

## Foucault Studies

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ISSN: 1832-5203

*Foucault Studies*, No. 11, pp. 76-91, February 2011

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### ARTICLE

#### **American Power: Mary Parker Follett and Michel Foucault**

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**ABSTRACT:** Classical pragmatism, despite its recognized concern for questions of freedom and democracy, has little to say directly about questions of power. Some commentators have found Dewey's notion of habit to be a resource for taking up issues of power while others have argued that pragmatism does not provide a sufficiently critical tool to challenge systematic oppression. Still others have proposed to shore up pragmatism by using resources found in post-structuralism, particularly in the work of Foucault. This paper begins with this suggestion, but argues that while Foucault offers a useful starting point his conception of power fails—at least in an American context characterized by the experience of pluralism. I then argue that the pragmatist tradition, through the work of Mary P. Follett (1868-1933) has the theoretical resources to generate a conception of power that begins with the experience of pluralism.

**Keywords:** Pragmatism, power, pluralism, Foucault, Follett.

Classical pragmatism, despite its recognized concern for questions of freedom and democracy, has little to say directly about questions of power. Work by Shannon Sullivan (2001) and Terrance MacMullan (2009), among others, has found Dewey's notion of habit to be an entry point for taking up the implications of power in a culture framed by the habits of whiteness.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, others have challenged pragmatist visions of liberation arguing that, while its democratic vision may be attractive, Deweyan and other pragmatist resources do not provide a sufficiently critical tool to understand the systematic oppression of women and people of color.<sup>2</sup> Still others, including Colin Koopman (2009) in his recent work, have proposed to shore it up by using newer resources found in post-structuralism, particularly in the

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<sup>1</sup> See Shannon Sullivan, *Living across and through skins: Transactional bodies, pragmatism, and feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) and Terrance MacMullan, *Habits of Whiteness: A Pragmatist Reconstruction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Paul Taylor, "Silence and Sympathy: Dewey's Whiteness," in George Yancy (ed.), *What White Looks Like* (New York: Routledge, 2004), Tommy Curry, "Royce, Racism and the Colonial Ideal," *The Pluralist*, 4 (3), (2009), 10-38, and Lorraine Code, "Feminists and Pragmatists: A Radical Future?" *Radical Philosophy*, 87, (1998), 22-30.

work of Foucault.<sup>3</sup> Although Koopman has yet to develop a detailed account of the way in which Foucauldian power can augment the classical pragmatist vision of democracy, the approach seems to have promise.

In this paper, following Koopman's suggestion, I will begin by considering Foucault's conception of power in relation to pragmatism. I will argue that while Foucault offers a useful starting point, his conception of power fails to be compatible with pragmatism in certain ways and is inadequate in an American context characterized by the experience of pluralism. I will then argue that the pragmatist tradition already has the theoretical resources for a conception of power that begins in the context of pluralism, can serve as a tool for critique, and can support the reconstruction of relations, habits, and social institutions. The needed theory of power is found in initial form in the work of Mary P. Follett (1868-1933) and developed in her 1918 book *The New State* and in her 1924 book *Creative Experience*.<sup>4</sup> I will argue that, where Foucault's conception of power fails in key ways, a conception of power based on Follett's work is both compatible with pragmatism and responsive to the experience of pluralism.

### **Foucault's Power**

Foucault presented his developing notion of power in *Discipline and Punish* where power is understood as a range of relations that frame both knowledge and action.<sup>5</sup> Power is not "conceived as a property, but as a strategy, that its effects of domination are attributed not to 'appropriation', but to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings."<sup>6</sup> Power in this sense is not exercised by the "powerful," but is a network of activities carried out by everyone in society? "In short this power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege', acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of strategic positions—an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated."<sup>7</sup>

The operation of power or rather its manifestation is found in particular acts, what Foucault calls the "micro-physics" of power. As such, power does not "obey the law of all or nothing" but is rather manifested in "localized episodes" that nevertheless have "effects on the entire network in which it is caught up."<sup>8</sup> At the same time, power cannot be separated for purposes of understanding its operation since "power produces knowledge... [and they]

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<sup>3</sup> Colin Koopman, *Pragmatism as Transition: historicity and hope in James, Dewey, and Rorty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> See May Parker Follett, *The New State: Group Organization the Solution of Popular Government* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1998) and May Parker Follett, *Creative Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1924). The resulting conception of power is similar in many ways to the results of Amy Allen's work in *The Power of Feminist Theory* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999) in which she brings together Foucault, Judith Butler and Hannah Arendt. While I think that there remain sharp differences between the pragmatist conception of power developed here and Allen's, her work nevertheless provides another valuable alternative to Foucault's conception of power.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

directly imply one another" so that "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations."<sup>9</sup> From the perspective of the theory of power, individuals themselves are products of the system of power relations. "The [individual] man described for us, whom we are invited to free," he concludes, "is already himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself."<sup>10</sup> Foucault concludes "Discipline," the operation of power, "'makes' individuals."<sup>11</sup>

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault further develops the notion of power in response to the claim that the modern west has repressed sexuality and that the proper antidote is to "speak the truth" about sex.<sup>12</sup> He rejects this "repressive hypothesis" and argues that sexuality has been a dominant means of organizing western society and, rather than being repressed, it is everywhere. Further, the supposed antidote to repression (speaking the truth about sex), rather than addressing some problem, is simply part of a system of power that both makes and pathologizes sexuality. In short, sexuality is a construction of power and individuals and their desires are all part of the resulting complex system of power relations.

In the last chapter of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault offers a genealogy of sexuality grounded in the shift of power—from power over life and death (to take life or leave it) to the idea of power as promoting life (and growth). This narrative is important, in part because it sheds a different light on pragmatism's notions of growth and progress. Rather than a benign commitment, the idea of growth is implicated in a system of power that requires constant control and surveillance. While taking life is a significant singular event that keeps society in line, growth requires an ongoing complex system of control. It is in this context that the deployment of sexuality has occurred. As a result, growth is part of a system of social control and not, as most pragmatists would have it, a standard that can guide a process of social progress. In general, the idea that individuals should "grow" or progress in light of their own interests and abilities serves to cover over the operations of a system of power that constructs both individuality and the desires that underpin it.

At work in Foucault's account of power is the key idea that even as systems of power act in ways that seem to have particular purposes, they do not act as subjects. "Power relations," Foucault says, "are both intentional and nonsubjective."<sup>13</sup> This is a tricky position. Foucault argues on the one hand that for a system to be a system of power it must operate with "aims and objectives." At the same time, because individualized subjects are the products of power, the work of power cannot result "from the choice or decision of an individual

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 170. Also see Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980). He writes "The individual... in not the *vis-à-vis* of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects. The individual is the effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation." (98)

<sup>12</sup> See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*, and *The Use of Pleasure, Volume 2*, translated by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, 94.

subject."<sup>14</sup> "The logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable," he concludes, "and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few who can be said to have formulated them: an implicit characteristic of the great anonymous, almost unspoken strategies which coordinate the loquacious tactics whose 'inventors' or decision makers are often without hypocrisy."<sup>15</sup> Even though "where there is power, there is resistance," resistance is itself a part of the system of power, not as a single locus, but as points distributed "everywhere in the power network."<sup>16</sup> These points mark themselves off as distinct within the system, but owe their character as individuals to the system as a whole so that their actions in opposition to the system are also actions of the system.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 2, Foucault takes up the analysis of the individual and argues that individuals, even as products of systems of power, are nevertheless not passive. "Moral action involves a relationship with the reality in which it is carried out and a relationship with the self."<sup>17</sup> The relationship with the self is not, he says, "simply 'self-awareness'" but is an active process in which "the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the percept he will follow and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal."<sup>18</sup> From this angle, individuals seem to become intentional subjects who actively relate to the codes and institutions that made them. These relations can take the form of selective acceptance or resistance, but in any case mark the tension between power and freedom. In fact, Foucault claims in a late paper that the philosophical problem of "our days" is "not an attempt to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state" and "promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality."<sup>19</sup> Power in this later discussion becomes more precisely "a mode of action that... acts upon [others'] actions: an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions."<sup>20</sup> In this more complex notion of power, two elements are required: "that 'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up."<sup>21</sup> Subjects act, but it seems that why they act, their intentions, goals, plans and futures, remain products of the power relations in which they are formed. Foucault then argues that individuals mark both the operations of power and the emergence of freedom, but freedom it seems, is intransigent, forming resistance to the modes of actions that would direct it, even as one is left with the question of whether new intentions can form beyond the systems of power that produce the subject.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 93-4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>17</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, 28.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Power*, edited by James D. Faubion, series editor Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1994), 336.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

While there is much more to be said about Foucault's later conceptions of power and subjectivity, it appears the idea power remains intentional and non-subjective, while individuals remain subjective and non-intentional; if agency is understood as the ability of an individual to act with its own intentions, then Foucault gives reason to set agency aside. To the extent sovereignty is understood as the ability of a collective individual or subject (a community, state, or culture) to act with its own intentions, then Foucault gives reason to set sovereignty aside also.<sup>22</sup>

While pragmatism may be understood in several ways (more in light of recent work in neo-pragmatism), at least some accounts argue that pragmatism is committed to the broad normative standard of growth that informs the general trajectory of organism/environment interaction and serves within inquiry as a framing principle not bound to the particularities of a situation.<sup>23</sup> Such a notion of growth is connected as well to C. S. Peirce's idea of abduction, the source of new possibilities in the process of inquiry.<sup>24</sup> Growth marks new possibilities and experience and not just resistance to or acceptance of possibilities already provided for by the principles of conduct given by systems of power. At the same time, it can be argued that pragmatism is also committed to the idea that, as James puts it, "*Prima facie* the world is a pluralism; as we find it, its unity seems to be that of any collection; and our higher thinking consists chiefly of an effort to redeem it from that first crude form."<sup>25</sup> The problem with Foucault's conception of power from the perspective of pragmatism is twofold. First, it appears to be incompatible with pragmatism's commitment to growth and, second, it is incompatible with the experience of pluralism.

With regard to the first problem, from a pragmatist perspective it is clear that the standard of growth, the idea that individuals and communities can develop by fostering more experiences and connections, is a standard that reinforces systems of power. Any effort to seek liberation and transformation can only amount to a reformulation of the system according to the aims and objectives of a system that develops without choice or formative desire.<sup>26</sup> Foucauldian power appears to provide a useful analytical tool: it provides a means of under-

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<sup>22</sup> For Foucault, 'sovereignty' is used more narrowly as the state of being subject to a king who demands the sacrifice of his subjects. This form of sovereignty is overturned in the modern West and replaced by "non-sovereign" "disciplinary power," which he describes as "one of the great inventions of bourgeois society" (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972-1977*, 105). When sovereignty persists in the modern world, it does so as part of the new system of power "as an ideology of right" and "the organizing principle of the legal codes." (Ibid., 105) Later Foucault recalls the term 'government' to mean "the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed." (Foucault, *Power*, 341)

<sup>23</sup> See Scott L. Pratt, *Native Pragmatism: Rethinking the Roots of American Philosophy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 17-38.

<sup>24</sup> See Charles S. Peirce, *The Essential Peirce*, Vol. II, The Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 216-7.

<sup>25</sup> See William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays* (New York and London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1897), viii.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Walzer (1983) and Charles Taylor (1984) raise similar objections. See Michael Walzer, "The Politics of Michel Foucault," in David Couzens Hoy (ed.), *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986) and Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," in David Couzens Hoy (ed.), *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

standing power in the form of dangerous habits that can control even those who seek to resist the system in order to improve the conditions for the most disadvantaged. Power has a history and challenging power requires an understanding of that history. However, since this theory of power also holds that standards like growth are themselves part of systems of power, the theory discounts the possibility of a standard for transformation that represents a position beyond the present state of affairs and can provide direction for change. The oppressed and those who oppress them may be in a position to resist or accept the demands of power, but it is not clear that they are ever in a position to leverage change beyond adjusting the resources and powers already present in the situation. Even when Foucault recognizes intransigent freedom as an aspect of the subject, it is not clear that there is a place for an organizing standard, an objective that is not already present in the systems at hand. The lack of a standard like growth that is in some directive sense outside the objectives of the present systems of power, would seem to make the Foucauldian notion of power incompatible with pragmatism.

The second problem for Foucauldian power has to do with the related pragmatist conception of experience that there are subject positions, *contra* Foucault, “in a position of exteriority in relation to power,”<sup>27</sup> that is, subject positions that are sufficiently distinct to exercise creativity and act in ways that can fundamentally transform situations.<sup>28</sup> The problem is partly that Foucault in his early work—in responding to what he takes to be the evils of modernity—must jettison agency in order to understand the pervasive operation of power. The idea of non-subjective intentionality allows him to explain the apparent directedness of power and the notion that such power operates below the level of desire in individuals. From this angle, when one experiences the desire to act in a particular way, the desire itself is a product of power relations that actually constitute the desiring subject in the first place. The view retains the idea that power relations are in purposive control in order to mark systems of desire such as hetero-normativity as systems of oppression and not simply ambivalent principles of order. Yet the cost of these analytical tools is giving up a meaningful notion of subjective intentionality, that is, the meaningful notions of agency and sovereignty.

Foucault’s later work seems to address this problem by arguing two things. First, systems of power are not homogenous, but rather are diverse and intersect such that different sorts of subjects with potentially different objectives can emerge. In this case, new forms of subjectivity can emerge at these intersections—not as the product of subjective intentionality, but as the products of overlapping systems.<sup>29</sup> While this may offer a partial response to the rejection of agency, it remains a question whether new subjects are agents or further products of power. Second, power is to be understood as a mode of action on the actions of others and

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<sup>27</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Introduction*, 95.

<sup>28</sup> The claim is not that a pragmatist conception of experience finds subjects separate from circumstances, but rather that subjects are continuous with them. Such a view understands the terms of a dualism as both identifiably distinct in experience and as necessarily inseparable from the situation at hand. This conception of continuity is a standard aspect of pragmatist logic and key to understanding the treatment of dualisms found in Dewey’s work. The ability to recognize subjects as both distinct and separable from circumstances and bound to them is key to pragmatist theories of education and to the process of inquiry.

<sup>29</sup> See Foucault, *Power*, 337-9.

individuals have the capacity to resist such efforts at control.<sup>30</sup> However, resistance seems to be determined by the activity of control rather than by new objectives determined outside the present systems, or “abductively” new as they might be in the context of inquiry. From this perspective, the concept of power that involves “the application of power over ourselves or others”<sup>31</sup> calls up a version of the either/or philosophy challenged by Dewey in *Experience and Education* where he also reinforces the need for growth as a normative standard.<sup>32</sup>

Within a Foucauldian conception of power, then, sovereignty is replaced with a kind of omnipresent subjection where even one’s desires count as evidence against the presence of a self who can act against modernity and the society it has spawned. In short, the idea of sovereignty is replaced with the idea of bio-power to account for the development of modern societies.<sup>33</sup> This replacement, however, constitutes the second problem as soon as one recognizes that some forms of oppression can only be understood as the loss of sovereignty. Consider one of the many instances in which the ability of a distinct culture to self-govern has been taken away by violence and the imposition of an external system of power. The history of indigenous North Americans provides obvious examples. The systematic displacement of Native American peoples, the destruction of sacred places, and the practices of forced assimilation through boarding schools, removal and finally termination, mark not only a history of oppression, but one that makes sense only if indigenous sovereignty is recognized as both prior to and outside Western cultural domination.<sup>34</sup>

In her recent work: *Red Pedagogy*, Sandy Grande has provided grounds to challenge the Foucauldian conception of power along these lines. The difficulty is that this conception of power replaces conceptions of identity with the idea of subjectivity that is, she says, “radically contingent, continually shifting along the axes of race, class, gender, and sexuality, and aggressively dismissing the notion that one ‘is’ anything.”<sup>35</sup> Such a conception of identity, Grande argues, presumes the normalcy of the western “democratic order.” “This presumption fails to account for the ‘difference’ of American Indian tribal identity—specifically, what it means to

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 336, 342.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>32</sup> John Dewey (1938), *Experience and Education*, in *The Later Works: 1925-1953*, Volume 13 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981-1990), 7-8.

<sup>33</sup> Foucault describes bio-power as “numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations” (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Introduction*, 140). He argues that such techniques of control were “without question... indispensable element[s] in the development of capitalism” which “acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization... guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony.” (Ibid., 140-1)

<sup>34</sup> See Alfred Taiaiake, *Peace, Power, and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) who argues that the notion of sovereignty has been an important resource for critique of western domination but does not serve as an adequate goal for the liberation of indigenous people. He argues that “reciprocity, harmony and autonomy” better capture the goal of indigenous governance. Sovereignty as it used here, that is, as group autonomy, seems closer to the indigenous goal than to the idea of sovereignty as overarching authority.

<sup>35</sup> Sandy Grande, *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 93.

be sovereign, tribal peoples within the geopolitical confines of the United States.”<sup>36</sup> In the face of a critical project that rejects the idea of sovereignty, “Native scholars... remain skeptical... viewing it as simply the latest in a long line of political endeavors aimed at absorbing American Indians into the prevailing model of the ‘democratic citizen’.”<sup>37</sup> The problem is that Foucault’s conception of power fails to take seriously the experience of this sort of oppression. To the extent that this sort of experience counts within pragmatism, Foucault’s rejection of agency and sovereignty means that it is both incompatible with pragmatism and inadequate as a robust pluralism for understanding at least some forms of oppression.

In Foucault’s defense, one might argue that he has not offered a general account of oppression but rather a genealogy of oppression within Western culture. One might grant that the resulting account is therefore valuable. However, it also seems that one must grant Foucault’s theory the implication of not just obscuring the sovereignty of non-western peoples, but also of obscuring the sovereignty of the West and its responsibility for a long history of violence and genocide. One might admit that Foucault’s concept of power is not useful with respect to the problems faced by indigenous peoples and take this conclusion as an opportunity to set aside these other problems for someone else to take up. In this case, the idea of power may become totalizing in a practical sense in just the same way Foucault finds Western sexuality totalizing, except here it overruns the boundaries of the modern West. The analytical tools provided by Foucault’s conception of power may be liberating in that they help people realize that they are historical products who behave in ways that are at odds with their own freedom. Yet, the resulting liberation appears to be selfish on one hand and limitlessly oppressive on the other—providing a new means of destroying the culture and community of others.

### **Follett’s Power**

Admittedly, by itself Mary Follett’s post-World War One conception of power does not provide a direct response to either the limits of Foucauldian power or the need for a conception of sovereignty with which to maintain cultural and political differences. Yet, while the best-known pragmatists failed to engage the idea of power, Follett saw the idea as central to politics, as well as questions of knowledge and the ontology of identity. I think that by bringing Follett into conversation with Foucault, a viable conception of power can emerge that is responsive to the experience of pluralism. Drawing together strands of the “new psychology”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> In *The New State*, Follett remarks that “in my frequent use of the term ‘the new psychology,’ I am not referring to any definitely formulated body of thought; there are no writers who are expounding the new psychology as such.” (Follett, *The New State*, 13) In fact, there were a number of writers doing exactly this. John Dewey described the “New Psychology” as early as 1884 (in an article in the *Andover Review* that was not widely circulated). New psychology was identified both for its experimental commitments and for its developing the idea that consciousness was relational rather than substantial. This was taken up in a variety of ways later on. See for example E. W. Scripture (then head of the Yale Experimental Psychology lab), *The New Psychology* (New York: Walter Scott Publishing, 1907); J. P. Gordy, *New Psychology* (New York: Hinds



and using a variety of sources, including the work of William James and Edwin Holt, idealism as it developed in Royce's so-called "absolute pragmatism," and social ethics of the sort developed by Jane Addams and others in the social settlement movement, Follett proposed that individuals and groups be understood as relational beings. Rather than marking a structure of static or passive relations, Follett held that individuals (whether singular persons or groups of related persons) are agents whose relations are manifested in purposive action. "In human relations," Follett writes, "I never react to you but to you-plus-me; or to be more accurate, it is I-plus-you reacting to you-plus me. 'I' can never influence 'you' because you have already influenced me; that is, in the very process of meeting, by the very process of meeting, we both become something different."<sup>39</sup> In this process, called 'circular response', "we are creating each other all the time."<sup>40</sup> Agents on this account emerge not as separate individuals, identical with themselves (that is, individuals as understood through a logic of identity), but rather as intersections, as the "activity-between." Following Holt, Follett concludes, "reality is in the relating, in the activity-between."<sup>41</sup> From this perspective, individuals (of whatever sort) are such because of their ability to act with purpose and to do so in response to the actions of others. As a result, who one is, must be understood as a co-constitutive process that has the double effect of marking off one from others and of connecting one to a larger whole where the differences between individuals are connected.

As agents, individuals are not merely passive but act in accord with desires. Desire, in this sense, is a goal-directed disposition that marks an agent and has its meaning in action. Follett drew her central idea of desire from Holt's 1915 book, *The Freudian Wish*, in which he incorporated elements of Sigmund Freud's idea of "the wish" or desire with a Jamesian conception of consciousness and Royce's conception of will-acts.<sup>42</sup> Holt writes, "An exact definition of the 'wish' is that it is a course of action which some mechanism of the body is set to carry out, whether it actually does so or does not. ...The wish is any purpose or project for a course of action, whether it is being merely entertained by the mind or is being actually executed."<sup>43</sup> For Holt (and James before him), human beings are understood primarily in terms of their embodied practices taken as continuous with their interests, intentions, and emotional life. As a result, conflicting desires are not merely ideas in contradiction, but ultimately a physical matter. "Wishes conflict," Holt continues, "when they would lead the body into opposed lines of conduct, for it is clear that the body cannot at the same time, say, lie abed and yet be

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and Noble Publishing, 1898); A. G. Tansley, *The New Psychology and Its Relation to Life* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1920).

<sup>39</sup> Follett, *Creative Experience*, 62-3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 54. Follett cites Holt's paper in *The New Realism* as presenting an appropriate conception of reality as wholly relational. "I should hazard the guess," Holt writes there, "that perhaps reality is some very comprehensive system of terms in relation" (Edwin B. Holt et. al., *The New Realism: Cooperative Studies in Philosophy* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 366). Although not mentioned by Follett, both her notion of reality as a matter of "activity between" and Holt's seem to follow from Royce's discussion of "betweenness" in *The World and the Individual*, Second Series.

<sup>42</sup> See Edwin B. Holt, *The Freudian Wish and Its Place in Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt, 1915).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

hurrying to catch a train."<sup>44</sup> The result is a conception of embodied, located or placed agents who *are* complex desires formed by, and acting in ways that affect, their circumstances. The character of individual agents—agents whose desires are formed and are to be fulfilled through reactions to the relations—are framed by three factors: "(1) that my response is not to a rigid static environment, but to a changing environment; (2) to an environment which is changing because of the activity between it and me; (3) that function may be continuously modified by itself."<sup>45</sup> In this sense, agents are always situated in relation to an environment in terms of which their desires are a new relation formed by the intersection of the agent's history and interests with the interests and constraints that emerge from the environment.

One might worry that Follett's conception of situations risks becoming a "block universe" since a given agent is, in a sense, in relation to every other relation and so is really a boundless field of connections. Follett, however, adopts James's idea of the fringe to mark the boundaries of present situations and to set up the possibility of encountering new agents in different situations.<sup>46</sup> In this case, the situations (or agents-in-relation or agent/situations) encounter each other, change through the process of interaction, and formulate new desires to be realized.

Put another way, as agents encounter other agents, their desires change and develop in relation to the desires (and so activities) of the other agents. In order to realize these changing desires, agents must take action in the newly emerging situation, that is, they must become parts of new wholes. This process of becoming parts of new wholes is the process of *integration* in which the desires of individuals interact in a way that evolve new desires and new agents that include the original individuals but which are also more than a "mere sum" of its parts.<sup>47</sup> Follett calls this "more" "plus values," which then become new collective desires of the community and lead to still more action and still more new wholes. "Or it might be put thus," she says, "that response is always to a relating, that things which are varying must be compared with things that are varying, that the law of geometrical progression is the law of organic growth, that functional relating always has a plus value."<sup>48</sup> This approach then marks a psychology (individual and social) that "studies integrative processes..., that is, is concerned with activities; when we are watching an activity we are watching not parts in relation to a

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Follett, *Creative Experience*, 73.

<sup>46</sup> "Those fringes which connect my life with the life of every other human being in the world are the inlets by which the central forces flow into me. I am a worse lawyer, a worse teacher, a worse doctor if I do not know these wider contacts. Let us seek then those bonds which unite us with every other life. Then do we find reality, only in union, never in isolation." (Follett, *The New State*, 191) The emphasis here (as in James) is on the fringe as a means of connection, but it is simultaneously a means of separation since the fringe also marks my life as distinct from those other lives I seek to know.

<sup>47</sup> Follett, *Creative Experience*, 108-9.

<sup>48</sup> Follett, *Creative Experience*, 73. Follett includes a long footnote in which she elaborates on the meaning of "plus value": "I think plus-value is what I mean [as opposed to alternative terms suggested by others], for I am not referring to a plus-plus relation of the parts, but expressing the fact that integration gives an additional value, one more value, but not necessarily a greater or super value." (Follett, *Creative Experience*, 75n14)

whole or whole in relation to parts, we are watching a whole a-making."<sup>49</sup> The participants in the process, however, are not just the recognizable human agents, but the environment as well, which constitutes another agent in relation. The environment too, she says, "is a whole a-making, and the interknitting of these two wholes a-making creates the total situation—also a-making."<sup>50</sup>

To summarize, individuals gain their identity as embodied habits and desires formed at the intersection of body, place, and the desires and habits of already present wholes that form one's environment. Identity is much like the view offered by James that binds together embodied material, social, and spiritual selves in an individual consciousness that is also a whole a-making, that is, subjects are more than "mere sums" but rather new agents.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, the forming desires of individuals become manifest in their relations with others, the process of reacting to you reacting to me reacting to you, and so on. As we interact, we begin a process of unification that at once affirms our differences and generates a new level of desire evolved through our shared needs and disagreements. This new whole a-making is the evolving collective will that in turn interacts with a still wider environment of desires and again seeks a new unification, new agency, and new "plus values."

Power emerges directly from the process of differentiating and uniting individuals. Rather than operating as a set of relations that generated apparent individuals out of a background of non-subjective intentionality, Follett took power as the ability of individuals to operate as both parts and wholes.<sup>52</sup> "Genuine power can only be grown, it will slip from every arbitrary hand that grasps it; for genuine power is not coercive control, but coactive control. Coercive power is the curse of the universe; coactive power, the enrichment and advancement of every human soul."<sup>53</sup> Agents, then, are beings who are able to actualize their desires. They have self-control and, in this sense as agents, "We can have power only over ourselves."<sup>54</sup> In order to achieve self-hood, agents actualize desires and in so doing exercise power. "What the formula I am using shows us," she says, "is that the only genuine power is that over the self—whatever self may be. When you and I decide on a course of action together and do that thing, you have no power over me nor I over you, but we have power over ourselves together"<sup>55</sup> In contrast to power as "nonsubjective intentionality," Follett's conception of power is self-control or, put another way, the ability of an agent to self-govern where the relevant agent may be an individual human being, a neighborhood, a city, region or nation. In *The New State*, this form of power is sovereignty, "(1) as *looking in*, as authority over its own members, as the

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<sup>49</sup> Follett, *Creative Experience*, 102.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> One might observe, rightly I think, that this summary sounds very Foucauldian. The question, as raised earlier, is whether these new subjects are also agents. For Follett they unquestionably are agents in their own right, that is, wholes-a-making.

<sup>52</sup> As pointed out by one of the *Foucault Studies* reviewers, "Foucauldians will worry that this view revives the substantial subject as the basis of agency." Although I think Follett would reject the idea that a substantial or transcendental self is implied, she would affirm that a different ontology is at work in her account.

<sup>53</sup> Follett, *Creative Experience*, xiii.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 156.

independence which is the result of the complete interdependence of those members; and when we at the same time (2) think of this independence as *looking out* to other independences to form through a larger interdependence the larger sovereignty of a larger whole."<sup>56</sup> Follett concludes: "This kind of power, power-with, is what democracy should mean in politics or industry."<sup>57</sup>

While "genuine power" is "power with," power that emerges as control of others, called, "power-over," stands as an obstacle to fostering agency and its potential for a larger collective life. Power-over marks an invasion or an intervention from outside the agent/situation that, since it is from outside, simultaneously denies the possibility of self-control and leads to subjection. Power-over undercuts the ability of agents to actualize their own desires and so leads to pain and suffering even as it destroys differences that make integration and new life possible. From this angle, the idea of power-over provides a framework for a kind of critical theory, in terms of which present social structures, institutions, and practices can be examined. Just as Foucault's conception of power offers a method of analysis to show the ways in which widespread practices construct systems of that foster ongoing oppression, so the idea of power-over can provide a means to identify practices that undercut the free play of desire and the ability of people to self-govern.

Yet even as power-over leads to coercion and suppression of desires and brings about the loss of identity and community, power-over, like disintegration, is a part of the character of agency. The imposition of desires of one agent/situation on another also involves the emergence of a boundary or "activity between", which itself has the potential to evolve new agency and the integration of desire. In other words, an encounter with agents outside one's present situation can lead to the elimination of self control or it can lead to the production of a new self, new desires and a new form of self control. For Follett, intentional activity—agency—is always a movement toward power-with. "[T]here is no power-over in the single situation," she says, "therefore the aim should always be to create the single situation, that is, to make a working-unit or functional whole."<sup>58</sup> This process of creating a single life cannot be produced "if we conceive the single situation as produced by coincidence of interest; this only twists and distorts the facts and that way lay failure—in the long run. The single situation is produced by the union of interests."<sup>59</sup> Power-over, as "pseudo power," nevertheless sets the stage for the possibility of power-with and the emergence of sovereignty by marking the intersection of conflicting desires. Power-over is a sign that two agents are at odds. What happens next depends upon the ability of the agents to recognize the nature of conflict and the potential for converting the activity between them into power-with.

### **Agency in Follett and Foucault**

From the perspective of pragmatism, it is clear that Follett's conception of power can retain—in fact is specifically committed to retaining—the idea of growth and change. Indeed, this is a

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<sup>56</sup> Follett, *The New State*, 350-1.

<sup>57</sup> Follett, *Creative Experience*, 187.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

creative process that leads to more experiences and opportunities. The desire for a future, which is different from the present and past, is constitutive of the agent. The conditions for its realization emerge through the ongoing operations of power. Here, power-with, the process of self-governance or sovereignty, provides an individual with the resources for directed action. Significantly, to act through power-with is not an innocent action but one that also exerts power-over. Individuals of whatever size and scope (whether as individual human beings, communities or cultures) always operate at once as wholes and as parts of larger relations. As a result, any action has the potential to institute new relations that exert power over others, encroaching on their boundaries, obstructing their plans, or reframing their desires. Power-with is, for Follett, genuine power, but even genuine power comes at a cost in a relational universe. Even as this pragmatist notion of power affirms the general standard of growth—of the value of new experiences and connections—through the exertion of power-with, it also demands the exercise of power-over.

If this assessment is correct, the compatibility of Follett's conception of power with pragmatism seems to undermine its difference from Foucauldian power. If power-with is ultimately power-over and if agents are themselves products of a history of acts of power-over, then even apparent acts of self-governance are, as Foucault claims, the manifestation of a kind of nonsubjective intentionality. The commitment to growth leads to the exercise of power over others who in turn try to act in accordance with their own desires (power-with), but in so doing carry out imposed and constructed desires. Growth as a standard that exceeds the present circumstances vanishes into the workings of power-over.

At issue in this objection is the ontological status of the individual. For Foucault, the workings of power-over presume that power-with or agency is only an appearance generated by a larger system as part of its aim of domination. For Follett, however, agents are not appearances, but are actors in their own oppression and their own liberation. If a pragmatist conception of power is to stand in contrast with the Foucauldian, it will turn on the justification of the nature of agency.

This same concern about the status of agents emerges for Follett's conception of power in light of her commitment to the Holt-Freud theory of desire. The Holt-Freud theory claims that desires that do not lead to active fulfillment become repressed and problematic. The repressive hypothesis, according to Foucault, argues that sexual desire in the West has been repressed and needs to be freed to seek fulfillment and in this way, modern society's ills will be addressed. For Foucault, the repression of sexual desire is nothing less than part of the system of sexuality that constitutes the desire in the first place. The Holt-Freud theory goes wrong, one could object, because it fails to see the constructed character of desire and that repression, rather than really marking the repression of desire, is part of a system of power-over.

It is not clear what will save the Holt-Freud theory from the objection, since Foucault's position is committed to the conclusion that intentionality—in the form of a purposive system of oppression—can function without an agent and its intentions. However, Foucault's position relies on the ability of its advocate to show at each stage that the experience of agency is finally not agency (subjective intentionality), but rather proximate intention arising from the system of power relations. It is unclear what would serve as a last argument in favor of this

conclusion, since it is generated as a response to particular cases of intention and so leaves open the plausibility of an alternative ontology of agency.

In the end, a pragmatist conception of power must turn on the ontological claim that there are agents whose desires are not reduced to the operation of power in the Foucauldian sense or power-over in Follett's sense. Since the Foucauldian case against such agents requires a case-by-case examination that illustrates the genealogy of power in terms of which systems of desire are constructed, there is no universal argument to rule out agency in every case. At the same time, the only counter argument to Foucault's hypothesis is to locate a case in which an agent is *not* acting as the result of a system of power relations external to itself. Again, the argument can only be made on a case-by-case basis. It appears that neither position on the nature of agency is stronger than the other.

However, this last point is a hasty conclusion. While power does mark the action of an agent relative to desire, agency is not found solely in such isolated acts. Recall that for Follett, individuals are relations—they emerge not in self-action, but in co-action with others. It is in the context of integration, of unification with others that desires direct action—even as they are transformed. To the extent an individual is directed by power-over, she is no agent. This being said, to act in the manner of power-with does not mean isolated action, but marks a kind of gap or rupture, in which one's desires meet the desires and actions of others. The point is finally a point of order. Even in a Foucauldian world, the actions of individuals, when in accordance with what they take to be their desires, are actions at the demand of power over. Yet, when an action as anticipation or outward activity is taken, it necessarily differentiates the alternatives (e.g. the act taken from acts not taken) and the actor from the environment. A boundary is formed in which the intention and action are both separable from and connected to the situation that frames the agent and her intention. The dictates of power—even Foucauldian power—must respond to the uncertainty of multiple alternatives, the intersection of interests, efforts and breaks in which directives fail or are changed by the particulars of the boundary created. Here, the constructed subject is suspended and the possibilities of agency and power-with emerge in the gap. The act of will has its logic and the resulting principles of order in the context of action are not exhausted, as Foucault would have it, by the demands of power-over or there would be no gap, no experience of alternatives, and no feelings of satisfaction and loss. At the same time, self-control or power-with cannot be isolated and able to operate without constraint since it is “between” alternatives, the conflicting demands of power-over, and its own past and future.<sup>60</sup>

From this angle, Follett's conception of power, like Foucault's, allows us to recognize the genealogies of power that frame the environment in which agents act. Follett's conception adds the recognition of an ontological pluralism of agents marked by boundaries that divide and connect. Foucault considers this sort of view, but seems to set it aside as he develops his conception of power. In a 1972 interview discussing the place of intellectuals in resisting oppression, Foucault says “if the fight is directed against power, then all those on whom power

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<sup>60</sup> The “gap” in the face of incompatible alternatives or uncertainty is central to Peirce's notion of abduction and creativity as well as Dewey's theory of inquiry. See Scott L. Pratt, *Logic: Inquiry, Argument and Order* (Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2010).

is exercised to their detriment, all who find it intolerable, can begin the struggle on their own terrain and on the basis of their proper activity (or passivity)."<sup>61</sup> In the context of such efforts to meaningfully resist power, Foucault seems to recognize the emergence of subjects who are not constructed solely by the system of power. "In engaging in a struggle that concerns their own interests," he continues, "whose objectives they clearly understand and whose methods only they can determine, they enter into a revolutionary process."<sup>62</sup> The trouble is that the idea of power developed by Foucault provides few resources for formulating what it means to join in localized struggle with a sense of one's own interests. Later, in a 1976 lecture, Foucault returns to the question of how one challenges systems of power, but now rejects the idea of localized agency. He concludes that the response to power will call for "a new form of right, one which must indeed be anti-disciplinarian, but at the same time liberated from the principle of sovereignty."<sup>63</sup> In a lecture published in 1982, Foucault suggests that the struggles of power must be understood in the broadest terms: "what makes the domination of a group, caste, or a class, together with the resistance and revolts that domination comes up against, a central phenomenon in the history of societies is that they manifest in a massive global form, at the level of the whole social body, the locking together of power relations with relations of strategy and the results proceeding from their interaction."<sup>64</sup>

A pragmatist conception of power founded on the work of Follett answers the problem of resistance in another way. Writing in 1918, Follett agrees with Foucault, acknowledging that "The atomistic idea of sovereignty is dead, we all agree, but we may learn to define sovereignty differently."<sup>65</sup> Rather than defining it as either a kind of monism or a static pluralism, Follett then defines it as a process by which power-over is transformed again and again into power-with. "The fact is," she concludes, "that the local units must *grow* sovereignty, that we want to revivify local life not for the purpose of breaking up sovereignty, but for the purpose of creating a real sovereignty."<sup>66</sup>

Grande offers a similar response to both the power of Western culture and the efforts of post-structuralist theory to challenge it. Following the suggestions of Taiaiake Alfred, Grande proposes an alternative conception of subjectivity, which she calls *indígena*, and with it an alternative view of power. From this perspective, "'sovereignty' becomes a project organized to defend and sustain the basic right of indigenous peoples to exist in 'wholeness' and to thrive in their relations with other peoples."<sup>67</sup> In the pragmatist conception of power, the recognition of diverse sovereignty demanded by Grande is here accounted for both in the recognition of power-over and the differences of agency that are required by power-with. In the context of American experience, the pragmatist conception of power opens the door to genealogy and recognition, responsibility and reparation.

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<sup>61</sup> Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited with an introduction by Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 216.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>63</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 108.

<sup>64</sup> Foucault, *Power*, 348.

<sup>65</sup> Follett, *The New State*, 283.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>67</sup> Grande, 171.

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