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Criticism without Critique: Power and Experience in Foucault and James

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ABSTRACT: Through an analysis of philosophical temperaments, I argue that both William James and Michel Foucault believed the central task of philosophy not only to be the generation of new ideas or ways of thinking, but also to create new temperaments, new ways of inhabiting the world. Though James and Foucault in many ways agree on the ends of philosophy, the methods and strategies that they developed differ according to the problems with which each philosopher was concerned. Although James gives a rich account of what it means to see philosophy as the reconstruction of temperament, Foucault's genealogical method explains concretely how temperaments might be reconstructed through the use of history. Raising questions of how this work might effectively continue today, I argue that Foucauldians and Jamesians, Continental philosophers and American pragmatists, might find common cause in exploring the production and reconstruction of democratic temperaments in response to social problems.

Keywords: William James, Michel Foucault, temperament, genealogy, pragmatism

After all, what would be the value of the passion for knowledge if it resulted in only a certain amount of knowledgeableness and not, in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower's straying afield of himself.

—Michel Foucault¹

The history of philosophy is to a great extent that of a certain clash of temperaments.

—William James²

In many ways William James and Michel Foucault begin with a similar vision: a world that is fundamentally plural, constantly changing, and lacking a solid and lasting ground for universal judgment. Both therefore consider the value of philosophical thought to be strategic and instrumental, not final and transcendental. To borrow Deleuze's terminology, both James

¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Random House, 1985), 8.

² William James, "The Present Dilemma in Philosophy," *The Writings of William James*, ed. John McDermott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 363.

and Foucault share an aversion to the traditional image of thought.³ Their primary contributions to the development of philosophy (if such a category of thought even exists) are as visionaries looking to set out a new way of thinking. Their primary task is to think differently. Thus, in addition to a vision, James and Foucault share a temperamental aversion to modes of philosophy that cannot hear new things. Their contributions to philosophical tradition are always to break, open, loosen, and shake. They seek change. Though they share few of the things that we tend to group philosophers by—tradition, concepts, arguments, nationality, language, ideas, and even audience—they share, at least to some degree, a philosophical temperament.

The word ‘temperament’ comes to us from medieval physiology. A temperament is a balance of multiple humors. It is a composite of multiple psychological forces, a concept for the general trend of the soul. Temperament is a vague sensibility; a kind of broad appraisal of a person’s attitude. It is a category that spans one’s nature and education. Our temperaments guide our attention, but are also reflections of our past experiences. Temperament changes according to the balance of humors in the body; it changes with age, and it is reflective of one’s upbringing and general cultural inheritance. A temperament is the culture of an individual, but it extends beyond the individual into deep and often unconscious attitudes, habits, prejudices and capacities. Temperament is rarely directly expressed; it is instead uncovered through the analysis of actions. One’s temperament shows through as a vague and general propensity, the sum total of many disparate and unrelated acts. It is a broad composite, built and undone over the course of a lifetime.

It is perhaps for these reasons that an analysis of temperament is uncommon in philosophy.⁴ Vague, shifting, and indirectly expressed, one cannot argue one’s way out of one temperament into another. Quite the contrary, the arguments that we make depend upon our temperaments, our native apprehension of the world. Our moods and fundamental modes of attention give us the premises out of which we construct and reconstruct our philosophical positions. To acknowledge the influence of temperament on philosophy is to recognize how rational discourse is subordinate to a multiplicity of forces and how perspectives are limited, changing, and often unconsciously assumed. To recognize the influence of temperament is, therefore, to give up the idea that the conscious and rational philosophical mind is in absolute control of its assertions.

Perhaps because of its vagueness and openness, temperament was an important philosophical concept for James. Beyond providing an explanation for how a particular individual may come to a point of view, James’ work on temperament was also a way, borrowing a term from Foucault, to reproblematicize what was at stake in philosophical arguments. James preferred to see philosophical disputes not as a matter of refutation, rationality or strict argument,

³ See Gilles Deleuze, “The Image of Thought,” *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Continuum Books, 2004), 164-213.

⁴ An important exception is Matthew Ratcliffe’s *Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, Psychiatry, and the Sense of Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Ratcliffe works through an analysis of Heidegger and James to uncover the extent to which what he calls ‘existential feeling’ is essential to our fundamental philosophical commitments. His chapter on “Feelings and Philosophical Positions” is particularly insightful on the relationship between personal temperament and broader philosophical commitments.

but as a matter of reconciling certain concrete personalities and ways of life. By considering temperament, James hoped to change the space of analysis; moving it out of the realm of reason and into a more psychological realm.⁵

The strategies at work behind this reproblematicization through temperament were of course multiple. James' primary motivation was however always to see the activity of philosophy in terms of a wider, deeper, and more human picture. The "trail of the human serpent" can also be traced through the most abstract of philosophical disputes, and the concept of temperament puts us on its trail. In this sense, the motivation is somewhat Emersonian. Before James, Emerson had already written that "Temperament is the iron wire upon which the beads are strung," reckoning temperament one of the fundamental categories of experience. Indeed, in his essay of that title, Emerson describes temperament as a sort of "prison of glass" out of which we never escape: "temper prevails over everything of time, place, and condition, and is inconsumable in the flames of religion."⁶ One of James' methods in philosophical criticism was to follow this Emersonian trail, to find—beneath rational argument and closed system—the vague and multiple influence of individuality, singular experience, and also the deeper and more persistent biological, historical, and socially acquired habits of Self.

Perhaps James' most explicit attempts to take up the question of temperament are in "The Present Dilemma in Philosophy" and "What Pragmatism Means." In these essays James reconstructs the long wrangle between empiricism and idealism in terms of clashing temperaments, tough minded empiricists arguing with the tender minded rationalists. His view is that that resolution will come not through more arguments but through the construction of a new attitude, the pragmatic attitude. What pragmatism means—James shows us in this essay—cannot be summed up in a definition, nor can it be argued for deductively. Pragmatism means an attitude towards the world; it means the predominance of a certain type of mind, a restructuring of the basic humors of the soul. When James calls for pragmatism, he does not call for a new way of reasoning. His call is for a new personality, a new way of being in the world. James explains:

You can see what I meant when I called pragmatism a mediator and reconciler and said, borrowing the word from Papini, that she 'unstiffens' our theories. She has in fact no prejudices whatever, no obstructive dogmas, no rigid canons of what shall count as proof. She will entertain any hypothesis, she will consider any evidence. ...you already see how democratic she is. Her manners are as various and flexible, her resources as rich and endless, and her conclusions as friendly as those of mother nature.⁷

To be a pragmatist, then, is to strive for a particular way of life and comportment towards the world. It is not to adhere to a strictly defined argumentative method. It is to adopt a set of

⁵ Marilynne Robinson puts it like this in her superb account of that vision: "James' philosophy has the qualities of a lucid and deeply coherent vision that is not to be distinguished from its method." "Risk the Game: On William James," Review of *The Heart of William James*, *The Nation*, December 13, 2010. Accessed December 15, 2010. <http://www.thenation.com/article/156641/risk-game-william-james>.

⁶ R. W. Emerson, "Experience," *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. William H. Gilman (New York: Penguin, 1965), 338.

⁷ William James "What Pragmatism Means," *The Writings of William James*, 389-390.

attitudes. You find the philosophy of James by living with its affective dimensions, not by following its arguments. More essential and fundamental to his philosophical vision are the sorts of topics he brings up, the invitational style of his discourse, the array of examples, and the vitality of his prose. In short, we find James the philosopher intermixed with James the man. His pragmatism is perhaps most fundamentally a sort of expressionism. James' greatness as a philosopher comes not through the universality of his voice, but through its singularity. His philosophy seeks not to incorporate, to dominate, or to convince; he speaks as an individual and invites us each, thereby, to reflect upon our own individuality, which is never something abstract but always concrete—the effect of multiplicities. In short, a temperament.

To take the temperament of the philosopher as more fundamental than the philosopher's arguments, language, or even ideas, is to radically shift the subject of philosophical criticism. It is one thing to produce a new idea or new argument, quite another to attempt to create a new temperament. James' philosophy is thus in a certain sense an attempt to refigure what the subject of philosophical criticism is. Pragmatism, at least for James, is not simply a doctrine, a set of ideas, or a methodology. What pragmatism is, what pragmatism means, is the reconstruction of fundamental attitudes, a bending of the iron wire of temperament. This is, of course, exactly what James, following Emerson, wanted to do. He wanted to produce in pragmatism not only a new set of critical ideas or a new image of critical inquiry. These were not enough. His vision was for a new temperament, one comfortable with plurality, openness, and change.

The seeds of James' vision lie in his early work. In psychological essays such as "The Stream of Thought" and "Habit," James places the mind and its work within a larger physiological, phenomenological, attitudinal, and social context. Here, thought is fundamentally personal. It is transitional. It is engulfed in feeling. It is always plastic. It is selective and active. Finally, it is always subject to interaction and influence from without. It is, in short, a living and stubborn organism, always open and moving but simultaneously reticent and resistant to attempts at domination. This is what is meant by "personal"—that when it comes to the mind "Absolute insulation, irreducible pluralism, is the law." James explains:

It seems as if the elementary psychic fact were not *thought* or *this thought* or *that thought*, but *my thought*, every thought being *owned*. Neither contemporaneity, nor proximity in space, nor similarity of quality and content are able to fuse thoughts together which are sundered by this barrier of belonging to different personal minds.⁸

We should be careful here. To say that the most elementary psychic fact is the ownership of thought not to reduce thinking to a bland subjective relativism, or even worse, to restrict it to a private or commoditized state. It is not to see thought as a kind of private property, capable of being bought and sold on the market—quite the opposite, in fact. The sentiment is Emersonian: that thought is inalienably personal and that it finds its value as property, as owned, in the very singularity of every individual's experience.

Thus, what makes experience temperamental, at heart, is the primary law of irreducible pluralism. Individual experience is the remedy to a capitalist system that distributes property

⁸ William James, "The Thing and Its Relations," *The Writings of William James*, 223.

arbitrarily, dependently and according to classes, construing a person into what they have instead of what they think, do, and experience. Emerson puts it like this:

And so the reliance on Property, including the reliance on governments which protect it, is the want of self-reliance. Men have looked away from themselves and at things so long, that they have come to esteem the religious, learned, and civil institutions as guards of property, and they deprecate assaults on these, because they feel them to be assaults on property. They measure their esteem of each other by what each has, and not by what each is. But a cultivated man becomes ashamed of his property, out of new respect for his nature.⁹

The shamefulness of property is that property denies the personal element of ownership. The process of commoditization on the market turns what is singular into what can be substituted. Instead of the Emersonian dream of a society of equal and yet singular individuals, you have the flooding of personality with the money relation, one that reduces the singularity of difference to the absolute sameness of the dollar-relation. You have the replacement of the temperamental person—the person who has personality, which is to say a thought, behavior, and manner which is of a piece and yet singular—with the atomistic and self-interested, but ultimately exchangeable individual.

In James' later writings, his phenomenology of experience takes on a more explicit ethical and political bent. As Frank Lentricchia explains in his wild and ranging—and certainly temperamentally expressive—book on Foucault, James, and Wallace Stevens *Ariel and the Police*, through his work in the New England Anti-Imperial League, James began to find and actively trace out the political implications of his work on the phenomenology of mind. Lentricchia puts it like this:

[James] began to understand empire as theory (as a kind of theoretical impulse), and theory or traditional philosophy as empire (as a kind of imperialist impulse). For James, the two impulses are measured and joined by the effects they produce in trying to cure the world of diversity.¹⁰

What started out as a psychological observation about the quality of mind, that irreducible pluralism is the law, later became an ethical and political imperative for James. The function of pragmatism was to break up a certain imperialism of mind that was the consequence of theory unhinged from the fecund diversity and irreducible plurality of lived experience. James' pragmatism is thus a philosophy of the street, loyal to the world of concrete experience: "multitudinous beyond imagination, tangled, muddy, painful, and perplexed."¹¹ The political and ethical challenge of James' vision was to construct a democratic temperament, one that could not only withstand the fractured, plural, and open nature of the universe, but perhaps someday embrace it and live intimately with it. To put the issue as simply as possible: the political-ethical-epistemological-psychological task of James' philosophy was to create a way of apprehending the world that was at home with the facts of change and pluralism.

⁹ R. W. Emerson, "Self Reliance," *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 284.

¹⁰ Frank Lentricchia, *Ariel and the Police* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 112.

¹¹ James, "The Present Dilemma in Philosophy," 369.

This task is ongoing and requires continuous reanimation. There is no such thing as a democratic temperament in itself, no ideal form towards which we might aim. The value of any temperament must be taken in terms of its interaction with its environment. James' temperament, for example, with its tendency towards a certain chauvinism, bravado, and imprecision, is useful for certain democratic tasks, but is certainly an impediment towards others.¹² His is, indeed, the temperament of a visionary, someone who charts a way forward, but perhaps too roughly, too broadly. As he himself recognizes in essays like "A Certain Blindness," part of recognizing temperament as a primary category of philosophical analysis is acknowledging the fact that "others are too much absorbed in their vital secrets to take much interest in ours."¹³ Every age and environment has its own vitalities—and its own corresponding blindnesses to other vitalities, and as such will demand its own temperament—in fact multiple temperaments—to carry out the democratic project.

The Use of History

Of course, to think James' vision pragmatically is not only to ask *what* he sees, but *how* a philosophical vision might be made real. An adequate evaluation of a vision cannot be satisfied by the mere articulation of what it sees or hopes; this articulation must be woven into concrete experience. Its value must be determined with respect to its interactions with the environment. The word that examines this weaving is "How?" How would such a transformation be made? How can this project be renewed under vastly different social circumstances in the 21st century? How exactly might new temperaments be constructed?

I hope to show that Foucault's genealogical work can provide some answers to these questions or at least help us phrase new questions that may help us better understand the mutability and variety of the democratic temperament. In this project, I am not traversing totally new ground. John Stuhr's book *Genealogical Pragmatism* makes a similar case, "offering an outline for a genealogical pragmatism—a pragmatism that takes seriously the temperament of postmodernism, a genealogy that takes seriously the temperament of pragmatism."¹⁴ Stuhr's work juxtaposes the more cheerful and affirmative temperament of pragmatism with a postmodern temperament that tends to emphasize radical difference and a kind of brooding disillusionment, arguing for a new philosophical temperament that can be attuned to radical difference while remaining affirmative and melioristic.¹⁵ More recently, in *Pragmatism as Transition*, Colin Koopman has argued for a supplementary affinity between Deweyan pragmatism and Foucauldian genealogy, and though temperament is not as explicit as in Stuhr's account,

¹² Charlene Seigfried's book *Pragmatism and Feminism: reweaving the social fabric* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) does an excellent job of elaborating a pragmatic criticism of James and his fellow pragmatists with respect to feminism, showing how the Jamesian call for plural voices must, in practice, be filled out in plural ways. However singular his vision might be, James cannot carry out his philosophy on his own.

¹³ William James, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," *The Writings of William James*, 629.

¹⁴ John Stuhr, *Genealogical Pragmatism: Philosophy, Experience, Community* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 89.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

it certainly colors the analysis, especially in Koopman's consideration of pragmatism's melioristic sensibility.¹⁶

Both accounts see the attitudes of pragmatism and postmodernism as complementary to some degree. In addition, they also share the vision that the future of philosophy resides in somehow combining them. While I am happy to count myself among Stuhr and Koopman as an advocate for bringing postmodernism and pragmatism together, I am however less inclined to see either postmodernism or pragmatism as being represented by any particular temperament. To do so is to risk erasing the quite marvelous variety of temperaments within each tradition. Instead, my tack here—following the issue of personality—is more micrological than macrological, to trace particular affinities of Foucauldian thought with Jamesian thought, to show a possible resonance that might in turn lead to future connections that run along different lines.

If Foucault has not spoken as directly or as often of temperament in his work, he has at least articulated his genealogical and philosophical work in terms of transforming the subject. In the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault describes his analysis of Greek sexual techniques and strategies as forms of self-transformation. He writes that the purpose of his study was not to tell others what the truth is, to dictate as if from the outside what the truth of the history of sexuality might be. Instead, he writes that:

The "essay"—which should be understood as the assay or test by which, in the game of truth, one undergoes changes, and not as simplistic appropriation of others for the purpose of communication—is the living substance of philosophy, at least if we assume that philosophy still is what it was in times past, i.e., an "ascesis," *askesis*, an exercise of one's self in the activity of thought.¹⁷

As is well known, Foucault's historical philosophy is motivated by an attempt to transform his attitudes, approach and perspective on own practices. To use the vocabulary I have been developing, Foucault is intent upon producing a different sexual temperament through the study of history. The value of his inquiry into sexual knowledge and practice is taken "from the standpoint of their 'pragmatics,'" that is, in terms of the concrete effects of his inquiry on the vague and overall sum of his own knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.

But of course for Foucault it is not simply a matter of studying history, it is a matter of genealogy, which requires doing history in a particular way, towards particular ends. As is well known, to read history genealogically is to abandon what Foucault calls the "supra-historical" perspective, which operates on the basis of an "apocalyptic objectivity," that is, a perspective that violates the Jamesian principle of radical empiricism—construing the stand-

¹⁶ Koopman writes: "[Meliorism] does not solve all our problems once and for all. But it does improve the situation, open up new problems, and enable us to progressively struggle for a better world. This melioristic integration of old and new is the central thrust of James' pragmatist perfectionist ethics...." *Pragmatism as Transition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 151-152.

¹⁷ Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 9.

point of the historical narrative from beyond the reach of experience.¹⁸ To write genealogically is, instead to write “effective history” that, instead of avoiding “the unavoidable obstacles of [the historian’s] passion,” operates through “deliberate appraisal, affirmation, or negation,” “explicit in its perspective.”¹⁹ It is, in short, to string historical events upon the iron wire of temperament. Genealogy is therefore both *effective* and *affective* history; it is an attempt to transform one’s habits through the study of history, but it is also an attempt to transform history by combining it with the singularity of a personal vision. Genealogy is history that affirms its interactions with the passions rather than pretending to hide them.

It is here that we can begin to uncover some ideas about how a new temperament is formed and why genealogical study may be particularly suited to the task of forging a new temperament. If the purpose of studying history is to transform one’s self or to produce the possibility or larger transformations beyond the self, then this purpose must itself orient the particular method. It must affirm the relation between deep attitudes and habits of self and historical study, so that an actual encounter occurs.

Foucault’s genealogies, then, are not simply a collection of knowledge, but a power/knowledge complex. They must be evaluated not only on the basis of their truth, but pragmatically the effects of truth at the level of subjective power. This power operates through selective attention, making choices about what to see and what to ignore, through specific blindness and lines of sight. Genealogy has its effects through shifts of perspective and the production of knowledge. It opens fields of self-knowledge through its perspectives on history and also produces new subject positions through the discovery and remembering of new historical knowledge. Foucault puts it like this: “[Genealogy] is no longer a question of judging the past in the name of a truth that only we can possess in the present, but of risking the destruction of the subject who seeks knowledge in the endless deployment of the will to knowledge.”²⁰ In these lines, Foucault echoes the beginning of Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*, identifying his problem as the Nietzschean problem of the origins and purposes of the will to truth. William James would make a similar point in his attempt to redefine the truth pragmatically as “what works,” drawing attention to the effects of truth on the subjects that both seek it and live according to it.²¹

All this is well and good, and the standard Foucauldian line, but it is worth considering what precisely it is about history that makes it a privileged method for these sorts of inquiries into the reconstruction or dislocation of the self? Is genealogy the best method for the reconstruction of temperamental attitudes or subjectivity in all cases and why? If not, why does

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 87.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 97

²¹ James writes, “True is the name for whatever idea starts the verification-process, useful is the name for its completed function in experience... From this simple cue, pragmatism gets her general notion of truth as something essentially bound up with the way in which one moment in our experience may lead us toward other moments which it will have been worthwhile to have been led to.” In other words, for pragmatism truth is determined by its function within experience for a subject; and its value has to do with those effects. “Pragmatism’s Conception of Truth,” *The Writings of William James*, 431-432.

Foucault choose to employ this method? Which sorts of transformations does it make possible and for whom? These questions force a closer look into Foucault's method.

Some keys to his selection of history as a means of transformation of the self are found in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In this essay, Foucault suggests that the power of history to transform comes exactly from the temperament of the historian. It is precisely because historians have "taken unusual pains to erase the elements in their work which reveal a grounding in a particular time and place, their preferences in a controversy," that history, ironically, contains such an explosive critical capability.²² Foucault explains further the "Socratic demagoguery" of history:

This demagoguery, of course, must be masked. It must hide its singular malice under the cloak of universals. As the demagogue is obliged to invoke truth, laws of essences, and eternal necessity, the historian must invoke objectivity, the accuracy of facts, and the permanence of the past. The demagogue denies the body to secure the sovereignty of a timeless idea, and the historian effaces his proper individuality so that others may enter the stage and reclaim their own speech. He is divided against himself: forced to silence his own preferences and overcome his distaste, to blur his own perspective and replace it with the fiction of a universal geometry, to mimic death in order to enter the kingdom of the dead...²³

Through these acts of self-immolation and a temperamental asceticism that Nietzsche had a nose for, the historian acquires quite a powerful temperament. Ironically, it is precisely through the attempted annihilation of perspective that the historian's perspective has gained such a tremendous amount of transformative power. It is exactly this power that Foucault, following Nietzsche, wants to put to work. This time, however, the work will be affirmative—a gay release of the ascetic energy on behalf of a particular perspective:

The problem was similar in the nineteenth century: to avoid doing for the popular asceticism what Plato did for Socrates. This historical trait should not be founded on a philosophy of history, but dismantled, beginning with the things it produced; it is necessary to master history so as to turn it to genealogical uses, that is, strictly anti-Platonic purposes. Only then will the historical sense free itself from the demands of a suprahistorical history.²⁴

Genealogy is to history as Socratic demagoguery is to Platonic idealism. It means, essentially, uncovering a philosophico-historical spirit that is grounded in the living specificity of Socrates the man, the Athenian. This is the philosophical spirit echoed by James, the philosophy of the street, of the agora—local, specific, problem-centered, community oriented, playful and affirmative. In short, the spirit of genealogical criticism is construing the historical sense as attitude, perspective, and a way of life rather than as system, as book, or as an ascetic and transcendental attitude. It means affirming temperament, locality, and problems.

Foucault describes the Socratic character of the genealogical method in *The History of Sexuality* as follows: "It was a matter of analyzing, not behaviors or ideas, nor societies and

²² *Ibid.*, 90.

²³ *Ibid.*, 91.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

their 'ideologies,' but the *problematizations* through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought—and the *practices* on the basis of which these problematizations are formed."²⁵ The history of sexuality as a method of genealogical inquiry is thus oriented according to problematizations and their relations to practice. It does not seek origins or explanations, but attempts as Socrates did to make interventions into particular habits and attitudes.

Importantly, for Foucault it is the practices that are first—the problematizations, the modes of reflection and modes of inquiry, the questions, laws, and codes, rise out of a series of practices and behaviors. These problematizations are the grist for the analytical mill. They are, essentially, the aspects of the practices that enter into discourse, the "practical texts, which are themselves objects of a practice in that they were designed to be read, learned, reflected upon, and tested out..."²⁶ The key point here is the relation between the forms of problematization and the practices out of which they arise. This is not a dualistic relation—the codes hovering over and making sense of the practices from above—but it is instead a sort of woven relation. The practices of reading, interpreting, arguing, and analyzing are woven into the very field of sexuality itself, as a part of its game.

Foucault's texts, then, in a very Jamesian way, encourage us to consider the way in which criticism is a sort of experience and must be evaluated in experiential terms. This is the key aspect of genealogy; that the subject of criticism is implicated in its analysis and transformed by it. The truths uncovered through historical analysis must be evaluated pragmatically, which is to say in terms of their power to do critical work.

If interpretation were the slow exposure of the meaning hidden in an origin, then only metaphysics could interpret the development of humanity. But if interpretation is the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a different game, and to subject it to secondary rules, then the development of humanity is a series of interpretations.²⁷

Yes, for Foucault, interpretation is a wholly human act, one that is an experience, involving appropriation, imposition, will and force. In short, it is an act of development, an undergoing, and most essentially a series of events. There is no absolute movement, no supra-historical perspective that orients history, and therefore it is closely allied to James' radical empiricism, which attempts to tie knowledge of all sorts to moving, open, and pluralistic experience.

At this point of similarity, however, it is important to distinguish to some extent the Foucauldian temperament from the temperament of James. James has a tendency to describe what works in terms of producing more intimate relations. The Jamesian argument against Hegelianism and traditional empiricism—and for his pluralistic radical empiricism—is essentially founded on a conception of intimacy. James thinks that conceiving the universe pluralistically is better because it essentially makes the universe more intimate to human hope and action; it is a home like the one we live in—incomplete, changing, open, with blindnesses, real

²⁵ Foucault, *Uses of Pleasure*, 11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁷ Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 86.

gaps, and accidental unities: "The all-form or monistic form makes the foreignness result, the each-form or pluralistic form leaves the intimacy undisturbed."²⁸ As Stuhr explains, James—and the resultant pragmatic tradition—can be characterized by his "will to intimacy," and in a certain sense it is this most essential sort of subjectivity that leads the pragmatist to try to reconstruct unnecessary dualisms, to attempt compromise in the face of long and seemingly unending arguments.²⁹ "What Pragmatism Means" begins with an anecdote about a philosopher settling a problem, exposing what were thought to be differences to actually be the same thing—just seen from different perspectives. The will to see truth and action or reason and temperament together essentially comes from a will that abhors separation and metaphysical foreignness. James, his writing shaped by the Civil War, writes in order to heal the republic, to allow differences to live together.

Though Foucault, like James, sees effective history as working across traditional dualisms such as power/knowledge, Foucault's tastes run to the disruptive, the breaking, and the scattering. Foucault's will to knowledge "ceaselessly multiplies the risks, creates dangers in every area; it breaks down illusory defenses; it dissolves the unity of the subject; it releases those elements of itself that are devoted to its subversion and destruction."³⁰ As Koopman has noted in his work, Foucault sees his work as essentially one of creating problems, not of solving them. Perhaps this vision is more appropriate for a late 20th century scene, in which the problem is less one of social cohesion and more one of finding spaces to break free from a social order that threatens to dominate and tame experience through the proliferation of monolithic institutions, sometimes governmental, sometimes religious, sometimes corporate. Foucault wants to break open situations, fracture consolidated histories, and liberate the subject through analysis. For him, liberation for its own sake is what it means for truth to work precisely because he identifies the problem of politics as one of control for the sake of control.

We see these different temperaments at work in the style of their writing and in their choice of subject matter. Foucault is detail-oriented, preferring to work his criticism through obscure historical documents. Genealogy is "gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary."³¹ His books are aimed at an academic audience, or at least at institutional experts—the folks who perhaps have some power to dismantle or reconstruct the large institutions that are the power centers of contemporary life. They are written for a global public, adapted to contemporary methods of the dissemination of ideas. James, at an earlier moment in history, before institutions had been quite so, well, institutionalized, aimed his philosophical work more often at popular audiences in lecture-length speeches. Part of his greatness as a philosopher comes from his ability to hold such an audience rapt through the use of flamboyant imagery and language that borders on the heroic. His philosophical medium was the primary experience of the public lecture hall, and his audience was an individual who was disciplined to respond in a much different way to speech and text.

²⁸ William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1996), 319.

²⁹ Stuhr, 104.

³⁰ Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 96.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

In sum, Foucault's critical endeavors occupy the more distant, grayer, more diffuse space of secondary experience. His job was not to rally the troops to a new democratic effort, but to slowly and carefully shift and break dominant discourses. He could hope, at best, for indirect changes, the sorts that trickle down from policy experts, bureaucratic expertise, or academia. In this sense, Foucault's temperament is effective precisely because it reflects the structure of power in the 20th century—just as James' Brahmin sensibilities resonated with the movers and shakers of 19th century America. In part Foucault's writing is representative of the "linguistic turn" that took place in part because power began to operate more like language, at a distance, rather than directly through primary experience.

From the perspective of a future for criticism, however, these differences are more tactical than essential. They reflect the specific political context of Foucault and James more than the necessity of the mode of criticism. I have tried to argue here that more essential to these tactics is the idea that in order to be effective, criticism ought to affirm its perspectival nature and be attuned to the knowledge/power or truth/experience complex. As Lentricchia writes:

For the pragmatist textualist, who is the bibliographer's version of the devil, there is only one text: the forever unfinished, decentralized text of history—forever supplemented, new chapters being written in all sorts of places by all sorts of people not especially in touch with one another. There is no work of 'correspondence,' only of 'production.'³²

We critics, we who find ourselves writing and living under the sway of a Foucauldian/Jamesian temperament must find our own ways to work through this temperament, to modify it and adapt it to our specific situation. Is effective criticism necessarily historical? Is effective criticism necessarily pragmatic? Ought it to operate through patient documentation of the historical record or through rousing oratory? Perhaps the variety of problems that social life presents us with demand a variety of temperamental proclivities and strategies? If so, how could we transform philosophical institutions to produce these temperaments and what impediments might the current institutions of philosophy raise to producing a selection of temperaments that is equal to the variety of critical problems intelligence will continue to face?

These seem to be the sorts of questions that Foucault and James raise for the 21st century. I have tried in this paper to illuminate the ways in which a basic temperamental attunement to change, multiplicity, and the affective dimensions of intelligence (that Foucault and James share) can play out in different strategies of criticism. Those of us who live in the wake of these thinkers and the traditions out of which they write do honor to the spirit of these philosophers by taking up the question of temperament that Foucault and James continually renegotiated through their writing, thinking, and ways of living.

Deleuze writes that "[p]hilosophy does not consist in knowing and is not inspired by truth. Rather, it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that determine success or failure. ...We will not say of many books of philosophy that they are false, for that is to say nothing, but rather that they lack importance or interest, precisely because they do not create

³² Lentricchia, 111.

any concept or contribute an image of thought or beget a persona worth the effort.”³³ James and Foucault have bequeathed two primary concepts to us—experience and power. Each of these concepts is paired with an image of thought. The Jamesian image of thought is the intimate stream, the joyful affirmation of experiencing change, pluralism, and openness. The Foucauldian image of thought is the fracturing of the subject, the liberation of power from consolidated blocks of control. Each of these concepts and images are, however, in turn, animated by a forceful and unique conceptual persona, one that resists the commoditization of philosophical discourse just as it also resists the forces that threaten the existence of personality itself.

They write as Emersonian selves, exhorting us through their temperaments towards a fundamental faith in the possibility of personality beseeching us with Emerson to “Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment of the times, and hurl in the face of custom, and trade, and office, the fact which is the upshot of all history, that there is a great responsible Thinker and Actor working wherever a man works; that a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of things. Where he is, there is nature.”³⁴ To make an encounter with James and Foucault is to trace the effects of philosophy along local and specific lines, in terms of power and experience. These are the concepts that they re-invented, and much of their critical power comes not only from their precise intellectual articulation, but by the experiential power of the temperaments with which they were articulated, the Emersonian/Deleuzian conceptual personae that animate and temper their critical use. Their temperamental prisons of glass are also prisms that reflect and refract thought so that it might be broken and colorful.

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³³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia Press, 1994), 82-83.

³⁴ Emerson, “Self Reliance,” 270.