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Undergoing, Mystery, and Half-Knowledge: John Dewey's Disquieting Side

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Abstract In this article I argue that Dewey, throughout his work, conducted a systematic dismantling of the concept of rationality as mastery and control. Such a dismantling entails, at the same time, the dismantling of the auto-grounded subject, namely, the subject that grounds itself in the power to master experience. The Deweyan challenge to Western ontology goes straight to the core of the subject's question. Dewey not only systematically challenged the understanding of thinking as a process consciously managed by the subject but also conceived of thinking as an event rather than a process—something that occurs in us rather than something intentionally staged by a reflective subject. Such a twofold dismantling of rationality and subject rather than a flow in a nihilistic/relativistic account of education results in a reinforcement of education that must be understood not so much as the attempt to understand and predict experience but as the means to create new, unpredictable experience. As a result, education, for Dewey, is grounded on, moved by, and directed at uncertainty. Education, in a sense, engenders uncertainty.

Keywords Dewey · Uncertainty · Education · Experience · Subject

Introduction

In *A Question of Experience: Dewey and Gadamer on Practical Wisdom* (2010), Chris Higgins, referring to the wide range of interpretations of Dewey's work, states, "Opinions differ on where the keystone lies in Dewey's diverse writings" (Higgins 2010, p. 302). He then lists several such keystones: "[D]emocracy and deliberation, […] art and culture, […] science and inquiry, […] education and growth, […] tools and technology" (Ibid.). Higgins also highlights that "there are other 'undiscovered Deweys constantly emerging: […] the

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erotic Dewey […]; the Emersonian Dewey […]; the Hegelian Dewey […]; the Darwinian Dewey […]; the idealist Dewey" (Ibid., p. 329). If I am allowed to add a category to Higgins' list, I wish to highlight how, along with these diverse Deweys, we can also find a "disquieting" Dewey, namely, a philosopher who seems to undermine the very basis of reflective thought. I am aware that such a statement inevitably sounds both unfounded and uselessly provocative. It is a given that Deweyan work is grounded in a firm faith in reflective thought as the means by which a human being "sets us free from the limiting influence of sense, appetite, and tradition" (Dewey 1910, p. 156). Through reflexion, "[e]xperience may welcome and assimilate all that the most exact and penetrating thought discovers" (Ibid.). It is also a given that inquiry is the only means by which a "problematic situation" can become a "settled or resolved one" (Dewey 1929, p. 194). As Dewey states, "If inquiry begins in doubt, it terminates in the institution of conditions which remove need for doubt. The latter state of affairs may be designated by the words belief and knowledge" (Dewey 1938, p. 7). However, and this is my point, despite the above statement, the emphasis in Deweyan work clearly lies on the side of doubt, which is the bottomless ground of thinking and living.

When analysing reflective thought, we need to ask about its aim and origin. Such "genealogical work" is important to remain faithful to the Deweyan aim, namely, to understand and leave intact "the cord that binds experience and nature" without taking knowledge as primary (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 23). Thus, along with the identification of the Deweyan account of "thinking" with "reflective thought" and "inquiry"—an identification that has served as the background for a significant portion of the educational research on Dewey—we can say that "there is another side to the picture" (Wilshire 1993, p. 257). This is a side that is more concerned with uncertainty and undergoing than with stability and equilibrium; that boldly questions the amount of control over the very process of thinking, thus forestalling the question of the "death of subject" (Boisvert 1998, p. 35) as a coherent centre of agency; that is unsettled by the "mystery, doubt, and half-knowledge" of the world in which man lives (Dewey 1980 [1934], p. 34) and fully aware of how in experience, "the distinct and evident are prized […] but […] the dark and twilight abound" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 20); that is concerned with "[t]he difficulties and tragedies of life" and boldly states that "the stimuli to acquiring knowledge, lie in the *radical disparity* of presence-in-experience and presence-in-knowing" (Dewey 1917, p. 48, emphasis added); and that openly speaks about "risk […,] ill-omen […and the] evil-eye", which dwell in our "aleatory world" (Dewey 1929 [1925], pp. 41–42).

Thus, if, according to Biesta and Burbules, Deweyan philosophy "takes *action* as its *most basic* category" (2003, p. 9, emphasis in original), then, according to Dewey, "[t]he distinctive characteristic of practical activity […] is the uncertainty which attends it. Of it we are compelled to say: Act, but act at your peril" (Dewey 1929, p. 6). Putting Biesta and Burbules's argument into Dewey's own words, we may even say that the heart of even the "*most basic* category" of existence entails peril. Moreover, if the key question of Deweyan pragmatism was "[w]hat shall we do to make objects having value more secure in existence?" (Dewey 1929, p. 43), then we ought to recognise how, at the same time, "[t]he existential conditions of any existence are indefinitely circumstantial" (Dewey 1938, p. 319) because, ultimately, "[e]very existence is an event" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 71).

This "disquieting side" of Dewey, of course, did not go unnoticed. Several scholars have noted it: Garrison (1994, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2005), above all, who clearly recognised that the Deweyan challenge to Cartesian metaphysics (2003) entails a questioning of the auto-grounded subject that lies in such a metaphysics; Alexander (1987), who analysed the relationship between art and experience and highlighted the role of

"'prereflexive' experience in Dewey's thought" (p. 10); Wilshire (1993), who openly spoke about Dewey as "a tragic figure" (1993, p. 257); and Saito (2002, 2005), who challenged the "apparently optimistic worldview" (Saito 2002, p. 249) that some perceive in Dewey's work, thereby linking Deweyan thought to "the sense of the tragic that we have lost sight of" (2002, p. 249). In a sense, we can find traces of this Deweyan "dark side" in the works of several scholars who, although not involved in highlighting it directly, have shown how the radical Deweyan challenge to Plato's and Descartes' "theoretical gaze" entails the dismantling of any safe ground for thinking (Bernstein 1961, 2010; Biesta 1994, 2009a, 2010; Jackson 1994/1995; Boisvert 1998; Biesta and Burbules 2003; Semetsky 2003, 2008; Margolis 2010). In their works, the easy and misleading interpretation of Dewey as the promoter of an irenic path to democracy and knowledge is challenged, and Deweyan thought comes to light in all its abyssal profundity. Working in the light of these scholars, I wish to analyse this "disquieting side" of Dewey's thought. Remaining faithful to pragmatist principles, I will attempt to argue the consequences of such an emphasis on the Deweyan conception of thinking, knowledge, and education. My point is that Dewey, throughout his work, conducted a systematic dismantling of the concept of rationality as mastery and control, which entails, at the same time, the dismantling of the "reflective subject", namely, the subject that grounds itself in the power of reflection. Thus, the Deweyan challenge to the Western "metaphysics of presence" (Derrida 1978 [1967]; Garrison 2003, p. 356) goes straight to the core of the subject's question. Such a twofold dismantlement of rationality and subject, rather than becoming a nihilistic/relativistic account of education, results in a reinforcement of education as the way to engender new meanings and new experience.

The article is organised into five sections. In the first section, I argue how thinking, in Deweyan work, must be understood in relation to its origin, namely, the world's dangerousness and human fragility. Dewey is adamant in claiming that human beings find themselves in an uncertain and perilous condition and in a universe marked by contingency (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 46). Knowledge and reflective thought emerged as response to this anguishing situation and must be understood in relationship to this origin. In the second section, I argue how we cannot reduce thinking in Dewey to "reflective thought". For Dewey, thinking is, above all, "something that happens in us" (Dewey 1910, p. 34), namely, something that is not at our disposal. In the third section, I engage with two of Dewey's statements that are as much disquieting as overlooked—to my knowledge, there has been no careful inquiry into these two questions. These statements concern (a) the fact that "a persistent trait of every object in experience [is that] [t]he visible is set in the invisible; and in the end what is unseen *decides what happens* in the seen" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 43, emphasis added) and (b) the problem that "[w]e have at present little or next to no controlled art of securing that redirection of behavior which constitutes adequate perception or consciousness. That is, *we have little or no art of education in the fundamentals*" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 316, emphasis added). In the fourth section, I address the question of how, allowing for the plausibility of my framework, the endeavour of education is possible. My point, which is strongly inspired by Garrison's argument about disrupting inadequate habits (Garrison 1996) and Biesta's "[p]edagogy of interruption" (Biesta 2009b, 2012a), is that in Deweyan thought, education is made possible by an interruption in the ongoing flow of experience. Such an interruption, by a jump into the unknown, creates a new point of departure in the course of events. Thus, through Dewey, we need to conceive of education not so much as the attempt to understand and predict experience but rather as the means to create new, unpredictable experience. As a result,

education is grounded in, moved by, and directed at uncertainty. Education, in a sense, engenders uncertainty. In the fifth section, I summarise my analysis.

Thinking, The Need for Security and Human Fragility

The question of challenging Western "ontological knowledge" (Dewey 1882, p. 210), or overcoming the "exclusive identification of the object of knowledge with reality" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 157), was one of the central questions in Deweyan reflection. Nonetheless, the Deweyan conception of thought has been the victim of several simplifications in terms of both methodology and content. Thankfully, according to Johnston (2002) and Rømer (2012), the situation has changed. Based on the works of Biesta (1994, 2009a, 2010), Garrison (1994, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2005), Jackson (1994/1995), and Biesta and Burbules (2003), we can say that the "mainstream" interpretation of Deweyan work has moved away from such a reductive understanding to a deeper and more consistent one that clearly recognises the Deweyan challenge to the roots of Western thought. Thus, the interpretation of John Dewey as an advocate of cognitive procedure only concerned with assuring "expected outcomes" on the basis of univocal methods has been overcome, as have interpretations that see in Dewey the champion of an easy and irenic path to democracy and knowledge. In this section, working in the light of these scholars, I wish to argue that when analysing Deweyan work, reflective thought and knowledge need to be understood in relation to their origin; they are a means that human beings have developed to face their fragile and uncertain condition.

I will begin my analysis by recognising that for Dewey, the first "fact" of living is that human beings are "thrown" into life; life and its conditions are anything but a choice. As Dewey states, "[man] cannot escape the problem of how to engage in life, since in any case he must engage in it in some way or other or else quit and get out" (Dewey 1922, p. 81). Thus, we need to identify the conditions in which man finds himself. My point is that Dewey, from *How We Think* (1910) to *Knowing and the Known* (Dewey and Bentley 1949), clearly recognised the danger and the awful that dwell in our aleatory world: "Man finds himself living in an aleatory world; his existence involves, to put it baldly, a gamble. The world is a scene of risk; it is uncertain, unstable, uncannily unstable. Its dangers are irregular, inconstant, not to be counted upon as to their times and seasons. Although persistent, they are sporadic, episodic. […] These things are as true today as they were in the days of early culture. It is not the *facts* which have changed, but the methods of insurance, regulation and acknowledgment" (Dewey 1929 [1925], pp. 41–43, emphasis added). This passage is sufficiently clear. I wish only to linger on the terms "facts" and "uncannily unstable". In a way reminiscent of Pascal,[1] Dewey views the world's irregularity and dangerousness not as features of our relationship with the world but as features that belong to the very nature of the world. I will return to this issue later. The world is "a scene of risk", "uncannily unstable", and what separates us now from "the days of early culture" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 43) is only the means by which we attempt to face such

[1] I am aware that a comparison with a philosopher such as Pascal, who is so greatly removed in time, aims and content, could be considered risky, if not wholly unfounded. However, in my opinion, the "existential emphasis", in which Dewey speaks of life as a gamble, clearly resembles Pascal's desperate argument of life as a wager. Of course, the responses to such awareness are very different according to these two philosophers: inquiry, reflective thought and faith in human possibility to achieve meaningful living are prominent in Dewey; religion and a lack of confidence in a human being's possibility to achieve any sense by himself are prominent in Pascal. Regardless, the existential roots of the diverse responses are closely related.

uncanny uncertainty. Moreover, to call the world "uncannily unstable" is not only to say that we cannot understand and predict the world; it means that we cannot even understand the world's instability.

Such a world "of perils and hazards" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 71) demands effective responses so that human beings will survive. In stressing this concept, we should add that in Dewey, the human condition is "firmly grounded" on need and uncertainty. As a result, knowledge and inquiry necessarily commit their "original sin", namely, venturing forth in an unsure and problematic equilibrium with the environment. This equilibrium, which is continually threatened by hazards and precariousness, needs to be continually reset. Thought and inquiry, in a sense, are anything but a choice; they are the only way in which the human organism can face a "fearful […and] awful" world (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 42). This is not to deny that living, to Dewey, is "an intelligent exchange between an organism and its surroundings" (Rømer 2012, p. 136); it is to say, rather, that to understand the quality and outcomes of such an exchange, we need to understand its aims and origin.

Human beings, since their appearance on Earth, have been thrown into such an aleatory world. To survive, they are called on to transform unsettled and indeterminate situations into more stable and clear ones, thereby finding, in the flow of experience, elements on which to ground: "Indeterminate situations are marked by confusion, obscurity and conflict. They require clarification. An unsettled situation needs clarification because as it stands it gives no lead or cue to the way in which it may be resolved" (Dewey 1929, p. 185). A human being is forced to modify a pre-cognitive experience into a cognisable and manageable one "by modification of its constituents" (Dewey 1938, p. 118). For Dewey, knowledge is literally a matter of life or death.

As Rømer has noted (2013, p. 643), Dewey does not limit such understanding of the human condition to fortuitous passages. In one of his masterpieces, *Experience and Nature*, Dewey clearly frames knowledge as springing from need and man's fragility: man finds himself in a universe framed by contingency—and, indeed, "[e]very existence is an event" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 71). In such a universe "[t]he need for security compels men to fasten upon the regular in order to minimize and to control the precarious and fluctuating" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. iv). The means by which human beings try to face precariousness is reflective thought, namely, human beings' specific responses to their state of necessity toward the world. We may even say that reflective thought springs from fear, and fear, "whether an instinct or an acquisition, is a function of the environment. Man fears because he exists in a fearful, an awful world" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 42). It is important to recognise that for Dewey, the existence of a perilous and fearful world is a fact: "The *world* is precarious and perilous" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 42, emphasis in original). In this statement, Dewey emphasises the term "world" as the basis of the question. Neither our understanding nor our relationship with the world is fraught with precariousness or dangerousness; the world itself "is precarious and perilous" (Ibid.). We may even say that the only exception Dewey makes to his transactional approach, in which things emerge by interaction and communication, lies in the 'objective reality' of such an awful world.

By means of reflective thought, human beings strive for harmony by facing "the character of contingency which [the universe] possesses so integrally" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 46). In human beings' lives, "[t]he striving to make stability of meaning prevail over the instability of events is the main task of intelligent human effort" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 50). That is why Dewey establishes "the natural continuity of inquiry with organic behaviour" (Dewey 1938, p. 36): by inquiry, which "began presumably as soon as man appeared on earth" (Dewey 1938, p. 5), man guarantees his own always-uncertain equilibrium.

Here lies the immense importance of reflexion, which is "the actual transition from the problematic to the secure, as far as that is intentionally guided" (Dewey 1929, p. 227). However, to understand such immense value, we need to continuously refer to its roots. Knowledge—that is, the result of thinking (Dewey 1930 [1916], p. 177)—springs from "existential conditions" (Dewey 1938, p. 319) and because of its origin is grounded in uncertainty. Furthermore, to the extent to which knowledge gains its importance from the "context of non-cognitive but experienced subject-matter" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 381), it is always threatened by uncertainty. Uncertainty is also the primary characteristic of the wider process of thinking, which is framed by Dewey as "to act on the basis of the absent and the future" (Dewey 1910, p. 14). Such a possibility has two faces. It means, positively, that by thinking, a human being can anticipate the consequences of her/his actions. However, in being grounded "on the basis of the absent", such a possibility is essentially uncertain: "[A]ll thinking involves a risk. Certainty cannot be guaranteed in advance" (Dewey 1930 [1916], p. 174).

Thinking, in Deweyan understanding, is disquieting in another way: by thinking, a human being is exposed to errors and failures in a way that does not concern animals that rely on instinct. Dewey is adamant in claiming that "[w]hile the power of thought frees us from servile subjection to instinct, appetite, and routine, it also brings with it the occasion and possibility of error and mistake. In elevating us above the brute, it opens to us the possibility of failures to which the animal, limited to instinct, cannot sink" (Dewey 1910, p. 19). Thus, the "power of thought" and, we may even add, the weakness and the indeterminateness of the thinking living being that man is engenders dangers that animals do not face. By developing thinking, human beings free themselves but simultaneously face the possibility of losing themselves. Significantly, in the opening page of the first chapter of his masterpiece *Democracy and Education*, Dewey is adamant in stating how "[t]he living thing may easily be crushed by superior forces [losing] its identity as a living thing" (Dewey 1930 [1916], p. 1). Such forces, of course, confront every "living thing"; however, it appears that Dewey places human beings in a special condition. Due the possibility of rational thought, human beings are more exposed to failure and death. Thus, on the one hand, Dewey recognises the unity between nature and human beings; on the other hand, he overturns the 'classic cosmogony' in which human beings are at the pinnacle of nature. Human beings, in the Deweyan account, are the more fragile and exposed creature of nature.

The Occurrence of Thinking

Thus far, I have attempted to argue how Dewey frames thinking as an uncertain human response to a perilous and awful world. In this section, I wish to explore another issue and to argue how the identification of thinking with "reflective thought" and "inquiry", which has characterised a remarkable portion of educational research based on Dewey, does not do justice to Deweyan thought. Dewey systematically challenged the understanding of thinking as a process consciously managed by the subject. Thinking is an event rather than a process mastered by the subject; thinking is something that "happens in us" (Dewey 1910, p. 34), that is, something that is not at our disposal. This is not to deny the immense value of reflective thought and inquiry in gaining "ordered relations" (Dewey 1980 [1934], p. 15) with our environment, nor is it to say that we have no control over reflection—that is, that reflection does not exist as reflection. My point is that Dewey, in pursuing his

endeavour to establish reflective thought as intelligent exchange with the world and nature, was fully aware that thinking is anything but a clear process and that reflective thought is essentially the tip of the iceberg of thinking.

Let us compare two of Dewey's statements: "Active persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought" (Dewey 1910, p. 6) and "Primarily, naturally, it is not *we* who think, in any actively responsible sense; thinking is rather something that happens in us" (Dewey 1910, p. 34, emphasis in original).

Both of these statements are from the same work, *How We Think*. In the former statement, the emphasis is on the possibility that we need to manage the process of thinking; in the latter, the emphasis is exactly the opposite: thinking "happens in us", and such thinking, in a sense, disposes of us. Thus, a wide gulf appears to separate these two statements until we recognise that their subject matters are quite different. In the former, Dewey speaks of "reflective thought", that is, the process of intentional reflection in which the subject "maintain[s] the state of doubt and […] carries on systematic and protracted inquiry" (Dewey 1910, p. 13). In the latter, Dewey speaks of something different, namely, "the flow of suggestions [which] goes on in spite of our will, quite as surely as 'our bodies feel, where'er they be, against or with our will'" (Dewey 1910, p. 13). Thus, the question is what relationship exists between thinking as "something that happens in us" and thinking as "reflective thought". We can attempt to address the concept of thinking as the space in which reflective thought grows. Such growth is provoked by "discord" with the environment and by a "[d]esire for restoration of the union" (Dewey 1980 [1934], p. 15). However, this problem remains: to the extent to which reflective thought emerges from a flow that "goes on in spite of our will", it is quite difficult to speak about "[a]ctive persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge"—or better said, such "careful consideration" is made on a basis over which the subject lacks any control.

My point is that Dewey did not entirely resolve this tension. He did not resolve it because, working on the logic of inquiry, he discovered something that transcended such logic and that resembled what Heidegger discussed approximately 20 years later, namely, our being-in-the-world as something that is behind knowledge (Heidegger 1996 [1927], p. 58).[2] Approximately 20 years before Heidegger, Dewey fully recognised how impossible it is to resolve the objects *of* consciousness exclusively in objects *in* consciousness; such a path is a dead end because "[w]hen intellectual experience and its material are taken to be primary, the cord that binds experience and nature is cut" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 23). According to Biesta and Burbules, in the Deweyan account, the "[h]uman organism is always already 'in touch' with reality, unlike the dualistic philosophy of consciousness, which separates the immaterial mind and the material world" (Biesta and Burbules 2003, p. 10).[3] In being "always in touch with reality", the human organism is, at the same time, always beyond itself and beyond its own understanding because its understanding is always an ongoing one.[4] Moreover, Dewey boldly states that knowledge, springing from such

[2] See Troutner (1969, 1972), Rorty (1976), Toulmin (1984), Margolis (2010), and Rosenthal (2010) for comparisons between Dewey and Heidegger.

[3] "The dualistic philosophy of consciousness" to which Biesta and Burbules refer presumably is the Cartesian one.

[4] Such "being beyond" is clearly expressed in a passage on learning from *The School and Society*: "Learning ? certainly, but living primarily, and learning through and in relation to this living. When we take the life of the child centered and organized in this way, we do not find that he is first of all a listening being; quite the contrary. […] He is already *running over, spilling over*, with activities of all kinds" (Dewey 1900, p. 37, emphasis added).

"being already in touch" with reality, does not grasp the ground on which it lies; knowledge depends on something over which it has no control.

This issue is central to Deweyan work, and it is best expressed in a passage from *The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy*. I quote it in full and then provide my comment: "The thing to be known does not present itself primarily as a matter of knowledge-and-ignorance at all. It occurs as a stimulus to action and as the source of certain undergoings. […] Such presence in experience has of itself nothing to do with knowledge or consciousness; nothing that is in the sense of depending upon them, though it has everything to do with knowledge and consciousness in the sense that the latter depends upon prior experience of this non-cognitive sort. Man's experience is what it is because his response to things (even successful response) and the reactions of things to his life, are so radically different from knowledge. The difficulties and tragedies of life, the stimuli to acquiring knowledge, lie in the *radical disparity* of presence-in-experience and presence-in-knowing" (Dewey 1917, pp. 47–48, emphasis added). Here, the priority of experience over consciousness is firmly stated. The "presence in experience" does not depend on knowledge and consciousness, whereas knowledge and consciousness "depend […] on prior experience of this non-cognitive sort". However, this is not the only issue raised by this statement. I wish to linger on the expression "radical disparity": "the radical disparity" between "presence-in-experience" and "presence-in-knowing" means, I believe, something resembling the "otherness" of experience with respect to knowledge—and, we may even say, the "radical otherness" of experience with respect to knowledge. One would be tempted to instead say the "transcendence" of experience, if such a term were not misleading in understanding Dewey. Such a "radical disparity" involves what Dewey, 8 years later, would define as the "ineffability" of the immediacy of existence: "Immediacy of existence is ineffable. However, there is nothing mystical about such ineffability; it expresses the fact that of direct existence it is futile to say anything to one's self and impossible to say anything to another. […] Things in their immediacy are unknown and unknowable, not because they are remote or behind some impenetrable veil of sensation of ideas, but because knowledge has no concern with them" (Dewey 1929 [1925], pp. 85–86).[5]

If we link the two statements, we see that Dewey's words witness that our own experience transcends ourselves; that is, regardless of what we will know, experience will remain always, at the same time, *behind* our knowledge and *beyond* ourselves. Such transcendence is an immanent one; experience is always "what it is" and is always "there" because "things are objects to be treated, used, acted upon and with, enjoyed and endured, even more than things to be known. They are things *had* before they are things cognized" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 21, emphasis added). Of course, through action, human beings possess the capacity to modify their environment intentionally. However, our experience in its entirety as being-embedded-in-the-world remains beyond the boundaries of reflection.

By addressing the question of "radical disparity", Dewey fully accomplishes the dismantling of the essence, namely, the founding categories of Western ontology (Garrison 2003). In the Deweyan account, the only ascertained truth is that "we are creatures with lives to live" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 27). What this life is and what experience as a whole means are senseless questions because such questions relate to something as the "essence" and the "ultimate telos" of life and experience, and essence and ultimate telos are the means by which knowledge, posing as an "extra-natural" power "over against the world" (Dewey 1917, pp. 30–31), establishes itself as the measure of experience (Dewey 1917,

[5] Regarding this issue, see Jackson's analysis of the "qualitative immediacy" of experience (1994/1995, pp. 194–195).

pp. 30–31). Indeed, as Dewey states, "When Descartes and others broke away from medieval interests, they retained as commonplaces its intellectual apparatus: Such as, knowledge is exercised by a power that is extra-natural and set over against the world to be known. […] The essential thing is that the bearer was conceived as outside of the world" (Ibidem). It is important to note that the Cartesian gesture of establishing an auto-grounded, egological subject causes—in Deweyan understanding—a twofold alienation: the alienation of the world from the human being and the alienation of the human being from him/herself.[6] Thus, in challenging the monopoly of knowledge over living and experience, Dewey simultaneously dismantled the ground of the Cartesian subject and thus the Cartesian subject itself. Stated otherwise, when the Cartesian egological subject no longer has the basis of its knowledge upon which to build, it is narrowed down to an event *of* experience. This narrowing down is simultaneously the freeing of the subject from what we may call a totalitarian concept of knowledge and thus an enlargement of the subject. Such a twofold freeing—of experience from essence and of subject from an all-encompassing knowledge—has far-reaching consequences in education. As I wish to argue in more detail in the fourth section, the weakening of the power of knowledge accomplished by Dewey flows in a reinforcement of education as the means by which new experience is created. In the following section, I engage with two statements of Dewey's that are disquieting as much as they are overlooked. To my knowledge, there has been no careful study of these two statements. They concern (a) the relationship between the visible and the invisible (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 43) and (b) the problem that "we have little or no art of education in the fundamentals, namely in the management of the organic attitudes which color the qualities of our conscious objects and acts" (Ibid., p. 316).

The Visible and the Invisible

In *Experience and Nature* Dewey (1929 [1925], p. 43) presented the following statement: "[A] persistent trait of every object in experience [is that] [t]he visible is set in the invisible; and in the end what is unseen *decides what happens* in the seen; the tangible rests precariously upon the untouched and ungrasped" (emphasis added). Let me express a personal opinion: such a statement hardly seems a Deweyan one. That the 'hero' of reflective thought can say that in experience "what is unseen decides what happens in the seen" and that "the tangible rests precariously upon the untouched and ungrasped" is upsetting. It is upsetting because Dewey is adamant when speaking about "every object in experience". However, the most startling part of Dewey's statement lies in the phrase "what is unseen decides what happens in the seen". To the extent to which "what happens" is decided by elements not only beyond the boundaries of knowledge but also beyond the boundaries of sight (namely, out of the boundaries of aware perception), it is difficult to understand how human beings can have any control over life and experience—

[6] The challenge to the Cartesian subject is also accomplished by Dewey in another way, namely, by putting communication at the core of the constitution of subjectivity. As Biesta states, "Whereas modern philosophy saw human consciousness—the Cartesian 'ego cogito' or the Kantian 'Ich denke'—as the *alpha* and *omega* of all philosophy, pragmatism put 'the life of association', and more specifically processes of participation, collective meaning making and communication, centre stage. This is why pragmatism might best be characterised as a philosophy of communication or, since it conceives of communication in thoroughly practical terms, as a *philosophy of communicative action*" (Biesta 2010, p. 711, emphasis in original). Because communication has conquered the central stage in philosophy, we can no longer speak of the subject as the basis of living and experience.

and, as I wish to argue, they have no such control. Thus, the "origin and career of what is present" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 44) remains beyond the boundaries of our sight. We are compelled to recognise how, upon closer analysis, the statement seems to undermine the very basis of "intelligent action" and "reflective thought". It is difficult to understand what can be the sense and the function of such activities in a world in which "what is present" is determined by "indirect and hidden factors" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 43). Here, it is critical that Dewey leaves no room for a more nuanced interpretation, which, for example, could suggest the possibility that such "indirect and hidden factors" could become, upon further analysis, visible and thus manageable. What is unseen remains unseen; what is unseen "set[s] the visible" and "decides what happens". In other words, by no means can we find a way to either penetrate this invisible ground or bridge the gap between experience and knowledge.

Of course, we could interpret reflective thought and inquiry as refined forms of experience—and, in a sense, they are exactly this—aimed at creating stability in a perilous world. Indeed, this is what Dewey argues is the aim of inquiry and reflective thought. However, I believe that if we have to take Dewey's words seriously—and there is every reason to do so—there remain problems related to not only the "radical disparity" between experience and knowledge but also the relationship between the visible and the invisible. In other words, if Dewey's intention was to discuss a bridgeable gap between experience and knowledge or to frame a process of progressive clarification and control of experience through knowledge, why does he use the term "radical" to qualify this disparity? Accordingly, inquiry is not a process of gaining progressive knowledge about the world or seeing the roots of our experiences, which would place Deweyan thought into a Cartesian paradigm. Inquiry, pragmatically, is the only means by which human beings can confront a perilous world, which in its "essence"—to use a very improper term in the Deweyan vocabulary—remains "uncannily unstable". Moreover, we must remember that Dewey boldly states that the world's instability is a "fact" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 43). As human beings, we are thrown into a world that "is not […] a matter of knowledge-and-ignorance at all" (Dewey 1917, p. 47). Instead, the world is a place of living and surviving. In this respect, inquiry is the best method we have discovered. Moreover, inquiry is not a matter of controlling and mastering nature and experience, both of which are the invisible sources of living and thus of inquiry; instead, inquiry is a matter of acting with and by the world.

Thus, "the methods of insurance, regulation and acknowledgment" (Dewey 1929 [1925], pp. 41–43) that we gain through living and evolution are not methods by which we gain the power to master the world and nature, both of which simultaneously remain, at the very same time, behind and beyond living and evolution.[7] Instead, they are methods of insurance and regulation of our ongoing contact with the world and nature (Biesta and Burbules 2003). Of course, insurance intervenes in the world and thus modifies it. Furthermore, insurance is fundamental: it is literally a matter of life and death—and, in a sense, if we are here as human beings, insurance and regulation have worked. However, remaining faithful to Dewey's words, we can see that there is an unfillable gap between knowledge as a means to fully penetrate the world (or even to control it) and knowledge as a means by which to survive and make sense of living, creating one's own equilibrium. Reiterating—and perhaps stressing—Biesta and Burbules's argument, we can even say that we have already been thrown into the condition to achieve the "*point of* [good] *contact*

[7] World and nature continue to underlie inquiry in that they precede and, in a sense, ground inquiry. In addition, they always underlie inquiry because inquiry, as Dewey frames that activity, intervenes on behalf of world and nature, but the whole always remains at a distance.

between the human organism and the world" (Biesta and Burbules 2003, p. 10, emphasis in original).

The Deweyan argument about visible and unvisible also appears to undermine the central Deweyan issue of communication and education. To the extent that "what is unseen decides what happens in the seen", it is likewise difficult to understand why one can be moved to communicate and share and how education may be useful or even possible beyond mere socialisation. If we conceive of education as entailing emancipation and awareness, and if we loosely refer to education as involving a personal and common effort toward human development, such a statement is an immovable roadblock to our hopes. The problem is that we have gained this understanding of education from Dewey himself. My point is that such a statement regarding human helplessness must be understood while bearing in mind that Dewey moves the question from the control of experience to the generation of experience. I will attempt to make my point by describing the functions that "eager and impassioned activities" (Dewey 1930 [1916], p. 50) and "immediate organic selections" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 298) serve in the Deweyan account of knowledge.

Let us begin with what Dewey says regarding the "subconscious" aspect of human thinking: "Apart from language, from imputed and inferred meaning, we continually engage in an immense multitude of immediate organic selections, rejections, welcomings, expulsions, appropriations, withdrawals, shrinkings, expansions, relations and dejections, attacks, wardings off, of the most minute, vibratingly delicate nature. We are not aware of the qualities of many or most of these acts; we do not objectively distinguish and identify them. Yet they exist as feeling qualities, and have an enormous directive effect on our behavior. Even our most highly intellectualized operations depend upon them as a 'fringe' by which to guide our inferential movements" (Dewey 1929 [1925], pp. 298–299).

At least two aspects of this passage deserve discussion. (a) Our engagement with the environment is an organic function and occurs in the form of "immediate acts". These acts are, at the very same time, not mediated by anything and fulfilled instantaneously. We may even say that one reason that such acts are not under conscious control is that we are "continually engaged" in them. They comprise "a multitude", and thus, it is impossible to have enough time to place such acts under the lens of conscious reflection. While the conscious mind is focussed on any one of them, any number of others have already occurred. However, this situation is not the primary explanation for our lack of awareness regarding such acts. Indeed, we can consider the conscious analysis of these acts one of the "most highly intellectualized operations [that] depend upon them" (Dewey 1929 [1925], pp. 298). In other words, consciousness is grounded on something out of its control, and the term "fringe" is strongly meaningful. (b) Dewey is also adamant in stating how such acts "have an enormous directive effect on our behavior". If human beings can interact with the environment by means of action, we must be aware of how, at the same time, that behaviour (i.e., the organised combination of our actions) arises as a result of such a multitude of pre-conscious acts. One could even say that Dewey has built up a naturalisation of the subconscious, and by such a naturalisation, he has placed the upsetting point of the lack of awareness at the very heart of thinking. The first way in which we are embedded in the world is entirely beyond the boundaries of awareness.

An additional claim about the occurrence of consciousness works in the same direction: "Consciousness, an idea, is that phase of a system of meanings which at a given time is undergoing re-direction, transitive transformation. […] Consciousness is the meaning of events in course of remaking; its 'cause' is only the fact that this is one of the ways in which nature goes on" (Dewey, 1929 [1925], p. 308). In defining consciousness as a "phase of a system", Dewey stresses how consciousness resolves itself in the temporal

dimension of experience: it is an instant in the continuum of experience, a temporal part within a whole. This is why consciousness, as a temporal occurrence of experience, cannot master experience. The same destiny affects knowledge due to its dependency on consciousness. We can see that Descartes' original sin was not only to place his Cogito out of experience, as a place by which experience could be managed, but also to place consciousness out of time. Dewey not only relocates consciousness in nature and time but also *resolves* consciousness in nature and time. The "unseen" and the "invisible" of our experience lie in such a natural and unconscious matrix; human awareness emerges by and is embedded in time and nature.

With this in mind, we may better understand the second disquieting claim I wish to discuss. The context is a discussion of the relationship between behaviour and consciousness. I will quote the statement in full and then provide my comment: "Instruction and reproof that are not an idle flogging of the air involve an art of re-directing activity; given this redirection and there is emergence of change in meanings, or perception. There is here no question of priority or causal sequence; intentional change in direction of events is transforming change in the meaning of those events. We have at present little or next to no controlled art of securing that redirection of behavior which constitutes adequate perception or consciousness. That is, we have *little or no art of education in the fundamentals*, namely in the management of the organic attitudes which color the qualities of our conscious objects and acts" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 316, emphasis added). If I am allowed to paraphrase Dewey, "The qualities of our conscious objects and acts" depend on "organic attitudes" in which "we have little or no art of education". Thus, our first understanding of the world and nature is something we cannot manage, and education fails "in the fundamentals". Again, it seems that what has to do with "the fundamentals", what "decides what happens" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 43), is beyond our control. As I argue in the following section, education fails "in the fundamentals" when we conceive of it as the attempt to manage experience. To the extent to which we conceive of education as the means by which the subject emerges engendering new experience, the question is entirely different.

Education as a Jump

In this section, I wish to show how the "abyssal" and disquieting Deweyan account of human beings is the very basis on which to found the human endeavour of education and how education, by such a weakening of knowledge and consciousness, is reinforced in its centrality. My point, strongly inspired by Garrison's argument about disrupting inadequate habits (Garrison 1996) and Biesta's "Pedagogy of interruption" (Biesta 2009b, 2012a), is that education, paraphrasing what Dewey states about thinking, works as "a jump, a leap, a going beyond" (Dewey 1910, p. 26) what is actually given in experience.[8] Such a jump is, literally, a jump into the unknown, into "possibilities not yet given" (Dewey 1917, p. 63),

[8] Whereas Garrison's argument is developed in a strong—and perhaps exclusive—connection to Deweyan work, Biesta's "pedagogy of interruption" is based on different sources (Levinas above all, but also Rancière and Arendt). What is shared by Garrison and Biesta is a concept of "immanent transcendence" that is essential to education. As Biesta argues, it is a concept "of a radical exteriority that comes to me [from teaching] rather than learning that is produced by me" (Biesta 2012a, p. 9). Such a concept is anything but extraneous to Dewey, whose philosophy (and philosophy of education) is simultaneously grounded in a firm and deep faith in the mystery of life and nature—and, thus, in the transcendence of life and nature—and in a similarly firm and deep faith in the human endeavor to make sense of that mystery.

in the sense that such possibilities are marked by this jump. As a result, we must conceive of education not so much as the attempt to understand and predict experience but as the means to create new experience. Basically the only power that the subject possesses is to create new, unknown interactions in the course of nature. My point singles out (a) the dismantling of the subject as the agency by which experience is managed and (b) the central role of habits in our relationship with the environment.

I will begin by addressing the first of these issues: singling out the understanding of mind that Dewey makes in *The Quest for Certainty*. He states, "The old center was mind knowing by means of an equipment of powers complete within itself, and merely exercised upon an antecedent external material equally complete in itself. The new center is indefinite interactions taking place within a course of nature which is not fixed and complete, but which is capable of direction to new and different results through the mediation of intentional operations" (Dewey 1929, pp. 290–291). By defining mind as "indefinite interactions taking place within a course of nature", Dewey undermines the basis for a consistent account of the subject as a centre by which to manage our relationship with the world and nature.[9] Mind, moreover, emerges by an "effort to change". The subject, in a sense, is such an "effort to change". I wish to highlight how, by using the term "indefinite", Dewey makes clear two things: (a) the range of interactions that constitutes mind is always open and potentially infinite, and (b) such interactions are beyond the boundaries of knowledge in the sense that they are behind knowledge and also behind consciousness: we become aware of these interactions after they have already occurred. Thus, we cannot grasp such "indefinite interactions" either quantitatively or qualitatively. We are always already taken in the flux of interactions without the possibility of stopping it and performing an analysis. Importantly, self and mind constitute such an ongoing relationship with the environment, a relationship that is continuously reconstructed and that lacks a fixed center. As Dewey would state 5 years later, "Mind is primarily a verb" (Dewey 1980 [1934], p. 263). In being "primarily a verb", mind and subject are always engaged in remaking, which is continuously threatened by instability and intentionally directed to make sense of that instability.

I believe that it may be fruitful to understand such a revolutionary conception of subject and mind (Garrison 1998, 2003; Boisvert 1998) in the context of the theory of consciousness that Dewey developed in *Experience and Nature*. Here, Dewey defines "the apex of consciousness" as "[t]he immediately precarious, the point of greatest immediate need […], its intense or focal mode" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 312). This point "is the point of re-direction, of re-adaptation, re-organization" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 312). Consciousness, if I may combine the two statements, springs from the "greatest immediate need" in the endless flux of "indefinite interactions". That is why Dewey states that "consciousness is, literally, the difference in process of making" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 316). Where there is making, a difference emerges—and this difference is consciousness. This means that consciousness comes later because in the beginning, we have the making. The subject's dismantling is also accomplished another way, namely, by the question of habits.

Dewey clearly states that we need to conceive of man in terms of habits: "Man is a creature of habit, not of reason nor yet of instinct" (Dewey 1922, p. 125). It is meaningful

[9] Boisvert, analysing the Deweyan account of subject, openly speaks about its death: "Dewey, long before French philosophers made the death of the 'subject' popular, identified, not the cogitant self, but the affairs of the world as 'subjects'" (1998, p. 35). Similarly, Garrison, on the issue of the emergence of the self in Dewey (1922, p. 125), shows how Dewey clearly anticipates Foucault's work on subjectivity.

that Dewey frames reflection in terms of habits: habits are "energy organized in certain channels", and "reflection, roughly speaking, is the painful effort of disturbed habits to readjust themselves" (Dewey 1922, p. 76). Habits, in a sense, are framed as an independent entity that possesses and moves human beings. Dewey clearly states that the power of habits to perpetuate themselves can overcome man and his environment: "No matter how accidental and irrational the circumstances of [habit's] origin, no matter how different the conditions which now exist to those under which the habit was formed, the latter persists until the environment obstinately rejects it. Habits once formed perpetuate themselves, by acting unremittingly upon the native stock of activities. They stimulate, inhibit, intensify, weaken, select, concentrate and organize the latter into their own likeness. They create out of the formless void of impulses a world made in their own image" (Dewey 1922, p. 125). Habits have such power because they lie behind knowledge and consciousness: "However, after all, this practical work done by habit and instinct in securing prompt and exact adjustment to the environment is not knowledge, except by courtesy. […] For it is a commonplace that the more suavely efficient a habit the more unconsciously it operates" (Dewey 1922, p. 178). Such a "definition" of human nature in terms of habits and, in turn, of habits in terms of "energy" is not only circumscribed to the treatise *Human Nature and Conduct*; 16 years later, Dewey speaks of habits as a "change in organic structures" determined by "the tension of various elements of organic energy" (Dewey 1938, p. 31). The systematic weakening of rationality developed by Dewey is reinforced by his discussion of 'human nature' in terms of "organic energy".

However, for Dewey, habits are not completely beyond the reach of human power. We find almost two decisive openings through which it is possible to affect habits and, thus, the possibility of education. Both of these possibilities are grounded in *indirect* action on habit. The first possibility involves the conditions in which man lives: "We cannot change habit directly: that notion is magic. But we can change it indirectly by modifying conditions, by an intelligent selecting and weighting of the objects which engage attention and which influence the fulfilment of desires" (Dewey 1922, p. 21). The second possibility concerns the consequences of habits: "All of us have many habits of whose import we are quite unaware, since they were formed without our knowing what we were about. Consequently they possess us, rather than we them. They move us; they control us. Unless we become aware of what they accomplish, and pass judgment upon the worth of the result, we do not control them" (Dewey 1930 [1916], pp. 35–36). Thus, the possibility of changing habits is twofold: on the one hand, we can make an intelligent selection of our environment, namely, we can set our environment; on the other hand, we may judge the outcomes of our habits. Thus, bearing in mind that "[w]e cannot change habit directly", we have the possibility to act on the basis and on the end of the entire process. We can manage the starting and the ending points of habits, namely, what engenders habits and what is engendered by habits. What happens in the middle of these two points is not under our control, which is another way to say that the evolution of habits is unpredictable. According to Garrison (1996, p. 441), "[h]abits are unconscious until something disrupts them". Thus, we can set the conditions for an interruption of our habits but not an understanding of them; what will result from such an interruption is not at our disposal. Bearing in mind the part played by the weakness of consciousness and subject described by Dewey, I can make my point about education.

Let me begin with a canonical passage from *Democracy and Education*: "The nature of experience can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and a passive element peculiarly combined. On the active hand, experience is trying a meaning which is made explicit in the connected term experiment. On the passive, it is undergoing. When we

experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness or value of the experience" (Dewey 1930 [1916], p. 63). I believe that it may be fruitful to understand this "classic" definition of experience while bearing in mind two pivotal previous Deweyan statements, namely, "the radical disparity of presence-in-experience and presence-in-knowing" (Dewey 1917, p. 48) and the fact that "experience […] is what it is" (Dewey 1917, p. 47). The reason to examine this relationship is that Dewey firmly stated that we do not act over the entirety of experience; instead, we act on something we experience—some "objects" of our experience. Experience in its entirety is a wholly different thing; it is our always-being-embedded-in-the-world. Thus, we are in the same situation with respect to experience as we are with respect to habits. We do not have direct access to experience, but we have access to (a) the conditions from which experience springs and (b) the consequences and the value of experience. What occurs in the middle is not under our control, but we can act on the sources and the consequences of experience. These sources and consequences become educational matters.

If my attempt makes sense, we can conceive of education as the choice to interrupt the normal state of affairs, thereby opening our experience to a new beginning. Such an interruption is grounded on, moved by and directed at uncertainty. It is grounded on uncertainty because in Deweyan thought, we have no means by which to grasp the whole of our experience or to grasp our awareness of the world, which emerges by experience as its part. It is moved by uncertainty because the very act of thinking in the future has no guarantee in advance. As Dewey states, "The exercise of thought is, in the literal sense of that word, inference; by it one thing carries us over to the idea of, and belief in, another thing. It involves a *jump, a leap, a going beyond* what is surely known to something else accepted on its warrant." (Dewey 1910, p. 26, emphasis added).[10] It is directed toward uncertainty for the very reason that such a jump gains its meaning from its uncertainty, and, indeed, "[t]o consider the *bearing* of the occurrence upon what may be, but is not yet, is to think." (Dewey 1930 [1916], p. 172, emphasis in original). At the very same time, we can conceive of education as provoking what is not yet by an interruption of the ongoing flow of experience (English 2013).

We find a foothold for such an understanding in the definition of consciousness that Dewey provides in *Experience and Nature*. First, I quote the entire definition, and then comment on it: "The immediately precarious, the point of greatest immediate need, defines the apex of consciousness, its intense or focal mode. And this is the point of re-direction, of re-adaptation, re-organization. […C]onsciousness is, literally, the difference in process of making. Instruction and reproof that are not an idle flogging of the air involve an art of re-directing activity; given this redirection and there is emergence of change in meanings, or perception. There is here no question of priority or causal sequence; intentional change in direction of events is transforming change in the meaning of those events" (Dewey, 1929 [1925], pp. 312–316). Here, Dewey boldly states that consciousness is simultaneously "the point of re-direction, of re-adaptation, re-organization" of experience and "the difference in process of making". Thus, Dewey frames a twofold account of consciousness: on the one hand, as "the difference in [the] process of making", consciousness springs from and

[10] Dewey uses the same words when speaking about the operation of inference: "Since inference goes beyond what is actually present, *it involves a leap, a jump,* the propriety of which cannot be absolutely warranted in advance, no matter what precautions be taken. Its control is indirect, on the one hand, involving the formation of habits of mind which are at once enterprising and cautious; and on the other hand, involving the selection and arrangement of the particular facts upon perception of which suggestion issues" (Dewey 1910, p. 75, emphasis added).

depends upon what we make in the ongoing contact with experience; moreover, "consciousness […] depends upon prior experience of [… a] non-cognitive sort" (Dewey 1917, p. 47). On the other hand, consciousness is the point in which experience can be re-framed and in a sense, re-established. The "apex of consciousness" is the point at which we are able to define a new beginning of experience. This is the meaning of our "liv[ing] forward" (Dewey 1917, p. 12) and the reason that "experience […is] a future implicated in a present" (Ibid.). Consciousness emerges from experience and simultaneously gives experience new direction. For education, the result is the same: education is implicated as a part of experience. Simultaneously, however, it is through education that human beings can engender new types of experience. It is important to remember that in claiming that consciousness springs from "the process of making", Dewey simultaneously dismantles the Cartesian subject and frees that subject from the monopoly of a knowledge "set over against the world to be known" (Dewey 1917, p. 30). In being freed from such knowledge, the (educational) subject is also freed for a broader concept of education.

The problem is that by dismantling the prior power of knowledge, we make uncertainty not only our starting condition but also (and importantly) our destination, so to speak. With education, we jump into a new territory of experience, which, in turn, is the ungraspable ground for the emergence of new awareness. Stated otherwise, jumping into the unknown is not about articulating the "radical disparity" between experience and knowledge that remains behind every endeavor of articulation. Instead, jumping into the unknown is about the fact that we must act to make sense of living, thus creating our own equilibrium. Thus, the process of remaking experience is continuous. However, this continuity is achieved by recurring interruptions and leaps into the unknown; in that event, the manner in which "[the] future is implicated in the present" (Dewey 1917, p. 12) has the features of both interrupting and leaping.

This is why Dewey states, "Certainty cannot be guaranteed in advance. The invasion of the unknown is of the nature of an adventure; we cannot be sure in advance" (Dewey 1930 [1916], p. 174). I believe that, consistent with the Deweyan spirit, we must conceive of the "invasion of the unknown" (Dewey 1930 [1916], p. 174) as an invasion provoked by our decisions to stage new interactions with environment, thereby re-framing our being "in-touch" with the world (Biesta and Burbules 2003, p. 10): "As a matter of fact, the pragmatic theory of intelligence means that the function of mind is to project new and more complex ends—to free experience from routine and from caprice. Not the use of thought to accomplish purposes already given either in the mechanism of the body or in that of the existent state of society, but the use of intelligence to liberate and liberalize action, is the pragmatic lesson" (Dewey 1917, p. 73). To liberate and liberalise action entails moving toward the unknown, and we can accomplish this movement by the interruption of the ongoing flow of experience.

I believe that Dewey himself was adamant about this: "But knowledge that is ubiquitous, all-inclusive and all-monopolizing, ceases to have meaning in losing all context; that it does not appear to do so when made supreme and self-sufficient is because it is literally impossible to exclude that context of non-cognitive but experienced subject-matter which gives what is known its import. […] When intellectual experience and its material are taken to be primary, the cord that binds experience and nature is cut" (Dewey, 1929 [1925], p. 23). Here, Dewey makes two clear statements: (a) intellectual experience is neither "ontologically" primary nor it is desirable to take it as primary, and (b) the import of "what is known" is obtained from the "context of non-cognitive but experienced subject-matter"—more specifically, something "experienced" and "non-cognitive", that is, something that underlies knowledge and gives knowledge its import. In other words, not only does the import of knowledge exceed the

boundaries of knowledge, but the import of consciousness also springs from the ongoing flux of experience as our being-embedded-in-the-world.

If my argument makes sense, we can understand education as the aware interruption of the normal state of affairs in which we are engaged. Such a decision can only concern something that is, literally, unpredictable. This unpredictability does not so much involve the fact that the future is not at our disposal but the fact that in the moment of the interruption, we decide to establish a new course of events, namely, a new future; we make an "intentional change in direction of events" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 316). We may even say that such a decision stages a new beginning in our experience. In a sense, we are both fully aware of such interruption and fully ignorant of its consequences.

Thus, when Dewey states that we may direct the course of nature to "new and different results through the mediation of intentional operations" (Dewey 1929, p. 291), he does not refer to a direct and precise action on an element of the environment. Instead, he refers to the very relationship between experience and education, a relationship that he explained in *How We Think*: "Experience is not a rigid and closed thing; it is vital, and hence growing. When dominated by the past, by custom and routine, it is often opposed to the reasonable, the thoughtful. However, experience also includes the reflection that sets us free from the limiting influence of sense, appetite, and tradition. Experience may welcome and assimilate all that the most exact and penetrating thought discovers. Indeed, the business of education might be defined as just such an emancipation and enlargement of experience" (Dewey 1910, p. 156). Thus, on the one hand, experience, as our ongoing being-embedded-in-the-world, is something that transcends us in the sense that we are within experience as a part of its ongoing flow; this is why experience, in a sense, has us. On the other hand, we can break the flow, thereby marking a new beginning in the ongoing course of events. Such a breaking, such an interruption—which, in Deweyan terms, is "the business of education"—needs to be understood as the possibility to engender experience because education, as thinking, "run[s] beyond what is, as yet, actually *given* in experience" (Dewey 1917, p. 186, emphasis in original).

This "beyond what is, as yet, actually *given* in experience" is not something that we can predict or plan in advance. Instead, it is ever-present with ourselves as our own possibility. In turn, this possibility entails that we are not guaranteed in our acting and thinking; the possibility of grasping such a beyond is not at our disposal. Of course, this is not to deny the immense value of human efforts toward such an understanding, nor is it to deny the effort that thinking is. Instead, it is to challenge knowledge's Cartesian gesture of exercising "a power that is extra-natural and set over against the world to be known" (Dewey 1917, p. 30). If my frame makes sense, reflective thought and intelligent action—two central concepts in Deweyan thought—are the medium-moments between experience as an ungraspable whole and the unknown that attends us after the leap that thinking is. In other words, in the leap of education, we cannot know in advance where we will land. Moreover, to define our landing in advance narrows down both the concept and the practice of education. This leap simultaneously constitutes a move toward uncertainty. To the extent to which the aim of education is to engender experience and experience is always unpredictable, we may even say that the very nature of education is to engender uncertainty.

Conclusions

In this article, I have argued that Dewey, throughout his work, accomplished a systematic dismantling of the sameness between thinking and reflective thought, thereby dismantling the auto-grounded subject, namely, the subject that grounds itself on the power to master

experience. Such a dismantling places education in the foreground as the means by which experience and meanings are engendered. I began by arguing that the Deweyan conception of living was anything but reassuring: we are thrown into life to face a "fearful […and] awful" world (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 42). The means to face such a world is thought, which, at the same time, "frees us from servile subjection to instinct, appetite, and routine" and "opens to us the possibility of failures to which the animal, limited to instinct, cannot sink" (Dewey 1910, p. 19). Thinking, in Deweyan understanding, makes the human being the most fragile and exposed creature in nature. Moreover, thinking is understood by Dewey as something that is not at our disposal; thinking "happens in us" (Dewey 1910, p. 34) and, in a sense, has us. Such a radical dismantling of the idea of thinking as mastery and control does not leave intact the concept of subject, which is understood by Dewey as an "event" in the ongoing flow of experience (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 232). Such a twofold dismantling of thinking as mastery, on the one hand, and of subject as a self-centred agency of reflection, on the other hand, leads to a reinforcement of education as the means to mark a new point of departure in the course of events engendering new experience.

Throughout his life, Dewey examined the continuity between life, education and experience. As he states, "[E]ducation is life […and] must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience" (Dewey, 1929 [1897], p. 295). Such a reconstruction is understood as an emancipation and an enlargement of experience: "Experience is not a rigid and closed thing; it is vital, and hence growing. […] Indeed, the business of education might be defined as just such an emancipation and enlargement of experience" (Dewey 1910, p. 56). However, due to "the radical disparity of presence-in-experience and presence-in-knowing" (Dewey 1917, p. 48), such an emancipation is unpredictable. Emancipating and enlarging experience can be neither simple nor safe; in the end, no one can know what will come to us from such emancipation and what such emancipation requires in terms of effort and pain. Educational effort thus "accepts life and experience in all its uncertainty, mystery, doubt, and half-knowledge and turns that experience upon itself to deepen and intensify its own qualities" (Dewey 1980 [1934], p. 34). In Deweyan thought, we have no possibility of controlling experience, and our possibility of foreseeing change is limited and uncertain. As human beings, we may only try to enlarge and emancipate our experience, thereby deepening and intensifying its quality. Such work engenders, at the same time, the 'emerging' subjects that we are.

Thus, on the one hand, "a mind that has opened itself to experience and that has ripened through its discipline knows its own littleness and impotencies" (Dewey 1929 [1925], p. 420), whilst, on the other hand, "it also knows that its juvenile assumption of power and achievement is not a dream to be wholly forgotten" (Ibid.). We see how in the final pages of *Experience and Nature*, Dewey revisits the alliance between human beings and nature: human beings are part of the universe, and "the belief, and the effort of thought and struggle which it inspires are also the doing of the universe, and they in some way, however slight, carry the universe forward" (Ibid.). Such an alliance, however, is anything but irenic. Instead, it has "the character of contingency which [the universe] possesses so integrally" (Ibid.). Moreover, because "[t]he realm of the practical is the region of change, and change is always contingent" (Dewey, 1929, p. 19), recovering the alliance with nature—the "inner harmony" with the environment (Dewey, 1980 [1934], p. 17)—is an endless and dangerous endeavor. Emancipating and enlarging experience, in Dewey's understanding, cannot be either simple or safe. Ultimately, no one can know what emancipation requires in terms of effort and pain or what will come to us from emancipation. However, we do know that without the effort of education, we can only undergo the unavoidable change of which experience consists. In a sense, education gives us a choice

that falls between undergoing unknown changes and provoking unknown changes by taking a knowing leap into the unknown.

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