle of the desert to stymie the flow of those same masses, an analysis of the interactive ecology of the boundaries between civilization and barbarism, between democracy and tyranny, and between knowledge and the unknown becomes more than an intellectual exercise. It should be emphasized that if a new manner of conceiving what experience is indistinguishable from the appearance of new realities within experience.

Therefore, though the habit of separating the manner in which reality is approached from the nature of the reality this approach finds is one of the deep metaphysical habits I'd like to reconstruct. Like all habits, it can change. An accurate account of the reality is a powerful tool of control, but the *experience* that motivates and produces this accuracy makes its own claims for inclusion in the conceptual apparatus of metaphysics. For this reason, I will use as a primary methodological principle in the present development of a metaphysics of experience the idea that the *experiences that demand* an accurate and intelligent account of experience must find a central place in to the metaphysical ecology of experience. This principle demands that the uncertainty, lack of control, misunderstanding, and suffering that are often taken as mere signs or symptoms of a lack of metaphysical understanding be reformulated as real characteristics of the experienced world. These aspects of the world are not incidental to metaphysics; they often—along with more positive affects like wonder, joy, and curiosity—directly motivate the search for a true conception of reality. Indeed, if metaphysics ignores the precarious nature of the world in its pursuit of the stable and enduring characteristics of

experience, it finds itself unable to account for the very existence of its own practice. It is out of the precarious and problematic world that the need for a true account of the world arises. Thus, any metaphysics that articulates a world truly, finally, and without error, must deny the very features of the world that generate reflection in the first place—the *natura naturans* that is our desire to know.

My point is not that prior metaphysical attempts have failed at their task; most have succeeded in articulating quite well coherent and understandable conceptions of reality. These theories had a different task: one of securing foundations for moral, epistemological, and political claims. This task caused them to over-emphasize the sharp edges of the world and underemphasize the fluid peripheries. Motivated by the desire to provide stable foundations, they understood the task of metaphysics to be to give an intellectual account of the eternal features of reality.

If, however, the project that motivates the articulation of the general features of reality is not to provide a foundation, but instead is articulated terms of the ethical-political-pedagogical function of the *generation* of new experiences, namely in terms of the democratic project of producing flourishing interactions between organisms and their environments, then the practice of metaphysics is also transformed. If the goal in articulating a theory of experience is to produce a conception of reality that motivates growth towards a vibrant, plural, and growing culture, then it is necessary to reimagine what it means to understand reality and reconsider the reasons why we desire this understanding. To develop a vital, pedagogical, and transformative conception of reality is to connect metaphysical inquiry with and through the wide, various, and fluid ranges of experience. Understandings of the real, then, like pedagogical practices, must be

precarious *and* stable, foundational *and* adaptive, in order to reflect *and* motivate the full breadth, feeling, and activity of living experience.

Further and most crucially for the present purposes, this change in perspective on what it means to understand reality *produces* a different reality. How a methodology works is inseparable from the results it achieves. This is a fundamental feature of experience. The world that appears to the naked eye diverges from the one that appears through the lens of a microscope. The U.S. border appears one way from the standpoint of Lou Dobbs' CNN watchtower and another way from the *latino* rivers that flow from familiar hardships to unknown ones. So also, the world that appears from the standpoint of the quest for an image of reality satisfying to the contemplative intellect diverges from the world that appears from the standpoint of the quest for a living and embodied democratic culture. Intelligence takes the encounter with the experienced world from the perspective of what it wants to learn from it. This taking, this selecting, this responding, this encountering, accentuates certain features and deemphasizes others. The view of experience that this chapter has already begun to articulate has understanding as its goal, but this understanding cannot itself be understood without considering the consequences of understanding in terms of the dissemination of meaningful living. In other words, once again, the value of the metaphysics here articulated ought to be determined according to the extent to which it enables the spread of a genuine democratic education, one intimately related to the movement of human desires and the experienced realities that are the life-blood of those desires.

Experience as Eventuations of Power

...the scarecrow of the ancient philosopher: a plant removed from all soil; a humanity without any particular regulating instincts; a virtue that “proves” itself without reasons. The perfectly absurd “individuum in itself! unnaturalness of the first water—

In short, the consequence of the denaturalization of moral values was the creation of a degenerate type of man—“the good man,” “the happy man,” “the wise man.” (Nietzsche 1967/1911, §430; p. 235)

The task before us is the articulation of a conception of experience that foregrounds the task of democratic education. I have indicated that this education is inhibited by a divided conception of reality, one that separates out the democratic ideal from the methods and practices that bring that ideal into reality. Such a divided reality has made the question of the relation between education and democracy into a theoretical problem, a problem, literally of *theoria*, of how we see. The challenge that the following conception of experience must face is therefore also theoretical. It must produce a different way of seeing the relation between ideals and practices, one that “solves”—or at least “dissolves”—the theoretical problem of the relation between democracy and education by identifying the concrete and experiential forms that this relation takes. If the metaphysical theorizing is successful, the theoretical problem of the relation between democracy and education will be transformed into a set of practical problems. Pragmatic—localized, active, engaged—“hows” will be substituted for the metaphysical—universal, abstract, speculative—“what.” Experiences—living, experimental, risky—will be substituted for abstractions—arid, distant, safe.

The most direct way to avoid the hostile relation between ends and practices that is characteristic of an account of a dualistic view of experience is to take a concept that relates to both ends and practices, but privileges neither, as the most fundamental characteristic of experience. The concept that will perform this function is the concept of

events. Therefore, I will take the first and most basic feature of experience to be that it composed of *eventuations*.

What is an eventuation? It is a relation of continuous transition. James writes, “to be a radical empiricist is to hold fast to this conjunctive relation above all others, for this is the strategic point, the position through which, if a hole be made, all the corruptions of dialectics and all the metaphysical fictions pour into our philosophy,” (1996/1912, p. 48). Eventuations are the formation of conjunctive relations. If experience had a favorite word, it would be “and”—its grammar works not only through the connection of subject, verb, and object (this is only one kind of eventuation, one form of conjunctive relation), but more fundamentally through the multiplicative production of events: this and this and this and that and this. And. Eventuating, the indifferent overproduction of relations, is the most basic feature of experience.

Therefore, to say that experience is a matter of events is to say that a general feature of experience is that it *happens*. Eventuations are temporal processes that emerge out of a past and into a future. Experience as event is experience-in-time. The way in which this “in” is thought is important. Just as experience is not an underlying and eternal stuff or substance, temporality cannot be conceived as a container or as a pure flux or flow. Time is as much in-experience as experience is in it. Though time is often associated with the spinning of clocks on a wall, what gives the movement of the arms of a clock its meaning is not only the regularity of that movement, but also the openness and indeterminacy of the events that this movement would regulate. The finishing time of the marathoner is a meaningless number unless it forms a relation with the qualitative urgency and intensity—the duration—of the experience of the race. The *subjective*

urgency and intensity is impossible to understand outside of its interaction with the marathoner's *objective* goal and her possible failure to reach it goal. The fencepost-passing of hours, sunsets, months, or centuries enclose a happening field within which the rhythms of occurrences lay like waving grass and buzzing bees and the settling of dew. Breaks *and* continuities make its rhythms.

To say, then, that an event is temporal is to say that it is characterized by an intimate interaction between practice and ends-in-view. Making sense of the "passing" of time requires referencing *both* the qualitative flux of that passing *and* the more measureable ends towards which (or against which) such passing moves. Making events fundamental to experience means resisting the temptation to give either the subjective or the objective aspects of any occurrence special consideration either as a "condition of possibility" of experience or as the sole location of the meaning of the event as it passes. These distinctions are real enough, but their function is not to draw rigid and unbreachable boundaries. Their work is pedagogical; their function is also characterized by movements in time: discerning, reconstructing, revising, accepting, resisting and recreating. Intellectual distinctions are means of embodied and practical understanding, tools for reflecting on events and orienting them towards future possibilities. Representations literally "take" from the event, reshaping it in light of and as a matter of experience's ongoing eventuations.

Here we find the second feature of experience. Experience is relational. It is composed of horizontal interactions, pulls and pushes, transformations, growths and degenerations. The metaphysics of experience takes the *relation* between subjective desire and objective outcomes as a real event. It refuses to impede intelligence by

creating a metaphysical gulf between the desire to know reality and the reality that such desire takes as its object. It also takes objectively real things in their connections with the functions and productions of subjective desire. In other words, the first principle of a metaphysics of experience is that it locates all experiences—subjective and objective, private and public, individual and social, natural and artificial, real and imaginary, known and unknown—as events on the same metaphysical plane, the plane of pure experience.

This plane is demarcated by the small and seemingly inconsequential word: the “and.” As Raymond Boisvert notes in his analysis of Dewey’s notion of the event, it does not transcend, but “encompasses both ‘situation’ *and* individual” (1988, p. 54). The “and” marks out the range of experience: marking the ways in which reality is a set of “withs.” Such is experience: this comes *with* that. This *and* that. The qualities of these “withs” are various: some things are with each other only externally, as a hammer might lie with an orange. Others are with each other intimately, as a robin with her blue eggs. Others are with each other indifferently, as a student is with the fluorescent lights over her head. To take experience as eventuations is to see it as a tissue of ands.

This tissue of eventuations is split into two specific kinds of eventuations. The first sort are epistemological, the eventuations we call knowledge. Knowledge is a certain type of relation, made out of a wider field of experience, but it does not characterize all of experience. As James puts it, “Knowledge of sensible realities . . . comes to life inside the tissue of experience,” (1996/1912, p. 57). In other words, known objects are specific sorts of experiential productions. They come to life as eventuations. Further, knowledge is immanent to the experiential plane: its place is as an eventuation “inside the tissue.” It holds no intrinsically special or authoritative site within experience. To know something,

then, is to be *with* it in a certain way: “In continuing and corroborating, taken in no transcendental sense, but denoting definitely felt transitions, *lies all that the knowing of a percept by an idea can possibly contain or signify*,” (1996/1912, p. 56; italics in original). Just as Darwin’s evolutionary theory explains the appearance of living species from the point of view of an evolutionary production, the metaphysics of experience sees forms of knowledge genealogically: as the “continuing and corroborating” of experimental processes, driven by the interactions of events. Objects of knowledge are formed out of the interactive processes of eventuation and therefore indicate lines of history and further development, rather than static truths.

Therefore, the truth-value of knowledge is best understood from a temporal point of view, from the standpoint of the knowledge’s relations: what sorts of “ands” does the “continuing and corroborating” that is the special relation of knowledge make possible? This view of experience places knowledge back in touch with power: the question of what knowledge is cannot be separated out from an analysis of what knowledge does. In other words, the function of knowledge is not merely to *explain* power; it is power: the power to make relations, to continue and corroborate. Just as experience is experience-in-time, knowledge is knowledge-in-power.

Thinking, then, which is the active element of the epistemological dimension of experience, does not begin with the intention and purpose of a subject and end in an external object. It does not bridge two distinct metaphysical realms. Thought is the “continuing and corroborating” that rises out of the attempt to qualitatively change the character of experience, to give the vast multiplicity of eventuating “ands” the character of control. To interpret thought as the controlling feature of reality is to understand the

situation backwards: thought is an attempt to control that rises out of the indeterminacy and essential multiplicity of the relations of experience. Its clarity is not a sign of its truth, as Descartes would have it; clarity is a mark of the power of a thought to keep the indeterminacy of experience at bay.³ Just like any other feature of experience, clarity of intent or purpose is a sign or a symptom of other, plural, and unconscious powers, and its meaning must be interpreted in terms of those powers. Thought is a specific sort of eventuating; it is a way of transforming a particular “and” of experience into a more intimate sort of relation, the knowledge relation.

Our conception of knowledge as eventuation implies that the epistemological dimension of experience is not the whole of experience. The “continuing and corroborating”—the controlling—quality of the knowledge relation is itself a relation; it is *with* another basic element of experience. There are eventuations that spur the formation of the knowledge relation. There are eventuations that defy the formation of the knowledge relation. There are eventuations that are indifferent to the formation of the knowledge relation. Nietzsche’s concept for these sorts of non-epistemic eventuations is the *physiological*.

The third general feature of experience is that it is physiological. As Nietzsche writes, thought emerges out of this dimension. Knowledge is subject to, dependent on, and formed by elements of experience that are prior to knowledge.⁴

³ Compare also Peirce’s criticisms of the method of tenacity and the method of authority in “The Fixation of Belief” (1992/1877). Peirce describes in this essay how these two methods are linked. When the tenacity with which an individual clings to the clarity of his belief fails on its encounter with other, alien, indecipherable beliefs, the tenacity of the individual becomes social. But the will of the state is no more or less arbitrary than the will of the individual; it has only more power to terrify. Peirce postulates an externality of experience independent of thought as the first principle of science; the function of this principle is to make the clarity of thought hesitate as to its autonomy. It points outward from thought to what is not clear: to what it cannot, may not, might not yet determine.

⁴ This notion that knowledge and ignorance can be organized and transformed by elements of experience

Starting point the *body* and physiology: why? – What we gain is the right idea of the nature of our subject-unity – namely as rulers at the head of a commonwealth, not as ‘souls’ or ‘life forces’ – and likewise the right idea of these rulers’ dependence on the rules and on those conditions of order of rank and division of labour which make possible both the individual and the whole... What’s most important, however: that we understand the ruler and his subjects as being *of the same kind*, all feeling, thinking, willing –and that whenever we see or sense movement in the body, we learn to infer a kind of corresponding, subjective, invisible life. (2003, §40[21]; p. 43-44)

The “physiological” in Nietzsche’s text does not refer to body of knowledge produced by science. Knowledge is the part of experience that has been past-participled: reflected, subdued, controlled, and organized. However, the physiological events of experience operate according to another logic entirely. Their grammar is the wilder and more experimental *gerund*: undergoing, eating, feeling, digesting, moving, defecating, copulating, pleasuring, suffering. It is out of these elements that the demand for control that makes up the will to knowledge is derived. In other words, the physiological aspects of experience are the eventuations of experience that are not recognized but are *sensed*. They operate according to a physio-logic rather than an intellectual logic. These relations are resistant to the operations of knowledge, but they are essential and fundamental to the operation of intelligence.

This point is crucial because it begins to bring forward the nature of experimental pedagogy. It is customary to say that the experimental method is the best way towards knowledge. However, if knowledge is only one aspect of experience as events, then a fully experiential experimental method cannot have as its only goal the production of knowledge. What is essential is the *quality of the interaction* between knowledge and the

that lie outside of the epistemic relation is brought forward both by Carole Pateman’s work on the Sexual Contract (1988) and Charles’ Mills work on the Racial Contract (1997). Both of these theorists work to show in quite brilliant and insightful ways how the non-epistemic functions of experience can work to transform and pervert epistemic functions—and vice-versa.

physiological aspects of experience, the way in which these relations are with each other. Since both of these aspects are ineliminable aspects of living experience, the question of pedagogy is not how to declare war on the physiological on behalf of the epistemological. The central pedagogical concern is with the maintaining the interaction between these two basic elements of experience. One side of the interaction cannot be sacrificed for the domination of one side over the other. Therefore, the experimental method properly understood does not serve the production of knowledge. It *names* the experiential interaction, the continuing and corroborating *and* the stupefying, bewildering, and wondering that marks the relations between knowledge and the physiological aspects of experience. This interaction is the very soul of the reflective experience. The question of pedagogy is how to make this interaction vital instead of hostile, leading to the enhancement and development of the powers and capacities of experience instead of to their diminution or death.

By giving the bodily aspects of experience their due and by taking the event of interaction between the epistemological and the physiological aspects of experience as primary, the metaphysics of experience radically extends the purposes of the experimental method. By bringing knowledge together with the a-known, the metaphysics of experience produces what Deleuze (1994/1968) calls a new “image of thought,” one that imagines the function of thinking as the production of an experience: an *encounter*. Knowledge is not the end of thinking. Thinking names the encounter *within* experience among the logics of the past-participled knowledge and the gerunding a-known physiological. In other words, we must not only wring knowledge out of events, but we must also, experimentally, put this knowledge back into relation with the affective

and power-laden dimension of experience. If knowledge is a type of power to control, it is also the subjection of knowledge to powers outside of control that produces the thriving interaction called experimentation that leads to the production of meaning. The meeting of control with what is not in control; the forms of relation that are produced out of this meeting: this is the nature of the encounter, the pedagogical task that is demanded out of the conception of experience as eventuating, epistemological, and physiological.

The fourth characteristic of experience is that it is *ethical*. If events, as interactions, are essentially experimental encounters, then the outcomes of these encounters are not matter of epistemology, of the limits and possibilities of knowledge, but a matter of *ethics*, a matter of *how* the encounter is made. The ethical terms “good” and “bad” refer to the outcome of the encounter; they are means of directing its further eventuations. The encounter demands not the known truth of an accurate recounting, but the formation of a life. As Deleuze writes: “A life is everywhere, in all moments that a given subject goes through and that are measured by given objects: an immanent life carrying with it the events or singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects,” (2001/1995 p. 29). Experience as continuous transition, as the interaction of the epistemological and the physiological, demands a pedagogy: the construction of a life.

Here is Nietzsche:

Learning to *see* – habituating the eye to repose, to patience, to letting things come to it; learning to defer judgment, to investigate and comprehend the individual case in all its aspects. This is the *first* preliminary schooling in spirituality: *not* to react immediately to a stimulus, but to have the restraining, stock-taking instincts in one’s control. Learning to *see*, as I understand it, is almost what is called in unphilosophical language ‘strong will power’: the essence of it is precisely *not* to ‘will’, the *ability* to defer decision. (1990/1889, p. 76).

The first ethical principle that the pedagogy of life demands is that one must affirmatively

resist the encounter. The encounter is an interaction, a play of powers, and in order to engage in this play a degree of difference is necessary. As an interaction, the encounter is characterized by being *between*, and the space of the encounter is opened up by what Nietzsche (1992/1888) calls elsewhere “the pathos of distance.” Thus, the first preliminary schooling in spirituality, the schooling that makes further learning possible is *not* to react. Nietzsche continues:

A practical application of having learned to see: one will have become slow, mistrustful, resistant as a learner in general. In an attitude of hostile calm one will allow the strange, the *novel* of every kind to approach one first – one will draw one’s hands back from it. To stand with all doors open, to prostrate oneself submissively before every petty fact, to be ever itching to mingle with, *plunge into* other people and other things, in short our celebrated modern objectivity, is bad taste, is ignoble *par excellence*. (1990/1889, p. 76)

The difference between resisting and reacting is fundamental to an ethics of the encounter. To react, to “stand with all doors open,” to “plunge into,” to “mingle with,” the encounter is to close it off because an encounter is, most essentially, a matter of meeting with the “strange” and “novel” aspects of existence. To encounter is always to encounter something new: this is the positive meaning of the event. This means *resisting*, which is the particular sort of application of power called criticism. This resistance creates experience with meaning: experience with has a past and a future, interests and oppositions, growths and degenerations, meanings and silences. All of these are communications, messages sent and received.

As we have already seen, from the point of view I have been articulating, effective criticism cannot remain at the level of concepts. Criticism must itself be conceptualized as an event of power and as an encounter with other powers. It is in this way that we become attuned to the experiential effects of criticism. Such a criticism

requires two moments. First, it requires conceptual identification and definition. Good analysis requires that the concepts used to characterize the event correspond with the event: the traditional epistemological “correspondence” notion of truth. This is, however, a relatively trivial aspect of criticism, and intelligence cannot stop with identification, it must also enact a perspective; it must interpret. We must say what the event is *known as*. Nietzsche puts the point this way: “Inasmuch as the word ‘knowledge has any meaning at all, the world is knowable: but it is variously interpretable; it has no meaning behind it but various meanings. ‘Perspectivism’. It is our needs which interpret the world: our drives and their for and against,” (2003, §7[60]; p. 139). Identification of perspective is the *ethical* aspect of intelligence, if what is understood by ethical is “related to an ethos, a perspective, a dynamic form of life.” This ethical moment requires an engagement of powers. If understanding is to be an encounter, criticism must selectively engage the event and transform the event for the better. This selective engagement with power is crucial to an intelligent encounter with a world of pure experience.

The fifth aspect of experience is that it is perspectival. To note this aspect of experience is to say directly what has already been implied in prior discussions of meaning. If *what* experience is cannot be separated out from *how* the power relations through which it is encountered work, then to say that the primary category of experience is the event is to say that reality is perspectival. The elements of the plane of experience—thinking, imagining, conceptualizing, desiring, wanting, needing, feeling, enduring, traveling, retreating, taking, giving, enjoying, suffering, loving, hating, fighting, and embracing—appear as lived events, that is as the site of possible ethical encounters. The determination of their meanings demands experiencing them as ethically

charged, which means taking them up, selectively and experimentally as *values*, *towards* an end in view, and *away* from other possible ends. This “towards” and “away” determines a perspective.

Perspectivism is often lampooned by moralists as a matter of “anything goes.” It is sometimes said that conceiving the meaning of values in terms of their experienced relations disavows the *demand* that is at the very nature of what a value means. Moral values, after all, require commitment! They are to be *served* and *obeyed*, the moralist says, not merely experienced. We ought to make ourselves more like them, not make them more like us. Our ideals are not our friends and enemies; they are our masters. Their meaning is already obvious; all there is for us to do is to say yes or no, to succeed in the implementation of the ideal or to fail.

However, such a characterization of perspectivism radically misunderstands the meaning of commitment. It imagines the relation between commitment and value as an external relation, as one of slave and master, because it makes, once again, an absolute distinction between what an idea is and how an ideal functions. Commitments, however, are not only the *means* to values; commitments *necessary for* values. We know our values not by the ideals that we speak, but by the lives that we lead. Our values are written in the body: our behavior, on our skin, in the flashing of eyes, the grinding of teeth, moments of elation, sighs of relief, our grief, confusion, anticipation and contentment are marks of the values we hold. Thus, the commitment that perspectivism demands is not a blind faith in a law or a principle that speaks externally or from above, but is instead an acknowledgment of the interactive nature of experience. The “towards” and “away” in experience that are features of its flow are also sites of interactive engagement,

possibilities for activity and response.

A perspective, then, is an embodied, ongoing, and experimental ethos. This ethos is not given, beforehand, as if by executive fiat. It is selected: achieved and cultivated, when it is possible, *away from* an encounter with an event and *towards* the next encounter. In other words, the production of meaning is inextricable bound up with the production of a habit of life. It is the result of interactions, and it makes new interactions possible. As such, the commitment that perspectivism demands is experimental, pedagogical, and open to risk. It is precarious and living. Indeed, perspectivism's understanding is that commitment not only opens avenues but also closes them. Flourishing in one area always demands pruning possibilities in another.

Sixthly, experience is herculean.⁵ It takes effort outside of an economy of compensation. Experience is multiple, life is finite, singular, and precarious, and the commitments entered into are produced through the intense and sometimes tragic demands that the singularity and finitude of life places on the teeming and interwoven strands of experience. If the attunement to events is radically focused on the experiences of human beings, it is equally attuned to the fact that being human means living in a world that is to a large degree indifferent to human aspiration. The metaphysics of experience does not place the human subject at the center of experience as its focal point and master, but locates it *within* experience, as aspect one of its many events. The subject, when it exists at all, is an event whose powers and productions are dependent upon and emerge out of interactions with objects, with physiological unknowns, pleasures and

⁵ I owe this idea to John Stuhr's *Pragmatism, Postmodernism, and the Future of Philosophy*. Stuhr writes, "...each person faces a Herculean labor that is both personal and practical: to determine how to think differently and live differently in the future from how one does in the present, and to act now so as to most fully move one's thought and life in this, rather than some other, direction," (2003, p. 1).

pains, joys and sorrows, boredom and anxiety, and the desires of other perspectives.

Nietzsche calls these open, living, and dependent interactions “the body”:

Put briefly, perhaps the entire evolution of the spirit is a question of the body; it is a history of the higher body that emerges into our sensibility. . . . Or rather: hundreds of thousands of experiments are made to change the nourishment, the mode of living and of dwelling of the body; consciousness and evaluations in the body, all kinds of pleasures and displeasure, are signs of these changes and experiments. In the long run, it is not a question of man at all: he is to be overcome. (1968/1911, §676; p. 358)

Understanding experience in this way means moving away from the idea that “man”—whether understood as Rousseau’s natural and originary individual, Plato’s philosopher, the democratic citizen, the bourgeois businessman, or an economic self-interested rational agent—is the measure of all things. It is a movement away from a teleological education towards an education that works through “the body”: the measure of man is both taken and undone, repeatedly, experimentally and inexhaustibly, by and through perspectival events of power, events that are taken as *immanent to* the experiential plane. “Radical empiricism, unable to close its eyes to the transitions caught in actu, accounts for the self-transcendency or the pointing, (whichever you may call it),” says James, “as a process that occurs within experience,” (1996/1912, p. 239). Such a radical empiricism would be a lived and experiential pedagogy, one that works to create conditions under which the experiences that have not yet been named, that are not yet human and perhaps never will be can occur. These modes of experience are the very condition of the growing interaction that is the criterion of educative experience.

James’ radical empiricism is one that does not neglect any dimension of experience. It thus places a higher demand on education, for pedagogy must care for and cultivate—but also let play and moves with—the fragile interactions between intellect

and affect, between body and mind without the consolation of a promised land or an end to time. This same caring and cultivating radical empiricism must also affirmatively and steadfastly resist every tendency of thought that attempts to ignore or belittle the developing an emergent dimensions of experience in the fetishized name of single idea: Geist, man, God, subject, Truth, Good, Justice, Reason, democracy, – the list will surely go on. Radical empiricism’s pedagogy works like Penelope’s weaving: relentlessly unweaving any finished moral image into a landscape of multiple powers, unmasking what appears as a dominating idea. But also weaving the tangled threads experience back together in a looser and more colorful cloth by interpreting it back into the historical, physiological, and affective language of events. Radical empiricism waits always for Odysseus, without need or demand for the hero’s return. It is, in this way, incomplete but also open. Constrained, but also free. Ignorant, but also learning. It actively resists any philosophy that would close down the universe. “There is a story of two clergymen,” writes James,

asked by mistake to conduct the same funeral. Once came first and had got no farther than “I am the Resurrection and the Life,” when the other entered. “*I am the Resurrection and the Life,*” cried the latter. The “through-and-through” philosophy, as it actually exists, reminds many of us of that clergyman. It seems too buttoned-up and white-chokered and clean-shaven a thing to speak for the vast slow-breathing unconscious Kosmos with its dread abysses and unknown tides. The “freedom” *we* want to see there is not the freedom, with a string tied to its leg and warranted not to fly away, of that philosophy. “Let it fly away,” we say, “from *us!*” What then?” (1996/1912, p. 278)

A metaphysics that resonates with and places education at the center of social life must acknowledge and respect the ever-unfinished nature of reality. Education names this unfinished project. Too often what is unfinished is prematurely closed off. Values, test scores, bureaucracy, fatigue, and even knowledge are used to suture up the loose threads

of experience. But the openness of experience is basic and cannot be tamed through any processes. It is a pervasive and ineliminable feature of existence, just as the work of education is also never done. The challenge that goes by the name of education is not how to finish or to perfect culture, but how to renew its life.

It is in this light that failures of the educational system ought to be considered. Education will always and necessarily fail if the project of education is thought in terms of the development of a “system” that works to implement pre-established values or sets of knowledge because the project of education is one of opening as much as it is one of closing. Done properly, education generates ignorance as much as it generates knowledge. It touches and reaches into wildness, intensifying it and putting it to work. It knowingly, actively, and caringly brings people into contact with uncertainty, with the loss of identity, with the disruption of the very values they hold most dear. Education must actively attend to these things if it is to live up to its definition as the renewal of life. If flux and the uncertainty that accompanies it is a threat to life, so too is rigidity and the certainty that accompanies it. Renewal, the art of education, requires attending to and cultivating both elements of experience.

The creation of such a pedagogy means putting the metaphysics of experience to work in and through a critical genealogical method, a method that, in turn, takes its cue from the nature of experienced events. The way in which Nietzsche employs the idea of will to power provides a model for thinking about metaphysics as not simply a hegemonic way of interpreting the real, but as an instrument and weapon for social inquiry. The sickness of classic metaphysics, what Nietzsche calls the “frog’s perspective”, has its place within the overall ecology of Nietzschean thought (1992/1886,

p. 200). Nietzsche's problem was never with classical metaphysics as a perspective, but with the refusal of classical metaphysics to acknowledge that it is a perspective: an attunement to certain aspects of reality and not others. Classic metaphysics ignores its will to power; it ignores its perspective and its creative responsibility. It imagines its will as a will to truth that is somehow unsullied by perspective, history, blindness, time, contingency, and chance and measures the success of its thinking by the distance that it moves from the categories of ordinary experience.

The critical question of a metaphysics is not, however, whether or not it produces a sense of absolute correspondence, identity, or representation to a reality that pre-exists its production. Instead, a Nietzschean approach to metaphysics takes reflection on the nature of the world as an essential and creative aspect of living. Like all modes of reflection, its value is judged in terms of the forms of experienced life it makes possible, or impossible. *Whose* life does a metaphysics empower: that of the priest or that of the warrior? *Which* qualities of experience does a metaphysics reinforce: revenge and resentment or affirmation and joy? *What* does the metaphysics work to empower: the same structures that already dominate contemporary life or the disempowered, marginal, and suffering that may not yet be structures?

Nietzsche's metaphysics does not stand over and against experience but is integrated immanently with the plane of experience, and its values are likewise taken in terms of living, partial, open, and happening experience. As Michel Haar writes,

If Nietzsche's last word takes us back towards a metaphysics of immanence or within immanence, it leads us also perhaps not to the direct reestablishing or validating of metaphysics, but to reevaluating its concept, once this concept has been freed of its reactive, negative, essentially pejorative charge and of its status as an obstacle to overcome. (1996/1993, p. xiii)

Nietzsche's metaphysics is, therefore, not simply a replacement of prior modes of metaphysical thought. It does not simply reject metaphysics or attempt to move past it. Seeing the value of Nietzsche's metaphysics requires looking to its power to make encounters with and through events. Will to power is a metaphysics born out of the living encounter with the nihilistic and mis-educative consequences of the dualisms of Christian and Platonic metaphysics. The metaphysics of will to power is a form of creative pedagogy that rises out of the contingency of this encounter, and its value ought not to be measured according to this encounter, not according to the standards of the old metaphysics it is meant to reconstruct.

As Haar suggests, the meaning of will to power is seen in its transformation of the very concept of metaphysics. Nietzsche takes the whole discourse of metaphysics in terms of its experiential functions, which is to say, in terms of its will to power. The consistency of the Nietzschean metaphysics is between the mode of critical evaluation it allows and the view of reality that emerges from the critical evaluation. Its essence and function—the theory and its practice, the idea and its power—can be distinguished intellectually, but not metaphysically at the level of the experience of his thought. What will to power *is* cannot be distinguished from *how* it operates. Will to power, like Jamesian experience, is a dynamic metaphysics in process, and its name refers to just this dynamism. Emerging out of an encounter, will to power is a contingent and singular phenomenon, as contingent and singular as Nietzsche's own vision. But the singular lesson of will to power is that the singularity and contingency of metaphysics is no argument against the usefulness of metaphysical speculation for a singular and contingent project. All new thoughts and experiences are singular and contingent: these are the very

qualities that make them new. For a metaphysics centered on the centrality of the educational task, which is the *renewal* of life by transmission, attunement to the singular and contingent aspects of experience is perhaps the most powerful gift a metaphysics can give.

By emphasizing reconstruction and transvaluation as attitudes of empowerment and resistance, will to power names the difficult task of life, which is the series of fragile and always eventually fatal remaking of indifferent or even hostile events into tools of growth. As Foucault puts it: “if the genealogist refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds there is ‘something altogether different’ behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal way from alien forms,” (1984, p. 78). Not extending faith in the old metaphysics, Nietzsche and James teach us to look for new realities, for a secret world of piecemeal experiences and alien forms. The metaphysics of experience here articulated is just this secret world. Like the pedagogy it is meant to encourage, it does not operate primarily through claims and assertions, but through sensations, resistances, and implications: underground and physiological actions. Secretly, playfully, it takes up the name of metaphysics affirmatively in order to redraw the boundaries between metaphysics and the world it describes. If the metaphysics of experience is nature, it is also an experimental work of art: fabricated, piecemeal, alien, and unfinished—*natura naturans*, no more and no less. For those who are willing to make an encounter with it, such an encounter might renew life’s efforts by opening critical and active perspectives on the most basic question of pedagogy: how might experience—the health and sickness of interactions within the passing, unavoidably

ethical, power-laden, and perspectival events of the world—be made more critical, more joyful?

In this chapter I have laid out a conception of experience as eventuating, relational, perspectival, physiological, ethical, and herculean. I have indicated in general ways how these categories of experience help orient our conception of education by dissolving certain problems and forming other sorts of problems. The value of this conception, however, cannot be judged until it is deployed in specific ways, in specific experience, for specific events. This task will be taken up in the next two chapters.

In the next chapter, I will draw out some concrete implications of this experimental metaphysics of experience for thinking about reconstructing power into more democratic forms. More specifically, I look at how war and religion are reproblematicized through the experiential account in terms of their implications for democratic education. The metaphysics of experience here elaborated finds its value in the reorganization of power and life in more democratic forms. War and religion have traditionally been obstacles to the democratic project. I intend to indicate how my conception of experience helps reorient these powerful functions immanent to experience towards the production of more democratic forms of life.

CHAPTER III

WAR, RELIGION, AND EDUCATION

That the world's value lies in our interpretation (—that somewhere else other interpretations than merely human ones may be possible—); that previous interpretations have been perspectival appraisals by means of which we preserve ourselves in life, that is, in will to power and the growth of power; that every heightening of man brings with it an overcoming of narrower interpretations; that every increase in strength and expansion of power opens up new perspectives and demands a belief in new horizons – this runs through my writings. The world which matters to us is false, i.e., not a fact but a fictional elaboration and filling out of a meager store of observations; it is 'in flux', as something becoming, as a constantly shifting falsity that never gets anywhere nearer to truth for – there is no 'truth'. (Nietzsche 2003, §2[108], p. 80)

In the last chapter, I used James and Nietzsche to develop a way of conceiving experience oriented towards the production of democratic education. In this chapter, I show how this metaphysics allows for the more intelligent reconstruction of social habits in more democratic forms by showing how this metaphysics problematizes war and religion, two long-standing and problematic features of the social field, in terms of their pedagogical functions.

I have suggested in the previous two chapters that the way to understand the metaphysics of experience is by looking to its implications for the project of democratic education. One problem that explaining metaphysics from an instrumental point of view presents, however, is that instruments are often construed as objects lying about, ready to be put to use by some pre-existing agent. Such a way of understanding instrumentalism, however, is dependent upon the very means-ends dualism that the metaphysics of experience undermines.

The problem of the badly instrumental approach to education that was outlined in

the first chapter is not so much that education is conceived instrumentally, but that the very concept of instrumentality is badly understood. So, if we are to take an instrumental view of education, then we will need a different notion of instrument—if education is a tool, it is also more than a tool; it is a tool for making tools, and sometimes even a tool for producing the need to use a tool. The most general interests towards which the instruments of education work are the very reproduction of the instruments of education. In other words, properly understood, education is both instrumental *and* an end in itself: 1) education creates conceptual tools where there are none yet, 2) education modifies or breaks and discards old conceptual tools that do not work, and 3) education generates problems that call forth in new ways the creative capacities and strenuous dimensions of human experience; that is, it creates (and sometimes breaks and refigures) *the demand for* creative imagination, exploration, and experimentation, the demand for education. In other words, education does not just solve problems or achieve ends; it alters the very nature of problems themselves, reconstructing or re-problematizing experience.

Therefore from the point of view an experiential education, no absolute distinction can be drawn between education's instrumental aspects and the ends towards which it works: good education is an effect produced by and through the experimental use and development of educative practices. The metaphysics of experience allows the very notion of an instrument to be reconstructed experientially, as the third category of education indicates above. By drawing attention to dynamic and open-ended processes, events, relations, and interactions instead of static and closed ends, means, ideas and values, the metaphysics reorganizes the relation between an instrument and the ends towards which it works. Instead of taking means and ends to be two different things, it

understands them as different aspects of a single immediate and primary experience, aspects that can be differentiated afterwards in reflection, but which, at a fundamental level, operate together and immanently within the plane of experience. Instead of talking about means and ends as if they were two different things, the metaphysics of experience takes means and ends, instruments and values, as two aspects of a single, primary interaction. To be an instrument is, in other words, to be an agent. The actual and experienced ends produced by the functioning of any given instrument are the only measure of the meaning and value of any instrument. On the other hand, the very meaning of ends is instrumental: their value can only be taken in terms of the actual and experienced habits and practices that they motivate. In other words, the value of a metaphysics of experience is located in the power that it has to produce experiences of renewal—to, as Nietzsche puts it, “overcome narrow interpretations” and to “open up new perspectives and demand a belief in new horizons.” In this chapter, I would like to highlight the ways in which the view of experience I have been articulating is instrumental in just this way: it engages and transforms powerful habits of thought that present obstacles to democratic social arrangements. The metaphysics of experience is both an instrument and an end: it engages human power as a tool in the service of democratic modes of life by articulating and motivating the necessity of that life. It is educative, then, in the broadest sense.

The connection I hope to draw between metaphysics, power, and democratic education is not wholly mine. In “The Energies of Men,” James articulates the problem of education in its most general form and its relation to power:

The two questions, first, that of the possible extent of our powers; and, second, that of the various avenues of approach to them, the various keys for unlocking

them in diverse individuals, dominate the whole problem of individual and national education. We need a topography of the limits of human power, similar to the charts which oculists use of the field of human vision. We need also a study of the various types of human being with reference to the different ways in which their energy-reserves may be appealed to and set loose. (WWJ, p. 683)

The metaphysics of experience is just this sort of “topography of the limits of human power” in the interest of unlocking these powers in service of the creation of democratic forms of life. Therefore, the metaphysics of experience is best understood not as a disinterested analysis of the general features of experience but as the articulation, mapping, and redistribution of a topology of power motivated by the “problem of individual and national education.”

In the last chapter, I examined the outlines of a theory of experience drawn from the philosophies of James and Nietzsche from an abstract and universal point of view⁶. For a philosophy that is not merely theoretical, however, the meaning of such an analysis cannot be determined without returning to the rough and more particular terrain of power and its effects. Since, in this chapter, I hope to look at what the view of experience I have articulated means in terms of the specific transformations such a point of view might make possible, my analysis will not begin with generalities but with the actual avenues of social power, the flows and impediments of “the energies of men.”

I will take up two of these main avenues or flows of power: the war function and the religious function. Through my analysis of these functions from the standpoint of the metaphysics of experience, I hope (1) to show how such a metaphysics might be enable

⁶ By “abstract and universal” I do not mean that the theory of experience that I have described applies universally or will or ought to be universally accepted. This is farthest from my intentions. Understood pragmatically, the *function* of abstracting and universalizing theorization is not to regulate the field of ideas; it is to open new possibilities and stimulate growth by freeing concepts from prior uses. Dewey explains the point well here: “In truth, abstraction from human experience is but a liberation from familiar and specific enjoyments, it provides means for directing hitherto untried consequences, for invention, for the creation of new wants, and new modes of good and evil,” (LW 1:151).

more intelligent appropriations of these functions and (2) to indicate how, more generally, the meaning and value of a metaphysical scheme is found in its educative function, that is in its deployment in and through interactions with concrete problems in the service of unlocking latent or dominated human power.

War Against War

Overcoming the affects? – No, not if it means weakening and annihilating them. *Instead, drawing them into service*, which may include exercising a long tyranny over them (not just as an individual but even earlier, as a community, race, etc.). In the end they are trustingly given back some freedom: they love us like good servants and voluntarily go where our best interests want to go. (Nietzsche 2003, §1[122]; p. 63)

First, war. Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary defines war most generally as "a struggle or competition between opposing forces for a particular end." Such a definition suggests that the problem of war is its filtering of multiple forces through the pursuit of a single end. In other words, the function of war is to make, through any means necessary, the multiple into the unified. Imagined in this way, war is necessarily violent, as there can be no reconciling the many and the one, once they have been sundered.

In "The Moral Equivalent of War," James understands war precisely in terms of this disciplining and unifying function, writing that "so far, war has been the only force that can discipline a whole community, and until an equivalent discipline is organized, I believe that war must have its way." (WWJ, p. 669) Interestingly, his taking of the phenomenon of war emphasizes its experiential effects: its power and its pedagogy. James' way of seeing war is still relevant. That our national community and individual subjectivities are forged to a great degree in and through a love of war is a fact whose obviousness is clear, once one begins to look for it, but whose pervasiveness is such that

it often goes unnoticed. James' 1910 essay brings this pervasiveness out of the background and foregrounds it as a specific problem of power and of education.

To reflect on the depth to which war is imbedded in culture, is to realize that it is so deeply imbedded in our bodies and bones, minds and hearts that there is little ground free from war. Experience is a tangled system of war, producing and produced by war machines. My tax dollars this year, once more, bought the bombs that explode in Iraq. I am responsible for civilian deaths, for the armless children, for the grief and fear. This is the first and perhaps most obvious form of complicity in war—taxes. To pay taxes is to support war; there is no historical evidence that governments have been able to refrain from overt acts of violence and destruction against its own people and against others. Indeed, as the ongoing events in Iraq and Afghanistan attest, we could take Hobbes' point a bit further: the war of all against all seems not only to be a condition of possibility of the liberal state, but also its consequence.

But our complicity runs much deeper than taxes or government. War fuels the hive of red taillights that swarm and buzz around our cities and snake across the plains of Kansas. War hustles immigrants across borders, fueling racism and alienation. War forges connections across species and between the animate and inanimate. War drives approval ratings and elects presidents. The explosives and bulldozers invented during World War II make possible the literal decapitation of whole mountains in West Virginia; a mountain is burned and poured like boiling oil on the sky to keep my lettuce crisp. My father still operates these same bulldozers, building businesses, churches, schools, roads, lakes, ponds. Pushing down trees. Putting food on our table, sending me to school.

In the contemporary era, the event of war has been spread and smeared like a

thick butter across the face of the globe. It does not spring up as a series of isolated skirmishes. War cuts so deeply through experience: the space and time that Kant saw as conditions of possibility of experience can be seen as lines of flight spurring off from this much more central category of experience. Our conception of space is structured by political boundaries. We learn about lines and borders from walls erected, divisions drawn. The strict coordination of schedules that we think of as time emerged, perhaps, from a need to coordinate military strikes. History is a slaughterbench, says Hegel; the time of memory is punctuated by trauma, says Freud. The very space we inhabit is ordered by the movement of violence, organized and legitimized by barriers, bunkers, metal detectors, uniformed soldiers, x-ray machines, cameras, and police with batons and guns. The stop sign at the end of my street is the color of blood mixed with air. War creates order and chaos; it *is* both order and chaos—both Apollo and Dionysus, both the pain of birth and the beauty of tragedy.

War multiplies and mixes discourses. Its glories are not contained to medal ceremonies, but are also disseminated by analysts and pundits on cable news and in the blogosphere. Little league teams steal bases. NFL teams battle and beat each other. Homages to war's guilt, horrors, and fascinations arrive in the mail with Netflix (no late fees). The images of Abu Ghraib served up a strong cocktail of laughter, sexuality, torture, bodies, digital photos, prison, Arabs, gender, discipline, play.

War is mundane. We make war with our supermarket purchases. When we turn on and off the lights. War flickers vaguely on the 24-hour news cycles; its distant violence is felt as a certain twinge at the sight of a green Darfur sign on a lawn. I just replaced the radiator in my Honda with one from China. How much of that purchase went to their war

efforts against the Tibetans? Did my purchase of that recent bag of Fritos just give Cargill the funds to buy another family farm, to wage its war of production against Middle America, Africa, and South America?

War implicates. Is the paper that this dissertation—or its many drafts—written the product of those clearcut wars waged on the Cumberland Plateau? What is this paper, this blank, white, empty page—the bane of dissertation writers everywhere—other than the clean cut of steel into hickory bark? Is it more than bleach into the Pigeon River? Was it once a hemlock in a cool hollow before it saw the chip mill? Was there a time for this paper before it was barged across the ocean to bypass environmental regulations and then shipped back by International Paper as yet another *tabula rasa*, a chance (once more!) to begin again (and this time creatively!)—white, clean, empty, new. War, we must also admit, can repair and renew.

War renews. It is, as James said, a force of cultural discipline. War does not only destroy and deconstruct; it creates new possibilities, forges new relations, and produces new complicities. It is a force of regeneration and reconstruction—if not the most powerful, one of the most powerful. War creates the possibility of victory—with no missions, there can be no missions accomplished. And this is why, if we must hate war for upsetting the peaces that were, for making innocents into victims, and for bringing certain possibilities to an end, we must also love it. Indeed, war is so pervasive and ongoing that the areas of peace that are produced, however intentionally they are located and scattered across the globe, are no less a part of the much more general production of war.

Finally, war is an instrument of the production of meaning. As Lakoff and

Johnson note in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), deliberative argumentation is understood through the metaphor of war: “It is important to see that we don’t just talk about arguments in terms of war. We actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we *do* in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war,” (p. 4). War is a way of understanding and communicating. It is a deep and common social habit, what Lakoff and Johnson term an “experiential gestalt,” that makes meaning, community, and social interaction possible.

War is, in short, multiple and pervasive. To bring an end to war is to bring an end a number of other essential cultural functions. War is not a “thing” or a “process” or a “mindset” to be ended or begun. It is an experienced event, whose ethos, perspectives, values, and efforts run deep and tangled in the thick weave of experience. As immanent to the flow of experience, war is open to and susceptible to flux; it is a particular sort of flux, meaning and value of which remains open. In other words, analysis of way from an experiential point of view must be plural and attuned to the actual eventuations that war produces, to whom those experiences redound, and how these relations might be transformed

It is, I think, an insight of this sort that determines James’ approach to war as one of finding a moral equivalency—instead of, for example, bringing it to an end. As the war on terror has shown, the demand to bring an end to elements of the war function can have as its consequence an intensification of the military apparatus, a stimulation of bellicose appetites, and an increasing fascination with war as a political object. The logic is so

common that it makes no sense to call it contradictory. We make war in the Middle East to eventually bring peace and democracy. We wage war to end terrorism. The war on drugs justifies military interventions in South America. And, each of these sentences can be written in reverse.

James does not attack this reversible and seemingly contradictory logic; he embraces it, beginning his essay against war with the demand *to make* war: “The war against war,” he writes, “is going to be no holiday excursion or camping party.” (WWJ, 660) But what can this possibly mean? In what sense can war be made into a moral equivalent through war? How can the answer to war be making another war? And what, pray tell, does this have to do with something so intellectually distant and cold as metaphysics as a topography of human power? James begins to address these questions by making a genealogical point:

Modern war is so expensive that we feel trade a better avenue to plunder [yes, here his text shows its age]; but modern man inherits all the innate pugnacity and all the love of glory of his ancestors. Showing war’s irrationality and horror is of no effect on him. The horrors make the fascination. War is the *strong* life; it is life *in extremis*; war-taxes are the only ones men never hesitate to pay, as the budgets of all nations show us. (WWJ, p. 661)

The deep, long lasting, and affirmative love we have inherited for war requires no verbal affirmations; its love-letters are found in its everyday actions, in the argumentative style of this dissertation, and in the conception of strategic instrumentality that underlies its pragmatic approach. Have I won you over to my side? Or must I surrender the argument? Will you make another critical counterattack on my basic position? The history of philosophy is philopolemic; we are long-time lovers of war.

Indeed, the love of war runs so deep that it is possible to fight against it with every ounce of will and every argument that can be mustered, but continue all the while, in

every action, to give the lie to our real passion. Like a long-married couple whose dotting affection cannot be divorced from their ceaseless bickering, so the moral outrage against war and the affection towards it may come from the same source. In order to make sense of the continuation of the centrality of war to life in the United States, we who pay our taxes, we who buy the bombs, we who rage against the horrors of war, must see the way in which that rage is not in opposition to a love for war, but a product of it. Wars make us make wars make wars against wars make us.

“Peace,” writes James,

in military mouths to-day is a synonym for “war expected.” The word has become a pure provocative, and no government wishing peace sincerely should allow it ever to be printed in a newspaper. Every up-to-date dictionary should now say that “peace” and “war” mean the same thing, now *in posse*, now *in actu*. It may even be reasonably said that the intensely sharp preparation for war by the nations is the real war, permanent, unceasing; and the battles are only a sort of public verification of the mastery gained during the “peace” interval. (WWJ, 663)

If these words were true in James’ time, they remain true today. The war on terror is explicitly defined as a war whose effect is to produce peace. Indeed, the discourse has evolved in such a way that is now possible to claim that every second of peace that we have had since 9/11 is a product of the war on terror. The new millennium has been defined as perpetual, ongoing, and global warfare. At any moment, the discourse of terrorism teaches us, war is possible. It is on—or just over—every horizon. It emerges randomly and can strike anywhere. The present discourse of war is, to this extent, Jamesian; war and peace are no longer opposites; they are mutually constitutive; a relation immanent to experience. Every moment of peaceful life justifies and legitimizes the ongoing wars, whose very intent and effect is to produce the peace that justifies its existence. This kind of “war against war” is one that leads to an intensification and

glorification of the war making apparatus.

If the war against war is to produce different effects, it must employ different strategies. A technique we might learn from James for doing battle with war is to bring peace closer to the war mentality, not away from it. Although peace is produced by and through the war culture, the peace that is produced remains far removed from the evaluations, means, and ends that motivate its production. The relation is real, but it is mediated in such a way that the thrills, dangers, and horror of war are far removed from the peace-effects of war. To live in peace for many of us in the United States means to watch war on television—to be enthralled by its dramatic horrors, glories, heroes, and victims, by the life lived *in extremis*. To be a spectator of war is to be attracted to it. The old lie: *dulce et decorum est, pro patri mori*, has not endured for so long because of its untruth; it endures because of the thrall it produces.⁷

The *function* of the thrall of war is to discipline the war spectator into a love of the warrior and a distrust of peace. Peace is for those who watch, he learns. War is for those who act. Peace is for those who do not have the dignity to suffer, whose lives know

⁷ Few books capture the intensity, horror, political function, and beauty of war more adequately than George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1969/1938). Here is a representative passage: "As our train drew into the station a troop-train full of men from the International Column was drawing out, and a knot of people on the bridge were waving to them. It was a very long train, packed to the bursting point with men, with field-guns lashed on the open trucks and more men clustering around the guns. I remember with peculiar vividness the spectacle of that train passing in the yellow evening light; window after window of dark, smiling faces, the long tilted barrels of the guns, the scarlet scarves fluttering—all this gliding slowly past us against a turquoise-coloured sea.

"'Estranjeros—foreigners,' said someone. 'They're Italians.'"

"Obviously they were Italians. No other people could have grouped themselves so picturesquely or returned the salutes of the crowd with so much grace—a grace that was none the less because about half the men on the train were drinking out of up-ended wine bottles. We heard afterwards that these were some of the troops who won the great victory at Guadalajara in March; they had been on leave and were being transferred to the Aragon front. Most of them, I am afraid, were killed at Huesca only a few weeks later. The men who were well enough to stand had moved across the carriage to cheer the Italians as they went past. A crutch waved out a window; bandaged forearms made the Red Salute. It was like an allegorical picture of war; the trainload of fresh men gliding proudly up the line, the maimed men sliding slowly down, and all the while guns on the open trucks making one's heart leap as guns always do, and reviving that pernicious feeling, so difficult to get rid of, that war is glorious after all." (p. 191-192)

no extremes. War is adrenaline, risk, and reward. Peace is for the individual, the consumer. War is about brotherhood and sacrifice. Peace is being free from responsibility. War is giving one's self over to a higher law. Peace watches; war lives. "Unconcerned, mocking, violent—thus wisdom wants *us*: she is a woman and always loves only a warrior." (Nietzsche 1992/1888, p. 533) The thrall of war devalues the very experience out of which the thrall arises. The spectator becomes conscious of the experience of peace as lacking, a devaluation that leads perhaps to the production of a kind of Nietzschean *ressentiment*.

A digression into the way in which communication is problematized through the metaphysics of experience will make more clear the sense in which our conception of experience shapes the problem of war-discipline. When James writes that "Pacifists ought to enter more deeply into the aesthetical and ethical point of view of their opponents" it is important that we pay attention to the way in which this "entering" takes place and the purposes that it serves. It is in these technical differences that the pacific effect is achieved. He continues:

[Enter] first in any controversy [into the aesthetical and ethical point of view of your opponent] ... *then move the point*, and your opponent will follow. So long as anti-militarists propose no substitute for war's disciplinary function, no moral equivalent of war, analogous, as one might say, to the mechanical equivalent of heat, so long they fail to realize the full inwardness of the situation. (WWJ, p. 666)

So long as war is only seen from afar, so long as it holds the spectator in its thrall, peace will always be lacking. James' point here is both strategic and ethical, and examining each of these dimensions will lead us closer to the way in which the problem of war is also a problem of education—the problem of constructing alternative and more democratic forms of war discipline.

The strategic point is a simple one about the conditions under which the communication necessary to produce transformation is possible, one that the metaphysics of experience is specifically constructed to bring forward. What every teacher, lover, and friend knows (and, incidentally, what philosophers often forget) is that communication depends upon an experimental moment of imaginative empathy that funds the viability of the exchange. Since experience is eventuating, perspectival, and interested, there is no pure common ground to which we might refer in order to communicate. It is necessary, instead, to enter into experience in order to make encounters in partially shared realities, like the pervasive cultural experience of war, and to reconstruct that experience experimentally. Entering into the war perspective means breaking its thrall.

The great difficulty of communication is that keeping both differences and similarities at the front of honest exchange. Communication would be unnecessary if we all shared the same ends, values, and purposes, and it would be impossible if we had nothing at all in common. But communication demands more than keeping our ends in front of us: making a genuine encounter demands also admitting the extent to which we do not even know what our commonalities and differences are. Communication requires humility, and out of that humility a willingness to construct new ends, interests, commonalities, and differences.

Overlapping this strategic point about the centrality of imaginative empathy to communication is an ethical point. The moment of imagination that makes communication possible is made possible by a recognition that communication is only possible through the metaphorical invocation of partially shared experiences and therefore demands attention to how these blindnesses are constructed. Taking seriously

the value and motivating factors of our opponents' position means taking up a herculean experimental reconstruction of these partially shared perspective towards more productive future sharings. Communication is never a matter of totalities; our own concepts derive their meanings from contingent and even opposing valences.

The capacity to imaginatively encounter—a Socratic and experiential definition of the interaction through which the renewal of life happens—allows for the possibilities of bridging these differences provisionally. We can imagine better what motivates the advocate of war without going to war, but only if we can make an encounter, however briefly and tangentially, with the experience of that point of view in order to grasp the special and specific vitality, the directions of its habitual flows, that is inseparable from its meaning. This oppositional encountering is always ongoing, whether it is recognized or not. Every expression of meaning is constructed through the very institutions and structures that such expression opposes. Such is the nature of power.

The question of war, then, from an experiential point of view, is how it makes certain encounters possible or impossible. The necessary blindnesses of communication are also sites of possibility. The busy-bee James surely contemplates the way in which his own business betrays him and blinds him, denying him access to a different sort of activity. His very business forces him to become a mere spectator to a friend who enjoys spending hours of quiet watchfulness in the woods: “For the spectator, such hours as Mr. Hudson writes of form a mere tale of emptiness, in which nothing happens, nothing is gained, and there is nothing to describe. They are meaningless and vacant tracts of time. To him who feels their inner secret, they tingle with an importance that unutterably vouches for itself.” (WWJ, p. 644)

Unutterable and secret, indeed, are our vital and clouded lives, but this “unutterability” is not primary. We can, and often do, open ourselves up and utter our most cherished and important and vital secrets, but disappointment is inevitable if we pretend that any utterance can substitute for the experience in all its vitality and in every situation. The unutterability of our tingling lives is the *consequence* of an ethical demand, which James utters in this way:

Hands off: neither the whole truth nor the whole of the good is revealed to any single observer, although each observer gains a partial superiority of insight from the peculiar position in which he stands. Even prisons and sick rooms have their special revelations. It is enough to ask of each of us that he should be faithful to his own opportunities and make the most of his blessings without presuming to regulate the entire field. (WWJ, p. 645)

We are caught between two seeming oppositions: the necessity of imagining alien demands and the necessary failure of this imagination. This tension is negotiable, when possible, only experimentally. “Imagination” names this experimental *working through* the constant ethical pinch. We try, experimentally, to place ourselves, over and over again, into the foreign whirl of the alien encounter, expose ourselves to new encounters, and out of the risk of exposure comes the possibility of a different habit, way of thinking, form of life. Such is the education of life, the renewal of experience. In this process, we have no recourse to transcendental values; there is only the dictum of experience: change or be changed.

Such imaginative encounters are only matters of encountering the face of another, another autonomous agent or person. They happen through things, animals, weather, events, and perhaps most often, through encounters with our own selves. Nietzsche reminds us that we live eternally within a foreign perspective; the point of subjectivity can only be understood in terms of its horizons: “We place a word,” he writes, “at the

point where our ignorance begins – where we can't see any further, e.g., the word 'I', the words 'do' and 'done to': these may be the horizons of our knowledge, but they are not 'truths'." (2003, §5[3]; p. 106) The question, then, is not how to enter into the perspective of the foreigner (for we are always already in this perspective to some extent), but how to put the fringes and horizons of experience to work, how "to reinstate the vague" in a way that calls forth the energies of men in the service of the general and widespread flourishing of life.

Here the metaphysics of experience may help to distinguish between the modes of imagination that lead to mis-educative consequences of war and the modes of imagination that would make it possible to put the war machine to work for educative ends. An experiential notion of war brings forth in yet another way the sense in which an encounter with opposition is always a part of what is most intimate; the "body" is a blindness that produces knowledge; the "indeterminate horizons" of the senses draw another wider, alien circle around the corporeality. Mute, physiological horizons articulate the point of consciousness: it is out of these vague and unutterabilities of our lives that variability, the differences, the risks, and the blindnesses, that responsibilities—the very vitalities of imaginative life—are forged. It is only in an encounter beyond the limits of knowledge that the renewal of life takes place.

The inherent partiality of experience thus have a positive aspect: although a certain blindness is necessary to and part of the eventuations of experience, the flip-side of that blindness is the emergence of hypothetical vitalities, alternative secret divinations upon which the possibility of bridging what James calls "the blindness with which we are all afflicted in regard to the feelings of creatures and people different from us" depends,

(WWJ, 629).

Therefore, although we are blind in a certain way to the specific forms of vitality of other lives, this blindness itself can be a resource for creative social engagement. The fringes, flows, perspectives, breaks and horizons in the metaphysics of experience are designed to point out just this curious blend of human powers: to bring forward the way in which ethical life depends not only on what we have the power to see, but also on what we have the power *not to see*—the powers that constitute and make possible our visions. By emphasizing the plurality of experience, the constant inadequacy of knowledge, the vague fringes and horizons that define the ethical ends and possibilities of experience, and the virtual occurrences within an experience that is more than immediately present, the experimental imagination upon which ethical life depends is transformed from a subjective faculty into an object of empirical inquiry. We can begin to ask critical educational question: who owns the vague peripheries of experience? How are they put to work? And, again, whose lives are empowered by them and whose are dominated?

Such questions turn the imagination into a weapon in the war against war. The challenge of intelligent resistance to war is a matter of putting this weapon *to work* in the reconstruction of war into a polemic of peace—a peace that is not lacking in experience and possibilities for renewal, one that preserves the hardness, the strenuous nature, the sense of meaningful experimentation that motivates and disciplines the defender of war. It is not enough to argue for peace: the peace for which we argue must be articulated and imagined in terms that even—perhaps, especially—the warrior can accept. To engage the war-function in this way would be to turn it to pedagogical purposes, to highlight the ways in which war serves the interests of life's renewal.

With this insight in tow, we can return to some of the original questions that James' seemingly contradictory "war against war" raises. The thought of a war against war is only contradictory from a standpoint that sees peace as totally opposed to war. But if war and peace make a relation immanent to experience, different questions emerge. Instead of asking how to produce more peace or eliminate war, we begin from the idea that every moment of peace is implicated in the experiential gestalt of war—and vice-versa. The problem, then, is reconfigured. The question of war becomes not one of its existence, of whether it should be ended or advanced, but of its educational function: whether or not it serves the purpose of the renewal of life—and the renewal of *which* forms of life.

The question that the perspective of the metaphysics of experience allows us to raise, then, is not the question of how to end war as such—to end war is, empirically and historically speaking, to end the only forms of peace that we know. As Deleuze writes, "The question is therefore less the realization of war than the appropriation of the war machine," (Deleuze and Guattari 1987/1980, p. 420).⁸ It is a question of who carries the burden of war's eventuation, of how its horrors are distributed, to whom it delivers peace, to whom glory and strenuous living, to whom boredom and disengagement, and to whom prosperity. Who does war dignify, and who does it humiliate? And would it be possible to create a morally equivalent war, whose end is dignity and hope? Is it possible to fight a war against war, one whose glories and triumphs come through the defeat of humiliation, and one whose benefits redound to the community as a whole, instead of to a social or

⁸ Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the exteriority of the war machine to the State apparatus in their "Treatise on Nomadology" also identifies war as a possible site of political renewal, developing the thesis that "In every respect, the war machine is of another species, another nature, another origin than the State apparatus," (p. 352).

military elite? The question, again, is not how to eliminate the instinct for war, but who controls the war-function and to what ends?

In this way, seeing war as an event immanent to the plane of experience makes war into a question of education, into a matter of the reconstruction of the habits of the war-function. James explains his vision:

If now—and this is my idea—there were, instead of military conscription a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of the army enlisted against *Nature*, the injustice would tend to be evened out, and numerous other goods to the commonwealth would follow. The military ideals of hardihood and discipline would be wrought into the fibre of the people; no one would remain blind as the luxurious classes now are blind, to man's relations to the globe he lives on, and to the permanently sour and hard foundations of his higher life. (WWJ, 669)

This passage must be read carefully. James is not calling for a war on nature—this war is, on the Jamesian view, always already ongoing. He is, instead, calling for a different outcome—for a moral equivalent to war. The battle he would like to see waged is one against the forces and powers that blind the powerful to the conditions of their power. It is a war against Nature, for nature with a capital “N”—and here, again, the value of metaphysical inquiry in this war and the ends to which it is put must be considered—is used as a way of blinding us to power relations that can be changed. The Natural superiority, for example, of white over black. The Natural hegemony of man over animal. The Natural domination of affect by reason. The Natural proclivity of the dominant culture to construct reason on models of warfare. The Natural luxury of the powerful. The Natural suffering of the poor. James' vision is of a war for democracy and for intelligence against the sorts of blindnesses produced by wars waged on behalf of luxury—the very peace that has been disjoined from the hardness, strenuousness, risk, shared endeavor, sacrifice, and vitality that is the promise of war.

James thus approaches the question of war with the temperament of the educator. The educator does not ask: how can I eliminate the passion of the child; she asks how best she can put that passion to work, how it might be best disciplined and channeled. Just so with the war-function. For James, judging war is not a question of measuring the war-function against a concept of absolute peace. Interacting with war requires more than affirmation or rejection, condemnation or glorification. To see war as an event is to see it as educator. It is to ask the herculean question of how to put the war function to work. The educative question is never strictly moral; it is not a matter of prohibition and punishment. It does not ask how to stifle the alien demand or to repress it; education is a matter of *hows*: how to encounter the alien demand, how to tweak and transform it and our own demand, how to transform the space of contrast or conflict between demands, and, finally, how to find its demand in our own.

The metaphysics of pure experience is useful at precisely this point. It is carefully constructed to produce encounters of the form just described because it is a picture of reality that preserves spaces of irreconcilable difference. It is a picture of reality and a topography of human power that attends to what is partial, what is powerful, and what is not yet finished. For this reason, it is possible to say that the metaphysics of pure experience is an imaginative attempt to further the war against war—to produce a picture of reality that is able to motivate the battle against any form of “Nature” that would attack human imagination, any attempt to blind us to our blindnesses. It is a vision of reality constructed to produce encounters with the alien that lead to the growth and vitality of the community instead of to the destruction of the alien demand. On this view, the differences between us are not an impediment to the formation of community; on the

contrary, they are the very conditions under which the imaginative empathy that funds the communicative relations between and among the members of society is produced. The war against war names this strenuous and experimental production; it names the work of education, the formation of culture.

Faith in Faith

The magic that fights for us, the eye of Venus that ensnares and blinds even our opponents, is the *magic of the extreme*, the seduction that every extreme exercises: we immoralists, we are *extreme*... (Nietzsche 2003, §10[94]; p. 189)

The religious-function is another educative landmark on the terrain of human power, one that is and has been often linked with the war-function. The war on terror derives its energies through the linkage of these powerful functions. Religious faith, like war, seems to have a special educative capacity. Marx had it half-right—if religion can be an opiate, it can also be Benzedrine for the human animal. Leaders from Martin Luther King to Jerry Falwell to Mahatma Ghandi to Osama bin Laden have used its power—its disciplinary function—to move and organize entire populations for social change. It calls forth what is *extreme* in us, what drives us to the wall. It produces, in its absolutist form, what James calls “the strenuous mood,” a mood which has, historically and presently, been put to many ends. As in the case of war, when religion is viewed from the standpoint of its functions in experience, its multiplicity, contingency, force, and partialities reveal its radically various educational possibilities.

Religion divides. As Martin Luther King Jr. remarked—and more recently Barack Obama reaffirmed—the eleven o’clock hour of Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America. It produces valences and social flows, marking off believers from

atheists, Muslims from Jews, Protestants from Catholics, Hindus from Buddhists. It builds peaks and valleys, elevations and gravities, by marking the difference between the sacred and the profane, the devoted and the backslider, the saved and the lost, the wheat and the chaff. It distinguishes between preacher and congregation, saint and sinner, enlightenment and blindness, body and soul, ecstasy and despair, heaven and hell. Even time and eternity, good and evil, the pure and the impure, the sexual and the chaste, are subject to and transformed by the religion-machine.

Religion consoles. It eases the body through practices of prayer and meditation. It creates communities of hope and generosity. Histories of long domination are turned into sites of refuge; the church of the inquisition now harbors immigrant refugees. The Black church turns the religion of the master into a dwelling-site of community. It turns long deprivations into jubilant bacchanalia—and back again—the sacramental wine of communion can also pour free and wild at Carnival. Sunday morning service provides relief from the daily grind, a quiet place for reflection. It offers a mode of sublimation for fear and anger. It promises, sometimes tenderly, a future world to come, sweet replacement for the injustices and sufferings of our own.

Religion mystifies. It provokes and sustains a sense of wonder. It speaks in tongues. It obscures and erases marks of power. It traces new connections and invents new interpretations. The body is a field of energy: how strange! The soul will be—or already is—one with God: who is he? There will be life after death: whose life? I was a wasp in a past life: did you retain your sting? The End is Near: let's dance! Humanity, the earth, the animals, and the sky are all one: which one? God healed my cancer: good news!

Religion combines. It fuses hatred of the self with love of the other. It makes us all sons of God. Cathedrals built from the blood of colonization house serve as traffic-ways backdrops for puzzled tourists. Jews practice medieval dietary restrictions and drink soda-pop. Christmas brings together families, sets the academic calendar, and fuels the economy. Pat Robertson and Jeremiah Wright call themselves Christian.

Religion condemns and commands. It speaks with authority and privileges the beyond. It raises questions about the lives of fetuses and the rights of women. It adds crime to crime, pronounces judgment on intentions, and raises doubts about the value of certain forms of association. Religion ostracizes the different and the deviant, and it enforces the law. Celibate men tell married women what to do. Ancient wisdom raises its voice over the television. Televangelists turn guilt into profit. Theologians police the boundary between the human and the animal.

Religion awakens. It reminds us to pay attention to what we do not understand. It interprets natural catastrophes as signs of God's wrath. It renders the world a play of judgments, an intelligent design. It sees a reason behind everything, an explanation of God's grace. Zen monks practice mindfulness. Football teams pray before games. Wounded soldiers clutch rosaries. Bus drivers make the sign of the cross when passing churches. Religious activists march for civil rights and they bomb abortion clinics. Religion fuels terrorism and pacifism, capitalism and fascism. It can fight totalitarianism and murder heretics. It generates both love and hate—hateful love and loving hate.

So, how does the metaphysics-democracy-anti-war-war-machine that we have been analyzing engage and transform the religious function? The following oft-cited passage for James provides a clue for how the religious function might be intelligently

addressed:

Every sort of energy and endurance, of courage and capacity for handling life's evils, is set free in those who have religious faith. For this reason the strenuous type of character will on the battle-field of history always outwear the easy-going type, and religion will drive irreligion to the wall. (WWJ, 628)

Paralleling his approach to war, James approaches religion from the angle of its experienced power and identifies the religious-function through its effects on this power. The war metaphor should not be overlooked. The problem is the same one he raises in the "Moral Equivalent of War": how can the religious-function release human energies and in what directions ought it flow?

James was fascinated by the power of religious faith to call forth the extremes of the human animal, noting that "even if there were no metaphysical or traditional grounds for believing in a God, men would postulate one simply as a pretext for living hard, and getting out of the game of existence its keenest possibilities of zest." (WWJ, 628) And, just as he diagnoses the effectiveness of war as a cultural educator, James here notes another peculiarity of human psychology—that the thought that our own desires are backed up by the demands of an infinite and all-powerful being is a powerful motivating agent.

Here we approach a deep tension in James's thought. On the one hand, James is attuned to the value of the strenuous mood. If the modes of education reinforced by the metaphysics of experience cannot do what the religious mood does, if they cannot call forth what is best in the human animal: its herculean passions, willingness to adventure, and zest for life, then these educations ought to be "driven to the wall." Just as the power of war as a stimulant to life presents a problem for the opponent of present forms of war, the concentration of the power of faith in a single absolute presents a problem to a

pluralistic and problem-oriented faith. The problem that James faces is the same one that we lovers of democracy continue to face today: the production of a mode of imagination that could tap the strenuous mood in the service of democratic modes of life.⁹ The religious dimension of the question of education looks like this: is it possible to build a democratic form of the religious function; one that puts the wonder, awe, vagueness, and uncertainty that is invoked by it to work in the service of uplifting and emboldening the energies of men?¹⁰ History gives us few examples, so we must ask: is it possible to joyously and strenuously face a tragic universe of multiple conflicting goods and alien ways of life without the sense that the infinite is on our side?

On the other hand, pluralism's perspectivalism resists just this strenuous mood and its religious function. It asks: who are "we" that want such a democratic religion? It calls into question the demand for democracy itself and the acts that are perpetrated on behalf of this demand. It casts a wary eye towards the highest ideals, towards the noblest of endeavors. The temperament, the ethos, of democratic pluralism demands not only the recognition of alternative temperaments, but their preservation. It locates the intersection of differences as the site of imaginative experimental encounters, the very hallmark of the thriving interaction that serves as the meaning of democratic culture. But if this temperament and perspective came to dominate and restrict the experimental possibilities within experience, the very possibility of the perspectival educative experience that is

⁹ In *A Common Faith*, Dewey writes eloquently of the need to construct a working faith in democracy and interestingly connects this faith with both education and the war-function: "Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values we have received that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it. Here are all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class, or race. Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind. It remains to make it explicit and militant," (LW 9:57-58)

¹⁰ William Gavin's *William James and the Reinstatement of the Vague* makes just this sort of argument. His penetrating analysis of the Jamesian conception of experience and its ethical and political implications colors much of my analysis throughout this dissertation.

located at the heart of democratic culture would be foreclosed. Can the war for the production of a faith in democracy call forth the strenuous mood on behalf of the democratic temperament? Or would this cultural strenuous mood be fascism masquerading as democracy, an ethos looking to dominate the plane of experience in the name of democracy?

James' way of tackling this problem illuminates the relation between his critical social philosophy and his metaphysical vision. James' approach to religion parallels the problem of reconstructing the disciplinary function of war. Just as James wants to acknowledge and address our love of war in an attempt to bring about peace, he must also acknowledge and address our love of ethical absolutes in the attempt to bring about a pluralistic culture. As in his approach to re-evaluating the educative function of war, the strategy and the *ethos*, the practice and the vision, are combined. His approach to the question of religious pluralism does not work by placing them in opposition, but by encountering the religious-function in a certain way, to a certain extent. James is in search of a way to say yes to the motivating and life-affirming aspects of religion—any other approach would violate the commitment to the alien demand that is at the heart of his democratic pluralism—without sacrificing the commitment to pluralism that is at odds with the common claims that religion makes to single and absolute authority.

The challenge he faces, then, is the creation of a democratic faith, one capable of appropriating the motivating power of religion in service of democratic ends. James will build his pluralism out of the psychological insight that what we love in our absolutisms are not the ends they commit us to, but the *commitment* itself, the sense of meaning, risk, sacrifice, and purpose with which it fill our lives. His gamble is that the ends to which an

anti-pluralist absolutist faith functions are less important to the believer than the experiences that it generates along the way. After all, it is the means—the strenuous mood, the motivating faith—that is experienced directly. And it is this experienced means that is the life-blood of any ethos. The ends, whether they be heaven, righteousness, judgment, domination, spiritual wealth, certainty, brotherly love, communion with the infinite truth, even political justice are really the *means to the more essential means*: the provocation of the strenuous mood, the meaningful life. The production of a pluralistic, democratic metaphysics is worth little if it cannot call forth from the game of existence “its keenest possibilities of zest.”

Perhaps it is for these reasons that James builds a sort of religiosity into his conception of experimental freedom. Towards the end of “The Will to Believe,” James ruminates on the essential role that faith plays in intellectual inquiry. In all matters in which the truth is as yet not known faith is not opposed to reason, but is necessary to it.¹¹ To wait for intellectual insight into the truth of things is, in fact, to act on the faith that the world hangs together intellectually and rationally. James writes,

Indeed, we *may* wait if we will, --I hope you do not think I am denying that,--but if we do so, we do at our peril as much as if we believed. In either case, we act, taking our life into our hands. No one of us ought to issue vetoes to the other, nor should we bandy about words of abuse. We ought, on the contrary, delicately and profoundly to respect each others mental freedom: then only shall we bring about the intellectual republic; then only shall we have that spirit of tolerance without which all our outer tolerance is soulless, and which is empiricism’s glory; then only shall we live and let live, in speculative as well as practical things. (WWJ, 734)

Because experimental faith is an ineliminable aspect of an eventuating experience, to veto a belief for the sole reason *that it is held on faith* is unjustifiable. This does not mean

¹¹ As we will see, the picture of the world that we have been painting is one in which few, if any, truths are known absolutely; in a pluralistic and perspectival universe, faith has a role to play in practically every experience.

that every view must be tolerated; it only requires that faith itself be tolerated as intellectually honest. The metaphysics of experience, with its partialities, flows, and unfinished business does not take faith as opposed to an experimental intelligence. It sees genuine faith as essential to experimental reason. James' vision does not pit religion and science against each other; it shows how they are actually similar in form, if different in content. In fact, the challenge that the opposition between science and religion presents is not how to eliminate one at the expense of the other, but how the relation between the two different forms of experience might be brought together and made mutually beneficial.

The value of the metaphysics of experience thus cannot be understood outside of the context of the role that faith and belief play in the production of democratic intelligence. As I have indicated various times, the metaphysics of experience is not meant to set the framework of Being against which all becoming might be judged. It is not meant to answer for all times and for all people the question: "What is Being?" His metaphysics is not an answer to a question at all. It is an spur to experimental faith—one might almost use the word "investment" if it could be freed from narrow associations with the stock market—a lump sum of imaginative capital meant to fund the ongoing production and reconstruction of a democratic way of life, the outlines of which are always not yet known.

James defines faith as "the greeting of our whole nature to a kind of world conceived as well adapted to that nature," (WWJ, 735). Unhappy with the worlds available to his pluralistic, empirical, and democratic temperament, James puts that temperament to work in the service of a "world conceived" in imagination that affirms

the life that conceives it. His metaphysics is not legislative, it is *ethical* in the classic sense: it frames, supports, and harmonizes with a way of life. Instead of an architectonic founding and grounding of the house of being; his metaphysics, like Nietzsche's, is the guiding vision of an *ethos*. Its function is not to provide a basis for truth claims. The metaphysics of pure experience is more akin to a Deleuzian desiring machine; it eats up anti-democratic views, digests what is nutritive, and shits out a soil that may—or may not; shit is still shit after all—be spread for the fertilization of democratic possibilities.¹²

In the end, then, it is the problem of democratic education, the problem of how to create a democratic *ethos* of meaningful activity—the unlocking of human powers in the service of life—that is the criterion for evaluating the value of metaphysical ideas. The truth of a view of reality is found in its “continuing and corroborating” democratic experience. Does it work along with, cohere with, and inspire faith in the cultural production of active and strenuous lives? The truth value of the metaphysical idea found in *its ability to educate*—when the metaphysics is put to work in the world does continue and corroborate the production of active, growing, committed, meaningful, multiple, and *strenuous* lives? It is the commitment to this educational project in the widest sense of the word that gives the pragmatic standard for evaluation of theoretical metaphysics.

In this chapter, I have drawn out some of the implications of the metaphysics of

¹² As a side note, the approach that academic philosophy often takes in its analysis of its monumental figures is similar to performing an autopsy. We love these old dead ideas, taking them apart, bending the old joints that have been stiffened by *rigor mortis*. Make the dead skeletons dance for a bit, and then put them back in their coffins. The present analysis of the work of William James is perhaps no different: the loving encounter with a dead man, a kind of intellectual necrophilia. Nature, though, knows a different economy of death. Its indifference allows for an ongoing refertilization: on the pre-organic, molecular scale we die a million deaths a second, and are born again just as frequently; on the scale of atoms and electrons, we live forever, endlessly recycled. William James, for example, was reborn as John Prine among others, a couple of generations later, singing: “Please don’t bury me down in that cold cold ground. I’d rather have them chop me up and pass me all around. Throw my brain in a hurricane and the blind can have my eyes. The deaf can take the both of my ears if they don’t mind the size.”

experience for problematizing war and religion in terms of their pedagogical functions. I have indicated the ways in which taking an experimental view of these functions draws our attention to the tensions available within these functions and the problems that these tensions pose for the formation of democratic forms of life. I have also indicated that the metaphysics of experience makes us more attuned to the differential effects of the war and religions functions, to the actual experiences they produce, and to the different ways in which their effects may impact different segments of experience.

In the next chapter, I return to the question that framed reflective turn to the metaphysics of experience, the difference between a badly instrumentalized education, one that works in the service of names and slogans, and an experiential education, one that takes as its end the experimental production of experiences of growth. In this final chapter, I offer some ways of rethinking what a school is and how it works on the basis of the experiential notion of education. I also offer some thoughts on the problems and possibilities that this way of thinking offers to people directly and actively involved in processes of education.

CHAPTER FOUR

SCHOOLS AND THE CREATION OF DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE

...there is a more or less implicit, tacit, or presupposed image of thought which determines our goals when we try to think. For example, we presuppose that thought possesses a good nature, and the thinker a good will (naturally to 'want' the true); we take as a model a process of recognition – in other words, a common sense or employment of all the faculties on the same object; we designate error, nothing but error, as the enemy to be fought; and we suppose that the true concerns solutions – in other words, propositions capable of serving as answers. This is the classic image of thought, and as long as the critique has not been carried to the heart of that image it is difficult to conceive of thought as encompassing those problems which point beyond the propositional mode; or as involving encounters which escape all recognition; or as confronting its true enemies, which are quite different from thought; or as attaining that which tears thought from its natural torpor and notorious bad will, and forces us to think.” (Deleuze 1994/1968, p. xvi)

Deleuze, in these words and in his general vision for philosophy, was concerned with articulating, both in style and content, a model of thought more akin to the movement of living experience. His thought, his criticism, his philosophy took its energy and direction from the intuition that the classic image of thought, in its will to truth, and its self-understanding as a process of recognition had caused us to lose sight of the experience of *thinking*.

Thinking is familiar with error. Thinking points beyond propositions toward the vague and unspeakable aspects of experience. Thinking makes encounters beyond recognition. If the classic image of thought associates thinking with knowing, with recognizing, with understanding—with the features of a subject under control—then *thinking* as an activity must be torn from the complacency of this control, “its natural torpor and bad will.” Deleuze’s philosophy is an attempt to *force* us to think. We

experience in his dizzying and unsettling texts, as in those of Nietzsche, the force of his thinking. Deleuze works to reveal a model of thinking that is tangible, sensible, and productive, one that works to push beyond the limits of truth and knowledge. Indeed, Deleuze's great insight is that the way in which thinking has been understood is an impediment to thinking. In this way, Deleuze's texts recall the philosophical practice of Socrates, who loved thinking more than understanding and who pursued wisdom and truth for the love it generated in him.

In many ways the task of this dissertation has tracked a similar path. I have been looking for a model of education that points beyond communicating the things we already know, beyond the institutions that are recognized as educational, beyond the opposition between student and teacher, in short a conception of education that operates beyond the dominant image of education. My strategy for developing this conception of education has been to focus on the nature of experience. Just as thinking, if it is to be creative, must make an encounter with the beyond, with the not yet cognized, much less recognized, so must education, if it is to lead to the growth and the renewal of life, make an encounter with the elements of experience that have not yet been tamed and brought under the control of social or individual life.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, I suggested that many of the problems that education faces today are linked to and produced by particular habits of conceiving the relationship between education and the ends towards which it works. I suggested that the solutions that are commonly proposed to educational problems often in fact contribute to the very problems that they are intended to solve. By misidentifying the task of education, traditional educational "solutions" often work only to feed and metastasize a

collection of educational institutions and practices that work in actuality to create mis-educative experiences by foreclosing and disrupting possibilities for experiences that may lead to growth.

The primary problem that I identified with respect to the relation between education and its ends is that the relationship between the educational practices and the ends they serve are commonly conceived as instrumental and external. We see this externality in three ways: 1) the separation between the results that we demand from education and the qualities of the immediate experiences that take place in educational institutions, 2) the isolation and separation of educational institutions from the wider social and political communities in which they operate, and 3) in the conception of education as a subservient system, the quality of which is only conceived in terms of experiences that lie outside of the immediate educational experience. Each of these three aspects of externality separates the subject of education from possibilities for renewal.

In the second chapter, I suggested that the habits of thinking that fund the externality of the relation between education and democracy are connected with and reinforced by a long-standing metaphysics that take the very separations that inhibit the development of educational practice to be necessary features of reality. Through readings of the metaphysical work of James and Nietzsche, I developed an account of experience that takes these separations and externalities not as metaphysical features of the real, but as problems within experience to be treated, resolved and reconstructed. I argue that by emphasizing the elements of experience that have not yet been placed under the control of intellectual or institutional life, both James and Nietzsche's metaphysical accounts offer resources for conceiving ways of educating that do not simply repeat experiences

that have been tamed, known, or otherwise controlled. They move us towards the creation of an educational practice that is experimental in a profound sense. The experiments of education do not simply teach knowledges and values that are already familiar. On the contrary, they open the way to experimental encounters *beyond* knowledges and values, encounters that work towards the renewal of a life that finds meaning in moving beyond meaning.

In the third chapter, I showed how the account of experience that I developed in chapter two might allow us to rethink war and religion in terms of the project of democratic education. By taking war and religion as multiple, active, and transformational events of power immanent to experience, we are better able to understand the role that war and religion may play in the production of democratic experience. The metaphysics of experience allows us to see war and religion in terms of their differential educative effects and possibilities, rather than in terms of dichotomous oppositions like peace and violence or faith and reason. Seeing war and religion in these ways allows us to rethink these phenomena in terms of both the possibilities *and* problems they create for democratic culture.

In this final chapter, I take up the question of how rethinking the nature of experience allows makes it possible to connect more intimately and less externally the practices and institutions of education with the political ends towards which these practices strive. I do this in two ways, at two levels. First, I take the institutional level of education: the question of how the relation between schools and the wider society ought to work. I look at the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) schools as a model for the sort of institution that unifies the democratic and educational functions *within* the

experiences generated by and through the institution. Second, I take up the interpersonal level of education: the question of how the relation between teachers and students ought to work. Here I draw on my own experience as a high school physics teacher and as a graduate student instructor in philosophy, looking at both how my conception of the nature of experience has arisen from my experiences as a teacher as well as how it has allowed me to conceive both the ends and means of my educational practice more clearly.

Schools and Society

The difference between conceiving the educational crisis as a metaphysical crisis instead of, say, a funding crisis, a crisis in standards, or a crisis in skills, is that to see the question as one of metaphysics turns our attention to the sense in which problems in education are as profoundly rooted in experience as the problem of meaning itself. To look at education from a metaphysical perspective is to take education as more than a means to the accomplishment of human ends. It is to take education a process that works to define, create, and revalue these ends. To educate is to transform the meanings of experience, to uproot and tangle with the problems and possibilities of human striving. If schooling is imagined only as a system run by bureaucrats, educational officials, textbook companies, and teachers unions for the ends of social or economic reproduction, then the schools are denied their metaphysical capacity and responsibility as educational institutions to produce, transform, and renew the meanings of experience. The school, as steward of the production of the education, not only has the right to creatively define experience, it has the responsibility to do so. To ignore this responsibility or to partition it out to institutions that do not take the task of education as their central function is to strip

the experiences that happen in the school of their power and responsibility to do metaphysical work of creating meaningful experience.

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey offers a way of thinking about schooling that focuses attention on the way in which schools not only educate, but also construct the concepts of education. At the end of the first chapter, in a short section called “The Place of Formal Schooling,” Dewey identifies the most basic problem of formal schooling not in the homogenization of formal education, not in the lack of resources for schooling, not in teacher pay, not in the tensions between public education and private education, but in

the method of keeping a proper balance between the formal and the informal, the incidental and the intentional, modes of education... To avoid a split between what men consciously know because they are aware of having learned it by a specific job of learning, and what they unconsciously know because they have absorbed it in the formation of their characters by intercourse with others, becomes an increasingly delicate task with every development of special schooling. (MW 9:12)

Here Dewey identifies a key and often ignored element of schools. Schools do not only educate the people who pass through their doors; they also educate the wider public *into the very meaning of education itself*. In other words, by establishing the distinction between formal and informal learning, between modes of experience that consciously and deliberately educate and modes of experience that educate without intent or intention, the formal school not only operates according to dominant conceptions of education, it also produces through the distinction between formal and informal education the very meaning of conscious learning.

To understand the school in this way is to connect it immanently to processes of democratic production as an agent of democratic mediation instead of to understanding the function of schooling in terms of an external means/ends dichotomy. In other words,

the educative function of schools is not only to transmit pre-established meanings, values, knowledges and practices of democratic culture, but also, through its very presence, to produce the very meaning of education itself.

Schools, then are not only institutions, they are also concepts. They work to delineate, define, and disseminate the meaning of education through the mediation of experience. By determining the difference between an educational setting and ordinary “non-educative” experience, the schools mediate the difference between experiences that lead to growth and development and experiences that do not open pathways of learning. The schools not only educate the students who attend them, they also serve a symbolic function as “embryonic societies” that represent and communicate the possibility (and impossibility) of social growth.

Dewey’s notion of the school is uniquely suited to analyze the school as a site of the production and dissemination of the meaning of experience. By conceiving schools as sites of the production of meaning instead of as a system that works in the service of external ends such as diplomas, economic competitiveness, and knowledge, Dewey quite radically transforms the problem space of education. This way of conceptualizing the schools makes them into sites of the experimental reorganization of experience, rather than as systems that work in service of the dominant regimes of power. Rethinking the schools in this way does not “solve” the problem of these powers, but it does expose them. Instead of asking: Why the schools are failing to make America competitive in the global market? Or, how might the schools be better administrated in order to produce global competitiveness? Dewey’s conception points us towards the relations between the concrete experiences within the schools and the concrete experiences in the wider social

body. We might ask, for example: How do the complexes of power that organize schooling institutions make possible or impossible the creation of new experiences within the schools? Or, how does the boundary between school and society function to impede this creation on the one hand, and to quiet its happening on the other?

To be sure, the outlines of a responses to these question are almost impossible to make out for the very reason that Dewey identified almost a century ago: "...the school has been so set apart, so isolated from the ordinary conditions and motives of life, that the place where children are sent for discipline is the one place in the world where it is most difficult to get experience—the mother of all disciplines worth the name," (MW 1:12). To put the meaning of schools in terms of global social and political processes that have, practically speaking, no known relation to the immediate activities, habits, knowledges, and practices that make up the experience (or lack thereof) of the daily life of schools is to practically eliminate the possibility of extracting useful trains of experience from the modes of life that schools generate. The externality and artificiality of many schooling procedures are a mark of the separation of the school from the very ends towards which it strives. The question of schools today is a simple one from the point of view of experience: how do the experiences created by and within school communities relate to experiences in the wider social body? If the externality and separation between these two modes of experience is too great, then the forms of life generated by the school are doomed to struggle in the soil of the wider social body. On the other hand, if the schools are to serve their critical social function it is clear that the experience that the schools produce must differ qualitatively from experience in the wider social body. The function of schooling is not merely to recognize and repeat the values held in society at large but

to renew and reconstruct these values in such a way that the growing ecology of this body is maintained and directed towards health and vibrancy.

As an example of a school that takes the question of the relation between the institution and the wider culture as a central aspect of its own educational practice, let me discuss briefly the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) schools. The Oxford American Dictionary gives two primary definitions for school. The first is simply that a school is “an educational institution.” The second is that a school is a type of society: “a group of people sharing a cause, principle, or method.”¹ Though these definitions are often separated, it is impossible to understand the school as a living phenomenon if these two ways of conceiving the school not thought together. The first definition names only an entity. The second definition names the activity of this entity. The KIPP program is a school in both senses of the word. It is both an educational institution and it is also a group of people gathered around a shared cause, principle and method. Its website proclaims this shared cause: “Every day, KIPP students across the nation are proving that demography does not define destiny,” (<http://www.kipp.org>, 2009). In carrying out this project, KIPP prides itself on measuring itself as other educational institutions do, and in many ways the results it measures its success appear at first glance to be external in just the fashion that I have been criticizing throughout this dissertation. Its website hosts numerous articles and studies that measure KIPP’s performance by traditional standards. KIPP graduates, for example, outperform their peers on achievement tests and enter college more regularly. KIPP students are taught from the moment that they commit to the school the year that they will graduate from college, and they are taught to believe in that possibility. They take the standardized testing system seriously and work explicitly to

meet the goals laid out by that system. They understand full well the power that this system wields in the centers of educational theory and in the halls of state and federal government.

Where KIPP departs from standard ways of conceiving these results is that it explicitly acknowledges the power of these tests and of college admissions to determine the immediate future of its students and its students' communities. These tests are not promoted to its students as ends in themselves, but—and this is the crucial point with respect to the question of the role of experience in schooling—as means to the immediate experiment around which the experiences of the school is organized: to prove, by means of the very tests that for years have demonstrated the opposite conclusion, that demography does not define destiny. The KIPP schools are focused on creating a community that has the power to take control of the very experiential valences that have worked to deny access to social capital and to turn them towards the opposite outcome. In other words, the KIPP schools are less a “system of education” and more a school in the traditional meaning of the word: an educational institution centered around a common and concrete mission. The purpose around which this school is formed is simply stated: to prove that education, the renewal of life by transmission, the openness of experience—demography not defining destiny—is possible. Its ends are integrated with its means: the school is successful if it creates the sort of environment in which its own experience, the experience of education, is charged with meaning.

Though KIPP is “results oriented,” it recognizes that the results it achieves are immanently linked to the commitments it demands. The KIPP schools do use more or less typical criteria such as college diplomas, standardized tests scores, and other objective

data to determine whether or not their community goals are being realized. However, the real work of the school takes place in linking these criteria to the production of meaningful experience: experience that has a past and a future, an aim and a process, commitment and successes. By explicitly theorizing the relation between the criteria set up by the dominant powers in education and the immediate experiences that happen in the school community, KIPP enacts the educational moment that Dewey describes at the opening of *Democracy and Education* in which the forces that act upon the community or individual organism are taken up as possibilities for the renewal of life. By means of the critical appropriation of the institutions of education on behalf of the experience of those subject to these institutions works, KIPP works to create a dynamic experience, a living example of the Jamesian notion that sometimes faith in a fact helps to create that fact. Their entry requirement is a pledge of commitment—from all members of the community, students, parents, and teachers—that foreshadows the results to follow, (http://www.kipp.org/01/commitment_full.cfm, 2009). Here is an example of a school that is working to develop a new model of educative experience, one that involves and integrates the traditional aspects of schooling but in pursuit of new and more meaningful forms of democratic life.

When educational theorists do not attend to the immediate ways in which this educative experience is formed, this dynamism is split apart. In articles on the KIPP school, elements of community and experience creation that are essential to a KIPP education are often downplayed and the “results”, taken out of the context of the meaningful experience of which they are the natural outcome, are over-emphasized. So, for example, the work of community building that KIPP undertakes is reduced to the

notion of “an intense educational program,” the intensity of which is defined by the number of hours per day that the members of the school community put in (Musher 2005). The question of KIPP becomes one of the sort of effectiveness of such an “intensive program,” and the effectiveness is not theorized in terms of the new experiences that is the true mark of this intensity, but in terms of the results of standardized tests and in terms of the ability of the student to be re-integrated into traditional schools: “The data from this study suggested that the benefits of an intense educational experience are cumulative and sustainable while students remain in the program. Anecdotal information, supported by objective test results, showed that alumni of this program continued to do well academically in public and private high school programs following completion of the KIPP middle-school program,” (Musher, 2005).

The theorist’s report on KIPP can claim that what the KIPP schools really show has really nothing to do with the KIPP community goal of proving that demography does not define destiny. This mutilation by abstraction allows the theorist to co-opt the experiential function of the school. When it comes time to “provide insight into important social and political questions,” here is what we get: “This study showed that providing an enriched educational experience can lead to remarkable improvement in scores on standardized tests, supporting the notion that tests can be used to document the educational success of the experience,” (Musher, 2005). The important social and political upshot of the KIPP schools: reinforcement of the powerful and pervasive testing apparatus! Such analysis twists the KIPP experience from one that is interested in reconstructing long and pernicious social powers that have obstructed the development of poor, Black, and Hispanic communities into an argument for the effectiveness of

standardized testing. Because the educational theorist cannot see the task of the school as the creative reconstruction of what counts as an educational experience, the transformative characteristics of KIPP are co-opted by the very powers that historically worked to create or maintain the very social problems that KIPP attempts to solve. This power move is made possible by the theorist's inability to see the transformative and philosophical nature of the *experiences* of the school. Blinded by the a perspective that is blind to the vitality of experience, the results of KIPP are portrayed to the wider public as arguments for the success of school testing, rather than in terms of the recreations of experience that they attempt.

The remove of educational theory from educational experience mirrors an equally external relation between school and the rest of society. In most instances, the value of a school is seen primarily in terms of the success or failure of the students who are the "products" of the educational "system." The results of a good education are articulated in terms of the outcomes of individual young people: whether or not they score well on certain tests or are admitted to particular colleges. A common story is told. Schools work on the bodies and minds of the young in order to facilitate the transition into social life. This story describes the school as an institution that channels social life through various separate disciplines into forms of knowledge that can be digested by the developing child. These disciplines are forms of power that work through mind and body to produce habits that the mature and responsible organism will use to continue the process of social reproduction on a larger scale. These habits of thinking about education set very precise boundaries on conceiving just how, where, and by what strategies education, the renewal of life by transmission, takes place.

However, to take schools as sites of the experimental creation of meaningful experience, is to pay attention precisely to the ways in which schools communicate the possibility or impossibility of democratic life. If we take the schools experientially, it becomes possible to understand how the school, through these forms of discipline, creates the very boundary between experiences of immaturity and maturity. It makes the difference between knowledge and ignorance. It marks off the intimate experience of family life from a more indifferent space of civil society. It creates students and teachers. It mediates between what has been and what will be. Schools become sites of the production of cultural values, rather than tools for the implementation of a culture that has already been determined.

Schools also, through these experiences, set up the difference between an educational experience and an experience has, apparently, nothing at all to do with education. Schools have doors that open and close, sharp divisions between the different subjects that it mediates, a structured and defined curricula, and a clearly demarcated beginning and end. The school thus signals itself as an enclosed space of education with well-defined means and ends.¹³ Schools, therefore, not only mediate experience but also, by marking the difference between formal and explicit modes of education and informal modes of education, produce the way in which experience is taken as educational or mis-educational by the wider culture.

Indeed, the most remarkable quality of a school is that it is a community that is explicitly concentrated around the task of the growth and dissemination of meaningful experience. It is, to use Dewey's language "an embryonic society," (MW 1:12). Schools

¹³ It is worth noting that by explicitly and actively drawing parents into the educational process, KIPP schools also work to vex this boundary.

are not opposed to the wider social body and they do not serve merely as a means to its perpetuation; they are specific *kinds* of societies. Namely, they are experimental ones, small communities organized around the task of the production of a better future. The schools are—or ought to be—places where conditions are established for the testing, modeling, and evaluation of democratic ideals. Their educative function, then, is not restricted to the participants in these experiments but extends also to the wider social project of developing a democratic culture. They are the institutional equivalent of a Kantian regulative ideal.

To speak in this way about the educative function of the school is to highlight in a precise way the real “problem” that schooling presents. This problem is not separable from the more general problem of democracy. The question of schooling is how, precisely, to create a democratic community. Schools ought to be judged according to this standard, and the value of any “educational result”, standardized or otherwise, ought to be expressed in terms of how well the school is working to solve and to renew the problem of how to create of a democratic community out of specific and local situations.

It is customary today to note the ways in which the schools are failing. But the failures of the schools are symptoms, not causes, of larger social failings. The primary and most pervasive of these failures is the lack of imagination with respect to social ends. The schools ought to be a site where this imagination is renewed, maintained, and provoked. However, if the best ends we can imagine for our educational practices are the vague and self-serving goal of “global economic competitiveness” or “literacy” or “better math and science scores,” then it ought to be no wonder that our schools are failing to produce meaningful democratic experience. If we continue to theorize the benefits of

education to students, teachers, parents, and communities in the same dead terms that underwrite and sustain the diminishing forms of community life in the 21st century, which often seem to draw their main inspiration from the movement of the DOW, then we should expect no better outcomes from the schools. The challenge that schooling presents is no different now than it was in Dewey's time: to present modes of community life that are meaningful enough to sustain and organize experiments in new forms of living. The function of Dewey's conceptualization of schooling is to draw attention to this fact, to orient us towards the imaginative work that schools do and fail to do.

The educational challenge that faces the school, the laboratory in which ideas are tested, is the forging of continuity between and among the increasingly global and rapidly changing relations that work constantly to reshape the boundaries of individuals and the communities in which they live. Creating this continuity means inquiring into the forms of power that produce us—into the activities and re-activities that produce our individual and social habits and formations. Experimental inquiry into these forces—the creation of a “will to *criticize* power”—is the agency by which social bodies degenerating at the behest of these might be healed in particular ways, at particular sites. The challenge is the formation of institutions and ways of life that will support this agency, an experimental and inquiring form of will to power. KIPP is an example of just this sort of institution: it works to transform the powers that work through its local communities by providing critical experiences to that community. It transforms the reactive relationship between community and testing apparatus (how does a school live up to the standards imposed by the testing apparatus?) into an active one (how can the standards imposed by the testing apparatus be appropriated for the task of the renewal of community life.)

However, as hopeful as the KIPP example may be, the pedagogical continuity between activity and re-activity that makes creative life possible is not guaranteed. It is a problem that cannot be solved permanently for any of us, and to attempt to solve this problem permanently across the whole of the social body leads exactly back into the issues of externality of ends that were broached in the first chapter of the dissertation. The KIPP schools can be successful because they are unique and counter-cultural sites. Their power comes in their resistance to dominant educational models, but if their model was made dominant, its power as an agent of the renewal of life would be lost.

Further, there are moments when the forces that act upon us are too great or too various or too subtle to be turned to the renewal of life. In fact, there comes a point in each living thing's life when its ability to renew itself wanes. Growth is not always possible. The flux of experience does not always lead to renewal; it is just as likely to lead to death, despair, annihilation, and dispersion.

A herculean educational ideal arises out of this recognition of the contingency of growth that is at the heart of the metaphysics of experience. As a fact, the renewal of life by transmission is the formation of life-habits out of the response to the flux of experience. In this sense, we are always undergoing the strain of education, as every experience either contributes to or undermines habit in the living organism or structure in the world. As James writes, "We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar," (1950/1890, p. 127). Education is an accumulation of scars, of small strokes. It names the sense in which transformation—for better or for worse—is always happening. In response to this fact emerges the reflective and critical demand that experience be

educative in a positive sense—that these experiences form habits of renewal instead of habits of decay. As a fact, education names the habit-forming element of experience. As a critical ideal, education is the demand that these habits renew themselves through engagement with the transforming elements of experience. *The ideal of education is the habit of experimentally reconstructing our habits in response to new experiences.*

This habit is one and the same as the will to examine and to remake relations of power, to see the world as an experiential plane of educative power. To critically inquire into the consolidations and formations of life is inseparable from the positive demand to see the world as an immanent web of educative power.¹⁴ Nietzsche's definition of life is appropriate here: "an enduring form of processes of the establishment of force, in which the different contenders grow unequally," (WTP, 342). The laboratory of education is an attempt to make and to control these forces to produce different forms of growth. It is a shifting world of power. To see the world as an immanent plane of unfinished events—

14 Foucault (1980) is one of the most thoroughgoing theorists of education in this sense. He makes plain the sense in which his view power is inseparable from the nature of his criticism:

It seems to me that power is 'always already there', that one is never 'outside' it, that there are no 'margins' for those who break the system to gambol in. but this does not entail the necessity of accepting an inescapable form of domination or an absolute privilege on the side of the law. To say that one can never be 'outside' power does not mean that one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what.

I would suggest, rather (but these are hypotheses which will need exploring): (i) that power is co-extensive with the social body; there are no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its network; (ii) that relations of power are interwoven with other kinds of relations (production, kinship, family, sexuality) for which they play at once a conditioning and a conditioned role; (iii) that these relations don't take the sole form of prohibition and punishment, but are of multiple forms; (iv) that their interconnections delineate general conditions of domination, and this domination is organized into a more-or-less coherent and unitary strategic form; that dispersed, heteromorphous, localized procedures of power are adapted, reinforced and transformed by these global strategies, all this being accompanied by numerous phenomena of inertia, displacement, and resistance; hence one should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, a binary structure with 'dominators' on one side and 'dominated' on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination which are partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies; (v) that there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective when they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies. (p. 142)

always undergoing, as always producing and being produced, as always engaged and being engaged, always charged with a will to power, always involved in differential and unequal processes of growth—is to adopt a strenuous critical attitude with respect to education. It is to set out the demand to listen to the multiplicity of habits that create us, a difficult task with no respite and no clear end. Can we make a home out of this labor, a democracy on an open road, the endless flow of the stream of experience? This is the philosophical question that democratic education poses, writ plain and clear. To respond well to this question is the task to come.

This brings me back to the question of experience and the role that philosophers who are committed to the project of democratic education have in mediating experience. We can take our cues from Dewey and also from KIPP. When we theorize about democratic education, it is of primary importance to attend to how we mediate these processes of experience. Philosophy is a school of thought. Its role is not to “discuss” the meaning of democratic education. It does not determine, on its own, a conception of democracy that is meant to guide educational practice from on high or from afar. Its point is not merely to imagine new ideas. As a *school* of thought, philosophy experimentally generates the meaning of experience out of its own practice. Its social function is educative and mediating: to create, out of past experiences new communities, new forms of life, new ways of thinking, new modes of experience. The metaphysics of experience I have been articulating is a concept that encourages the development of this function.

Teaching and Learning

We have just seen how the metaphysics of experience reconfigures the relation

between schools and the wider culture. It draws attention to the interactions and experiments that the schools run. It evaluates schools as sites of the experimental production of democratic experience, in terms of the actual experiences they produce, instead of (primarily) in terms of ends that may have very little to do with the problems that the actual school community experiences. In what follows, I will examine how taking an experiential approach might orient thinking about proper pedagogy at the classroom level, for classroom teachers.

In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, there is a short section called “On the Land of Education.” It begins, “I flew too far into the future: dread overcame me,” (p. 231). This dread of the future sends Zarathustra looking for a home, and on his way he stops briefly among the “men of today” in the “land of education,” (p. 231). Zarathustra says, “I can endure you neither naked nor clothed, you men of today. All that is uncanny in the future, all that has ever made fugitive birds shudder is surely more comfortable and cozy than your ‘reality.’ For thus you speak: ‘Real we are entirely, without belief or superstition,’” (p. 232). Education, on this account, inspired by a fear of the future runs the risk of manufacturing realities without belief or superstition. The schools are machines set up by the men of today as an attempt to tranquilize the future, an attempt to control the future for the sake of the present. Their strategy for doing this is to hide the way in which knowledge is belief, to hide the ways in which reality function as superstition. They work, in other words, to mask the elements of faith, transition, and perspective in experience.

In this manner, Nietzsche situates the problem of education between two extremes. First, Nietzsche notes that since education takes the future as its object, as its

product, its main task is to control this future for the sake of and in the interests of the men of today. Education frightened by the uncanny nature of its task, substitutes a reality “without belief or superstition” for the dread of the future. The schools of today: “half-open gates at which gravediggers wait... this is *your* reality: ‘Everything deserves to perish,’” (p. 232). If educators look only to prepare students for the reality of today, they are the gravediggers of the future. The difficult space of education is figured as on the one hand a future that is never present and on the other hand the nihilistic fetishization of a present-without-a future that is the very same phenomena put backwards.

On the other hand, Zarathustra the fugitive wandering bird, with his love of flight, is in danger of falling prey to the same form of resentment. He closes the short section on education with these reflections:

From all mountains I look out for fatherlands and motherlands. But home I found nowhere; a fugitive am I in all cities and a departure at all gates. Strange and a mockery to me are the men of today to whom my heart recently drew me; and I am now driven out of fatherlands and motherlands. Thus I now love only my *children’s land*, yet undiscovered, in the farthest sea: for this I bid my sails search and search. In my children I want to make up for being the child of my fathers—and to all the future, for *this* today. (p. 233)

Having been driven out of fatherlands and motherlands, having found himself cast adrift in a world of will to power, a world of pure experience, a world of makings and unmakings, Zarathustra sets sail for “my children’s land, yet undiscovered, in the farthest sea.” Here, perhaps, is a vision of childhood that is opposed to an education that would only repeat the conditions and problems of today. But this vision is itself a reactive one, a dream formed out of resentment against the betrayal of the future by the men of today: “I want to make up for being the child of my fathers—and to all the future, for *this* today.” Even for Zarathustra, *ressentiment* inspires the vision of the land of the future.

On the one hand, then, Nietzsche gives us education as a machinery of the present working on the body and the mind of the child to maintain and perpetuate the present at the expense of the future. On the other hand, we have a concept of childhood that is merely reactive, an empty concept, forged out of contempt for the machinery of education and its lack of respect for and dread of a future that it cannot imagine and will do its best to prevent. Neither of these moments is enough to create a positive conception of a liberatory education. We have here only a negative space: a dead education of today and an empty and reactive childhood of tomorrow.

Throughout this dissertation, in various ways and in various contexts, I have been suggesting that the concept of experience—or rather, the actuality of experience—as articulated by James’ metaphysics of pure experience on the one hand and Nietzsche’s will to power on the other provides a way of conceptualizing education that falls into neither extreme. I have suggested that an attunement to events, relations, bodies, ethoi, perspectives, and efforts might provide a way through the problem space that Nietzsche here identifies. The way to an intelligent educational practice means creating institutions, practices, habits, and forms of life that escape both the repetition of today and a naïve escapism into a romanticized tomorrow.

In what follows I provide some invitations to consider more positively what such an educational practice may look like from the standpoint of teaching and learning, how such a practice might challenge institutional structures of the school, rearrange relations of power in the classroom, and open the way to encounters that lead to neither to the repetition of today’s forms of life nor to the resentment of those forms of life. I pose the labor of classroom teaching as an affirmative relation, a sort of gay science, one that is

not practiced on the basis of a today or a tomorrow, but instead reaches out of a generalized today or a romanticized tomorrow into the hard but necessary work of *living*: encountering and creatively working through the tissue of lived experience, weaving and unweaving difficulties, constructing the singular lives of people, the singular places of community, the singular intersections of meaning.

In the first chapter, I argued that part of the problem of education was that it does not take the future seriously enough as a future. The relation between educational means and political ends had been drawn too tight in part because the ends are known all too well, in advance, and not allowed to emerge out of the means. The political ends come to dominate education, making it into a mere means. Such domination has an effect on both the educative function as well as the political ideals. The primary effect is to diminish the wildness of experience, to tranquilize it, to subsume it, and often to make this wildness erupt into violence. When the transient, vague, and unsettled aspects of experience are ignored by intelligence or put into service of the constant, the clear, and the determined, these elements of experience are not intelligently connected to the task of education—growth, the renewal of life. The wildness of experience is then stripped of its ability to play a meaningful role in the educational process. When it appears, it appears only as chaos, uncertainty, fear, or disobedience, never intelligently as an integrated part of the practice of education. James famously quotes B.P. Blood in the preface of “The Will to Believe” (1956/1897): “Not unfortunately the universe is wild, —game-flavored as a hawk’s wing. Nature is miracle all; the same returns not save to bring the different. The slow round of the lathe gains but the breadth of a hair, but the difference is distributed back over the whole curve, never an instant true—ever not quite,” (p. ix). If, for

“universe,” the word “classroom” were substituted, most of us would laugh. But in this laughter is the challenge of the teacher.

A full practice of teaching, one that puts the unsettles as well as the settled to work on behalf of intelligent life, demands an “art of the wild,” a definition of which is given by the poet Gary Snyder (1999/1992):

The “art of the wild” is to see art in the context of the process of nature—nature as process rather than product or commodity—because “wild” is a name for the way that phenomena continually actualize themselves. . . . The work of the art of the wild can well be irreverent, inharmonious, ugly, frazzled, unpredictable, simple, and clear—or virtually inaccessible. Who will write of the odd barbed, hooked, bent, splayed, and crooked penises of nonhuman male creatures? Of sexism among spiders? Someone will yet come to write with the eye of an insect, write from the undersea world, and in other ways that step out of the human. (p. 260)

Snyder is, of course, calling for a sort of poetry, a written art of the wild that draws attention to the processes of nature. But the case is translatable to the art of teaching. What is essential to an art of the wild is that it attend not only to phenomena, to what is present before us in the form of products, ideas, commodities, possessions, but also and perhaps more essentially to the way in which the “phenomena continually actualize themselves.” In other words, an art of the wild brings reflection to the aspects of experience that have not yet arrived, the aspects that are on their way, the aspects that are of the future of tomorrow, not the future of today.¹⁵

That the encounters of teaching ought not only be such an art, but *already are* whenever such encounters genuinely occur is merely a logical point. There is no renewal of experience, no preparation for the future, no possibility of growth without connecting up an encounter beyond the limits of the present with the present and the past out of

¹⁵ Certainly the notion of wilderness can and should be extended beyond that of nature and animals; Mills notes, for example, “the nonwhite body is a moving bubble of wilderness in white political space, a node of discontinuity which is necessarily in permanent tension with it,” (1997, p. 53).

which it arises. The future must be made real, brought present not reactively out of negation of the present, but affirmatively as the possibilities of the present, as the way in which the present itself is not yet settled. This is a metaphysical point that is also a pedagogical point. Bergson (1998/1911) puts it this way:

...if the evolution of life is something other than a series of adaptations to accidental circumstances, so also it is not the realization of a plan. A plan is given in advance. It is represented, or at least representable, before its realization. The complete execution of it may be put off to a more distant future, or even indefinitely; but the idea is none the less formulable at the present time, in terms actually given. If, on the contrary, evolution is a creation unceasingly renewed, it creates, as it goes on, not only the forms of life, but the ideas that will allow the intellect to understand it, the terms which serve to express it. That is to say, the future overflows its present, and can not be sketched out therein in an idea. (p. 103).

The future overflows its present. In the term “overflows,” there is the possibility of delineating more positively a relation and interaction between the future and the present, one that succumbs neither to the petty realities of the men of today, nor to the fugitive flight of the Nietzschean bird. A pedagogy responsive to the overflows of experience: that not only education, but also the very terms by which an educational experience is identified, known, and constrained, is subject to the overflow of the future would be one that is attuned to the art of the wild. It would work to create experiences that work out of the present, that reach, to echo Nietzsche and Snyder, beyond the human. The question then for a teacher committed to the renewal of experience is to take stock of the situation of the classroom, to see some critical ways in which it is, or might be, a site where the classroom experience overflows itself.

These overflows are not difficult to find, once one begins to look. What this means concretely is that the classroom itself is seen and engaged by the teacher from the standpoint of the actual experiences that happen instead of in terms of a future as seen

from the present, a place where grades are disseminated, where degrees are conferred, knowledges and characters are formed according to prevailing social conceptions. These are futures that are all too present, so much so that they bear down upon our students. These are the futures they have been taught will happen, must happen, and ought to happen. But the lifelessness of these futures is a sign of the deadness of the educational experiences that are formed through the intent to secure that future.

However, if these futures are problematized as not fully present; if they are theorized as sites for negotiation, interest, experiment, and activity these futures can be brought back into relation with the present. If they are taken as relations of power, as interactions of experience, then their existence becomes a site of possible encountering. A site not just for the reactive production of a future that is already present, but also, perhaps, a chance for activity, for reconstruction, for the forging of new identities, meanings, and relations out of that future.

How does this insight provide a signpost for educational practice at the level of the classroom teacher? Here the analysis cannot be abstract and communication cannot be direct; I must go down into the wild weeds of experience and attempt a sort of pollenization. For this purpose, I will take the luxury here in this last section of my dissertation to reflect upon some experiences in education, how those experiences turned me to philosophy, and how this turn to philosophy has changed the way in which I view the goals and challenges of teaching. Out of these experiences, I will draw a few lines of thought that are not irrelevant to the general push and vision of the more general and less idiosyncratic push of this dissertation.

If the account I have been giving all along makes education something that

happens in smaller places, in the events, happenings, openings, angles and crannies of experience, then perhaps it is appropriate that the ideas of which I have been speaking terminate in smaller and more personal problems. I take this manner of finishing not as a retreat from reflecting on the large and endemic problems of education that plague and stymie the production of democracy. On the contrary, by turning attention to the ways in which philosophy has a chance to change, to create, and to disassemble and reassemble problems on a micro-political scale, I hope not only to indicate that philosophy *can* have the effect of generating meaningful experience if we look to its experiential effects on a smaller and more local scale, but that it *has had* those effects, the mark of which I carry in my own life, which is bound up in small but not invisible ways with other lives, with your life.

In the classroom, the teacher practices a kind of experimental micro-politics. The problem of the classroom is how to create a meaningful, ongoing, intersubjective and developmental experience. The relationship between this micro-political production of meaningful experience and the larger problem of the production of a democratic culture is never direct. However, the argument of this dissertation is that we cannot understand the large social questions of democracy or of education without taking into account the effects of these questions on actual and living experiences, the sites that José Medina (2006) calls “eccentric and polyphonic” contexts. To turn, then, to the eccentricity of my own experience is not to speak for others or to make a claim that my experience is or should be like yours or his or theirs or hers. It is to interrupt the flow of reflection, to break a habit, to call attention to something smaller and more ordinary. To speak for a moment from elsewhere and to invite you to listen. Such is the challenge of teaching, the

work of pedagogy. It is in these small breakings and invitations, rather than in sweeping theoretical suggestions or the radical conclusions of political speculation, that the work of democratic philosophy, culture, education, and experience begins, ends, and finds itself again.

The question that will guide this final foray is one that takes reflection not as the abstract mind of a philosophical subject, but locates it as arising out of particular situations and returning, transformed to those situations. The question is simply this: How are the ideas and strategies developed here on the general subject of the relation of experience to the problem of democratic education related to my prior experiences as educator? This question has two related dimensions, one retrospective, and the other prospective. I will take these one at a time.

The retrospective question is takes up the issue of how theory, the reflective moment, rises out of past problems and practices. The impetus for the present reflection on issues of education can be derived from many sources, and telling the narrative of how this impetus came into being, like all acts of memory, is a matter of selective and interested engagement with the past. But it cannot be doubted that these thoughts on education rise at least in part from my experiences as a high school teacher at a small private school in Tennessee. What was most problematic for me at the time in this situation was a problem that I believe is common for many teachers. I was confused by the task that I was given and the responsibilities that it bespoke. These responsibilities worked on me as Nietzsche's dread of the future. I had fallen into the position of prophet without ever considering the message that I was beholden to give. My task: to create a future.

The classroom was designed in a certain way to communicate this task to me and to my students. Their chairs were oriented towards me. I had a curriculum that was progressive. We had common goals to achieve, a certain set of knowledges to inculcate, a certain set of values to instill. Time was marked everywhere: the repetition of classes, the regular bells, the quarters and semesters and school years: freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, communicated to all of us that we, together, were involved in the task of bringing a very particular sort of future into being. The younger students could see their future in the older ones. The newer teachers in their older peers. The older peers in the memories they had created, in the students that had passed through before, in the ones to come who were surely not so different. The school seemed to me, at least from this perspective, to be a vast and breathing machine capable of turning out progress. And so it went: 9th graders went on to become 10th graders. Chemistry students passed on to become physics students. Classes were passed, certificates received. Experience was ordered and meaningful, at least at a certain level. Education was happening. This is what the macro-level of the school experience indicated. The whole operation flowed along quite smoothly.

On the other hand, at the level of ordinary encounters and experiences this institutional progress was consistently problematized. Students complained about the tedium of classes. They wondered aloud about the point of their educations. Teachers saw their own experience as repetitive. Friendships were made and friendships broken. Trust betrayed and earned again. Students daydreamed in some classes, focused in others. Some individuals were expelled from the school. Schools were formed within the school: alliances of teachers, oppositions. The same with students. There were disagreements

over the meaning and ends of education, about how the school should operate, over its basic values, its most fundamental practices. Young people got sick. One was killed in a car wreck. Teachers gave birth, had hidden affairs, and some of them retired. This was the school in which we lived, it seemed to me. A wilder place, one where progress was much less evident but also where the stakes of education were much more clear, more immediate, and more direct.

My life, then, as educator, was divided between these two levels of experience. At one level, experience was loaded with the responsibility of progress, the demand to move students through, to expand their potentialities, to allow them to grow in real, measureable, and communicable ways. The demand to learn was ever present. At another level, this very same school was as fraught with a lack of progress in precisely the same ways and to the same extent that life outside of school is or might be. Here, there was a life that overflowed the ways in which the progress of the school was framed. Living experience militated against, problematized, and stimulated the demand to learn.

A.S. Neill (1992/1960) writes that children do not come to school in order to learn, but in order to live. This would be true, if these tasks could be separated. It is not possible to make a clear distinction between the macro-logical level of learning which heaves the sense and burden of the responsibility of progress onto each life it touches and the micrological wild livings of experience that escape and elude this responsibility. The micrological movements of life are the stuff out of which both the demand for progress and any measure of success that one might have in living up to that demand is made. This tension between living and learning is what the classroom is made out of. There is the order of the syllabus, the trajectory of the plan, the knowledge disseminated, tests

rendered, standards achieved, levels passed. Here is also the wild beating of hearts, the circulation of blood, the jiggling of legs, the wild dreams and thoughts, dust in the corners, light in the windows, fractures in the ceiling, skin, desire, the flash of sweat, the heat of explanation, the stubborn wall of frustrated confusion. To make a bridge between these two levels of experience is the job of the teacher. It is shared by the student, not because the institution demands it, though it does, but also because the student comes with her own task of building a life, renewing a life, out of all of these stimuli. The task of learning is partitioned out across the plane of the classroom.

The challenge of experiential education at the level of the classroom, then, is not so much to engage the experience of the student in way that it can be taken up and integrated with the notion of progress that the school institutions demands. To phrase the problem of teaching in this way is to put the task of living at the behest of the pedagogical task of learning instead of keeping the relationship between the two vital and open. More accurately, the difficulty that I faced as a teacher was in drawing connections backwards *and* forwards between the macro-level of experience-as-learning and the micro-level of experience-as-living. How can the classroom situation be made into a site not just of *learning*, of progress, of orientation towards a future that everyone knows all-too-well, but also of *living*, which is to say a site of repetition, relation, experimentation, lines of flight, and trains of effort? This was the way my experience was framed by the problem that I faced every day when I walked into the classroom. How could I live and educate? How could I make my teaching an act of living? And how could I let my students live while also demanding that they learn? These were the questions with which I was faced by the classroom experience, the problem that I had to work out. What was

the criterion by which genuine progress in the renewal of life can be separated from the sort of progress that schools are designed to communicate, as a set of slogans, often in advance of any renewing experiences that might or might not take place.

In response to these problems and question, I developed a few strategies. The first is simple, but powerful. Thematize the narrative of progress that frames and structures lived experiences within the school as a set of positive, if underdetermined values for the students in the classroom. Students should be made aware, from the outset, of the values that the school imbeds in the experiences that it creates. So, for example, students ought not only to sit at desks or in chairs. They ought not only use science labs and libraries. They ought not only to participate on sports teams or in choirs. They should also be made aware of how these experiences structure to frame and develop their very ideas about what it means to be a student is, and how those ideas arise. I worked to make students aware of how these elements of experience close off or make possible encounters within the classroom that may work beyond the idea that the classroom is a neutral site where education happens, perhaps magically by dint of my authority and the institutions standing behind me.

By thematizing these problems, I was able in some limited ways to bring out the ways in which the classroom space was not an empty place in which learning somehow magically occurred, but was able to indicate how the learning that took place in these areas was linked directly to the experiential conditions of the classroom. Students could see, for example, how the spare and simple laboratory instruments of my mechanics lab reflected the spareness and simplicity of the Newtonian equations. And how also, the neat corners and well-defined experiments blocked off certain forms of encounters with the

world. It is one thing know an eraser as it flies across a classroom room as a parabola. It is quite another know how to arc a basketball in a game, as the clock winds to zero, through the hoop. But the one practice informs the other. It is in this way that *immediate experience* becomes a part of the lesson and gets its chance to speak and to be heard in its own voice. The distinctiveness of this voice cannot be heard unless it is set over and against other possible situations. The precise situation of the physics classroom and the immediate experiences that it is set up to produce make no sense unless they are related to other situations, other possible classrooms, other modes of learning and living.

Secondly, I found it helpful to think about the classroom as a sort of problem space, attending to the ways in which the structures, values, and norms of the classroom make certain forms of social engagement possible and certain relations impossible. Why, for example, are science classrooms equipped with laboratories while history classrooms are not? What lesson does this communicate about the manner of conducting inquiry in science? What lesson does it communicate about the manner of conducting inquiry in history? Students might be brought into discussions, then, that not only work within the framing of the disciplinary experience, but also make this framing itself apparent *as an experience*, that like all experiences has its own perspective, its own ethos, its own criterion for effort, for success, for truth and falsity. In other words, it has been helpful for me to consider my practice as one of creating disciplinary experiences instead of, for example, as one of communicating truths, giving understanding, or raising questions. Surely, each of these other ways of framing education are tried and true principles of growth, but none of these pedagogical tools can be understood by teachers and students unless they are linked back into the question of what is happening at the level of ordinary

experience in the educational process.

Such an attunement to teaching as an art of creating experiences re-orient the problematic of pedagogy away from questions of what sort of pedagogical strategies are best for achieving what sorts of knowledge or moral goals. It rephrases this problem in terms of the more general problem of how these goals and strategies work both on and in experience to produce particular forms of life: particular ways of relating to each other. In other words, it puts the macro-logical curricular and institutional goals into conversation with the micro-logical living and lived experiences, not as powers that stand over and against these experiences in a disciplinary way, but as routines and channels around which the micro-logical happenings of life take place. It reminds us as teachers that our task is not only to learn, when we enter the classroom, but—like our students—our task is to live. To live means appropriating, encountering, transforming the forces that act directly upon us. The task as teacher is to create situations in which students can live. This can never be forgotten.

When we teach, we are involved in the experimental production of an embryonic society. The values structuring such societies are not determined solely by the forms of learning they make possible or by forms of life they communicate and educate into the lives of the people who work at the school or who attend it. Their value is also immediate and living. They have value in themselves as meaningful and living experiences in their own right. To delay or defer the value of these experiences to some social end or to theorize it solely in terms of the development of some species of adult life that will probably never arrive is to ignore the rich possibilities that may be available for living better now.

Finally, I have found it important to thematize the way in which the classroom experience is made possible by and dependent on in real and unavoidable ways on communities and individuals that these classrooms do not immediately reveal. If the classroom is to be a space for the renewal of experience, then it seems crucial to ask: whose experience can a classroom renew? Which forms of life does it suit? And which forms of life does it restrain? The people affected by what happens in classrooms are not only the people who sit in them, but the whole population of workers involved in the schooling institution and by the other institutions that fund and feed the school community. Who is made visible by the notion of classroom teaching? Who is made invisible in these communities? How can the classroom be a site where those who live and work at the margins of school life can be seen? And would they even like to be seen?

These questions point towards the way in which a classroom is imbedded in a rich social context. Drawing connections between the work of the classroom and the world outside of its walls is a delicate and difficult task, but the value of a lesson learned depends in part on the connections of that lesson to the wider social body. So, a teacher might ask: how can this classroom be made into a space where these connections are more evident, where the encounters that take place not only enact the current relations that make up the school body but *problematize* and *engage* these relations. When a leaf-blower moves underneath the window of a class at Vanderbilt, disrupting a conversation, what are the choices that can be made? Are these choices a part of the lesson? Does the whirr of the motor enter the class as an annoyance? As a representation of a relation of class? As a reminder of Vanderbilt's commitment to order and cleanliness? As a mechanical sound wave? And how do these meanings get attached to the motor? Which

are the principles of selection that operate? And how might this spontaneous event, which appears as disruptive, be reappropriated by the classroom participants into the discipline that the course demands?

Sometimes, surely, the answer will be: it can't, shut the window. We have an important conversation to continue. But if this is the answer always, and every time, if spontaneous occurrences are always shut out and never brought forward as part of the classroom experience, then the relation between the micrological structure of lived experience and the macrological drift of the classroom discipline never rises to the level of active and intelligent attention. Experience is flattened and condensed. The whirls and vaguenesses, the atomic percolations, the elsewheres and borderlands are stripped out. If they appear, they do so in harmless forms, as day dreams, as boredom, as a whirl of text messages, vibrating cell phones, and ipod earbuds. Learning becomes associated with its opposite, with the diminution of life, rather than with its advancement. The classroom becomes less wild, less experimental, less experiential.

At least this is my experience.

CONCLUSION

Alas, what are you after all, my written and painted thoughts! It was not long ago that you were still so colorful, young, and malicious, full of thorns and secret spices—you made me sneeze and laugh—and now? (Nietzsche 1992/1886, p. 296)

I have been writing for a while and have grown weary of my own voice. A call for an education committed to wildness, to renewal, and to pluralism can only be repeated so often before it becomes heavy, and tame. It is time to end the dissertation, to move on to a defense, a conversation, a new beginning. But before ending, as a way of moving forward, let me track where I have been.

In the first chapter, I drew rough characterizations of two models of education. The first I termed instrumental education. It was characterized as the dominant way of framing the question of education today. This way of imagining education sees it as a means to social and political ends that are determined without regard to the actual practices that make up the education of the social body. For instrumental education, the means and the ends of education are not mutually constitutive or interactive. The political ends work to structure unilaterally the institutions, practices, people that make up the educational experience. In contrast to this way of framing education, I posed the idea of experiential education. An intimate and interactive relation between means and ends characterized this way of framing education. Instead of seeing education as a system working to produce established political ideals like the democratic citizen, the corporate worker, or the critical thinker, experiential education frames the question of education in terms of the actual experiences that education produces. It understands education as an act of living, first and foremost, as the ongoing, lived, immediate, and embodied

encounter with the task of the renewal of life. I suggested that conceiving education experientially may lead to more intelligent analyses of the relation between the political task of producing democratic culture and the educational task of renewing life.

In the second chapter, in order to articulate more positively this account of experiential education, I drew from the metaphysical speculations of William James and Friedrich Nietzsche to delineate six categories of experience. I suggested that by theorizing education as eventuating, relational, perspectival, physiological, ethical, and herculean, some of the dualisms that animate the instrumental conception of education might be dissolved. I suggested that conceiving experience in this way foregrounds the project of democratic education as one of seeing the ways in which both traditional educational institutions and events, institutions, and practices work immanently to experience to create or inhibit the renewal of life in various forms. I argued that the meaning of experience that I articulate using James and Nietzsche might be valuable for freeing up the concept of education from its association with a system of schools and as a means to political ends, reproblematising the issue of education as an experimental project of the renewal of life across the entire social body, rather than as the production of a set of knowledges or values.

In the third chapter, I look at how the metaphysics of experience frames war and religion as experiential and educative functions. I argue that the metaphysics of experience allows more democratic ways of encountering these functions because it attunes us to the way in which these seemingly monolithic functions actually produce a variety of different experiences. If we understand the meaning and value of war and religion in terms of the actual experiences they produce, we can see possibilities (and

impossibilities) within war and religion for the production of democratic culture. Instead of taking war or religion at the level of a pre-defined concept, by looking to how these functions actually work, in concrete and living experiences, war and religion can be considered as functions appropriable for the renewal of experience—and criticized for the specific and concrete ways in which they inhibit the renewal of life. In other words, the metaphysics of experience allows us to see war and religion as educative functions that work within the wider social body. Such an way of taking these phenomena may create the possibility for critical interventions into these functions of the behalf of the production of democratic experience.

In the fourth chapter, I employ the metaphysics of experience to explore more traditional educational questions. First, I work to show how an attunement to experiential education makes it possible to see the schools as autonomous sites of the experimental production of democratic societies. I look at the KIPP schools as exemplary in this respect, showing how schools that take the question of the immediate creation of meaningful experience are more effective educators. I also suggest that looking at the schools in terms of the actual and direct experiences that they create, helps empower members of those school communities—teachers, students, administrators, and parents—by seeing them not as victims, but as active and engaged members of a community. Secondly, I turn my attention to how the way of thinking that I have been developing informs and was informed by my experiences as a classroom teacher. I invite an experimental attunement to the modes of experience that are unsettled, wild, and interruptive, and I suggest that such an attunement can enhance the classroom teacher’s ability to connect the macro-political project of creating students who have learned and

who are capable of continuing the project of learning with the micro-political project of creating spaces for living well together.

Many questions and problems remain. I have been concerned in this dissertation with developing a sort of specific vision for education, and I have suggested in a variety of contexts ways in which this vision may yield more democratic ways of living together. But much work is left ahead. My work, like most philosophical work, is long on imagination and short on concrete specificities. In order to determine more precisely the scope of its applicability, whether not this vision may be illuminating and helpful to others or idle speculation is yet to be determined. How the vision I have here articulated will survive and what future forms it will take will be determined in precise situations, by how it motivates me to take up future projects, and by how it might effect others to do the same.

I see, from where I stand, three different futures for this work. The first involves traditional education. I would like to translate these ideas and ways of thinking into language that helps people on the ground—teachers, students, policy makers, and administrators—make sense of their own work. I would like to work more directly in the future with these folks, to have them criticize my ideas and reformulate my thoughts in ways that are more practical and relevant to concrete and specific problems of schooling. The second future for this work looks like social criticism. Though I have taken up in broad strokes the question of the educative functions of war and religion, these analyses were prolegomena for concrete work in and on specific situations. Each of these phenomena are instantiated in vary particular ways and in very particular situations. Looking at these actual instantiations and their consequences for the renewal of life in

concrete forms is the actual work of democratic social criticism. The third future for this work involves more traditionally philosophical inquiry. More work remains to be done in analyzing the connections between metaphysical conceptions of reality and political projects. I would like to draw more intimate and transformative relations between the traditional task of metaphysical speculation and the political consequences of these speculations. This work calls for further reading in metaphysical and political philosophy. It demands uncovering the views of reality that motivate particular conceptions of political and social life. It also means extracting new ways of understanding the world in which we live from emergent forms of political life.

The unfinished nature of my task is, I hope, no argument against it. Philosophies, educations, and democracies, at their bests, are invitations to future encounters. It is in the spirit of invitation that I hereby conclude this dissertation.

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