

Colapietro, Vincent. "Subject Positions and Positional Subjectivity: A Pragmatic Approach." *Semiotische Berichte*, ed. Jeff Bernard, Dinda L. Gorlee, & Gloria Withalm, 1-4, 1999 [Sex & the Meaning of Life/Life & the Meaning of Sex]: 13-28.

Vincent Colapietro  
 Subject Positions and Positional Subjectivity:  
 A Pragmatic Approach<sup>1</sup>

*Summary:* Human organisms are the occupants of not only determinate regions of physical space but also contestable loci within densely sedimented cultural places. The ongoing enactment of various subject positions makes possible, through a process of habituation, the positional subjectivity so integral to human agency. The sort of agents we are is of a piece with the kinds of sites we dramatically occupy or simply strive to claim or even to flee. A pragmatic account of human subjectivity (one based upon the work of Peirce, James, Dewey, and Mead) is one in which the links between subjectivity and positionality are thematized and explored.

*Zusammenfassung:* Der Mensch besetzt als Organismus nicht nur bestimmte Bereiche des physischen Raums, sondern auch umkämpfte Orte im dicht geschichteten kulturellen Raum. Die ständige Aktualisierung verschiedenster Subjektpositionen ermöglicht via Anpassungsprozess die für menschliches Handeln so wesentliche positionale Subjektivität. Welche Art von Akteuren wir sind, koazitiert damit, welche Art von Plätzen wir dramatisch einnehmen bzw. beanspruchen oder auch fliehen. Ein pragmatischer Zugang zur menschlichen Subjektivität (bauend auf Peirce, James, Dewey und Mead) ist einer, der die Zusammenhänge zwischen Subjektivität und Positionalität anspricht und erforscht.

In his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, Sigmund Freud explained the deep, widespread resistance to his approach to the psyche. Central to his explanation is a claim regarding the ego's resistance to its own marginalization: the ego cannot help but feel this marginalization as its own trivialization and perhaps even annihilation. "In the course of centuries," Freud notes, "the *naïve self-love* of men has had to submit to two major blows at the hands of science" (1917[1966]: 353). The first blow came when we learned that "our earth was not the centre of the universe but only a tiny fragment of a cosmic system of scarcely imaginable vastness." The second blow came when biological research destroyed humanity's privileged position by proving the descent of the human species from other forms of animal life, thereby proving its status as nothing more than a distinctive form of animal life. Though distinctive, Charles Darwin argued in *The Descent of Man* that *Homo Sapiens* are not unique. Every trait or capacity by which human theorists have tried to mark the essential difference between *Homo Sapiens* and other forms of animal life (such traits or capacities as language, morality, conscience, religion, etc.) is in some guise observable in other species.

"But human megalomania will have suffered its third and most wounding blow from the psychoanalytic research of the present time [1915-1917]" (Freud 1966: 353), i.e., from the psychoanalytic approach to the human psyche. The Freudian revolution will carry forth the impetus of the Darwinian and, behind that, the Copernican revolutions, more dramatically shattering the ego's sense of its own centrality than either one of these previous revolutions. For the Freudian approach most directly shows to the ego that the ego "is not even master in its own house." (ibid.)

It demonstrates this truth *ad hominem*, thus bringing home its most fundamental insight not as an impersonal truth to be calmly asserted but as a personal fate to be psychoanalytically acknowledged, despite immediate and indeed recurrent resistance. The ego must content itself with only fleeting glimpses of what is going on unconsciously in the psyche which it so presumptuously calls its own. It turns out that the master-slave dialectic so compellingly articulated by Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is, in effect, played out in the history of our self-understanding, for the I who strives to assert such complete mastery over the psychic domain thereby reveals, time and again, its servile status, with instinctual impulses that are

destined to emerge as invincible forces. When the I confronts itself most honestly, the I realizes that it is always doing the bidding of the unconscious, despite its protestations and presumptions. The psyche belongs, first and foremost, to the unconscious. Thus, the ego is not even master in its own house. The extent that it can attain self-possession depends, ironically, upon its ability to acknowledge the specific ways and vast degree in which it belongs to its other (the unconscious). "Where id was, there ego shall be": what the id has undergone, the ego will re-enact.

To be sure, the master himself is no longer a body-ego, an embodied presence, in this house, in these gracious rooms and connecting hallways, nor was Freud such even during the last months of his physical life. He is but a ghost here, a disembodied echo of his own texts and ours. But, for some of us at least, he is still an arresting echo, a series of utterances and a set of tropes to which we compulsively return. Indeed, our comportment toward his texts seems often to have the disconcerting character of a repetition compulsion.

What is it about this particular father, this seminal figure, that makes him so uncannily persistent, what enables him to bury his own undertaker? While abroad but still very much alive (more alive, I suspect, because he was abroad), Mark Twain read his own obituary. This prompted his famous response to the Associated Press: "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated." Though no longer alive but still very much abroad, as well as hauntingly present here – here in these rooms and in this city – Sigmund Freud, through Karen Horney and Melanie Klein, Paul Ricoeur and Jonathan Lear, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva and Teresa de Lauretis, as well as countless others, is continuing to write the obituaries of his undertakers. For the hostility toward, and dismissal of, the discourse of psychoanalysis can only be adequately understood if (among other resources) its own terms and tropes are deployed.

The writings of Charles Sanders Peirce, the unpublished ones at least as much as the published ones (the inaccessible part of his textual psyche even more than the accessible regions) are prominent among these other resources. For these writings supplement the terms, techniques, and tricks of Freud's own texts in ways that sharpen the cutting edge of psychoanalytic discourse. Moreover, they provide the means for making Freud's hermeneutic experiments into more explicitly and consistently semiotic ex-

plorations of the human psyche. What Peirce noted generally about psychology seems to have special applicability to Freudian psychology:

Of course, psychologists ought to make, as in point of fact they are making, their own invaluable studies of the sign-making and sign-using functions, – invaluable, I call them, in spite of the fact that they cannot possibly come to their final conclusions, until other more elementary studies have come to their first harvest (MS 675; quoted in Fisch 1986: 340).

In 1909, the same year in which Freud met William James in the United States (see Freud's *An Autobiographical Essay*, 57–58), Peirce noted that:

A great desideratum is a general theory of all possible kinds of signs, their modes of signification, of denotation, and of information; and their whole behaviour and properties, so far as these are not accidental (MS 634; quoted in Fisch 1986: 340).

One reason why such a study is desirable is that this study would provide the terms and typologies needed to articulate with sufficient precision and scope the sign-using and sign-making capacities of human and other forms of animal life.

Chronologically, Freud's life overlapped with Peirce's. Even so, though not surprisingly, Freud was not aware of Peirce, while Peirce was only very superficially conscious of Freud. Peirce dreamt of a theory of signs so encompassing that it could provide the conceptual resources for describing and perhaps even explaining the innermost recesses of the psyche and the most primordial, pervasive features of the cosmos. In turn, Freud marked the signifiers of dreams and other traces of the unconscious. In doing so, he helped us not so much to interpret hitherto indecipherable signs and texts as to see for the first time phenomena not previously, or (e.g., in the case of dreams, for centuries the object of interpretation) no longer, seen as signs.

While Freud was in his last months exiled from this house, Peirce was exiled during his last years (arguably his last two decades) in the home he called Arisbe. Both Freud and Peirce were in deep, crucial respects imprisoned in the house of the father: The cultural place of their inherited patriarchy was one they more or less uncritically inhabited, largely taking it for granted that positions of privilege, power, and authority were ones to which their intelligence, industry, and upbringing entitled them. To be sure, their own personal failures and failings, as well as the intrigues of their rivals, might block their access to these positions; but this inaccessibility had nothing to do with their gender or (in the case of Peirce) ethnicity.

In recent years, I have been engaged along with several others (most notably Teresa de Lauretis) in the project of reading Peirce in light of Freud and, in turn, Freud in light of Peirce. The results of this engagement include: "Notes for a Sketch of a Peircean Theory of the Unconscious"; "Peircean Reflections on Gendered Subjects"; and "Further Consequences of a Singular Capacity." This essay is a continuation of that project, thus a sibling of these offspring, though in this instance I am offering a more generally pragmatic than specifically Peircean sketch of a theory of human subjectivity.

As a way of turning from my opening reflections on my own subject position as one speaking in a room in Freud's own home, and turning more directly toward the task of sketching such a theory, let us recall the words of another famous Viennese author. "The human body is," according to Ludwig Wittgenstein, "the best picture of the human soul" (1958: 178). But the human body provides such a picture inasmuch as it is a mobile agent as well as situated language-user implicated in various language-games, inasmuch as it is a sentient, expressive being as well as an articulate, theorizing actor within a historically developing discourse.

### Subjectivity and Positionality

Let us now turn directly to the task at hand – that of sketching a pragmatic account of human subjectivity. This account is intended to be *pragmatic* in a twofold sense: first, it quite explicitly and extensively draws upon the writings of the American pragmatists (Peirce, James, Dewey, and Mead); and, second, this account is intended to be useful. It is designed to do work, in particular, to help us *make of our lives* something more luminous and autonomous than they otherwise would be. To some extent, any pragmatic account of human subjectivity must illuminate the actual processes by which human organisms are transformed into reflexive agents (i.e., how bodies are engendered as subjects); but it must also to some extent suggest how these processes might be altered and, even, how they must be sustained in order to be altered. It is not enough to describe and explain what actually has taken place or takes place in such processes; it is imperative to suggest terms and tropes (e.g., performativity) helpful for redescribing and, thus, reconstructing these processes.

The American pragmatist William James (1842-1910) suggested that the word "I" is primarily one of position. In this respect, it is akin to "this," "here," "now," etc. In what follows, my main purpose is to identify the most important implications of this intriguing suggestion. When James suggests that the word "I" is primarily one of position, he means not the bare symbol abstracted from living usage, not the word to be found in a dictionary, but the word as it is used to *stake out for oneself a position* in the course of some exchange or encounter (e.g., "But I disagree"). Whatever else the word "I" is, it is a means of self-positioning and, thereby, of self-identification (self-proclamation, self-declaration, self-assertion, etc.). But note that it is impossible to identify oneself apart from others: "I" apart from "you" is as meaningless as "up" is apart from "down." That is, "I" is a *correlative* as well as positional term.

But, in order to make this more concrete, let us recall more fully the text from which I have taken James's suggestion. This will help to make our topic concrete by *pointing* to the observable and palpable being who is *subjected* to the pressures and promptings of other such beings and of its own organic constitution. It will help us to focus attention on what so frequently gets overlooked or, when considered, is etherialized – namely, our corporality, our somatically located and identifiable selves.

The world experienced [...] comes at all times with our body as its center, center of vision, center of action, center of interest. Where the body is is 'here'; when the body acts is 'now'; what the body touches is 'this': all other things are 'there' and 'then' and 'that.' These words of emphasized position imply a systematization of things with reference to a focus of action and interest which lies in the body; and the systematization is now so instinctive (was it ever not so?) that no developed or active experience exists for us at all except in that original form. So far as 'thoughts' and 'feelings' can be active, their activity terminates in the activity of the body, and only through first arousing its activities can they begin to change those of the rest of the world. The body is the storm center, the origin of coordinates, the constant place of stress in all that experience-train. Everything circles round it, and is felt from its point of view. The word 'I,' then, is primarily a noun [sic] of position, just like 'this' and 'here' [...]. (James 1976)<sup>2</sup>

As such, the word "I" is a crucial factor in what Maxine Sheets-Johnstone calls "the spatial semantics of our intercorporeal life" (1994: 44; cf. 47). This word functions often as a way of simply emphasizing bodily assumed positions (e.g., the utterance "I am" in response to the question by a cashier regarding who is next in line). Perhaps even more often, the word "I" functions as a way of declaring a discursively defined role (e.g., that of

speaker). But in the background at least, we can discern the traces of our bodily assumed positions, our somatic self-positionings. Think here of the manifestly bodily metaphors associated with our subject positions (as a speaker, I might say: "Let us move to the next point"; or that "We keep getting stuck at this juncture"; or that "We should retrace the steps in the argument in order to discover where we went astray"). Our somatic positions tend to convey comprehensible meanings, because they trade in largely shared or at least shareable meanings. It may even be, as Sheets-Johnstone argues in *The Roots of Power*, that the meaning of these positions contain echoes of an evolutionary history. Physically lowering oneself, transforming oneself from a relaxed to a taut posture, narrowing one's eyes, moving closer to or moving away from another, etc. are specific examples of corporeal semantics. At one stage in his career, the jazz trumpeter Miles Davis performed with his back to his audience. He bodily positioned himself in such a way that neither the expressions on his face nor the sounds from his horn were directed toward others. What are we to make of this subject position? Of course, this is intended as a concrete example of what is encompassed by "the spatial semantics of intercorporeal life." Subject positions are either somatic positionings or dramatic postures ultimately dependent upon the exertions of somatic agents.

The capacity to use the word "I" and, more generally, the capacity of a self to position itself imaginatively as well as physically vis-à-vis others are marks of subjectivity. Our association with others itself marks our lives from infancy onwards; but only eventually does this association transform the largely blind and uncontrolled gropings and gestures of the immature organism into the more or less conscious and directed utterances and exertions of enculturated organisms. Dewey insists that "the word 'subject,' if it is to be used at all, has the organism for its proper *designatum*. Hence it refers to an agency of doing, not to a knower, mind, consciousness or whatever" (LW14: 27). But the word "subject" does not designate the organism *simpliciter*, but rather in a certain respect. This becomes apparent when Dewey asserts that

from the standpoint of a biological-cultural psychology the term 'subject' (and related adjectival forms) has only the signification of a certain kind of actual existence; namely, a living creature which under the influence of language and other cultural agencies has become a person interacting with other persons (concrete human beings) (LW14: 39).<sup>4</sup>

The "particular agency through which the function [of subjectivity] is exercised" must, in accord with Dewey's empirical (thus, denotative) method, point to "a singular organism" but one "that has been subjected to acculturation, and [as a consequence of this process] is aware of itself as a social subject and agent" (LW14: 199).

Human subjectivity is an emergent function of the human organism.<sup>5</sup> To adopt an empirical approach to human subjectivity, thus, requires us to point out "when and where and how" this organism acquires the distinctive functions associated with subjectivity (e.g., the function or capacity of self-identification, of self-positioning, and of self-narration). At a much more basic level, it requires us to consider living bodies in their complex entanglements with one another. Human life is an *intercorporeal* affair. Intercourse of some form is so apt a metaphor for human experience (experience as a transaction of self and other) because our experience is so fundamentally, pervasively, and irreducibly *corporeal*. But the living bodies with which we are most familiar, our own and those most akin to us, are ones intimately (if not harmoniously) associated with one another: in being corporeal, our experience is also *intercorporeal*.

My objective is not merely to speak about subjectivity *and* positionality in the same breath; rather it is to explain subjectivity in reference to positionality and, by implication, to performativity and reflexivity. (Think of positionality as a term analogous to temporality or spatiality.) Whatever else subjectivity is, it is the capacity to position oneself vis-à-vis others, including oneself imagined as other. One of the characteristic postures of the human subject is, of course, that of the rebel, the person who says "No" to some intrusion, expropriation, or exclusion. Op-position is a position of refusal, resistance, or rebellion. Oppositionality is ordinarily (if not always) an attempt to twist free from a position in which one (though a "one" who is not merely nor even truly a one) has been conscripted. But oppositionality is an instance of positionality. It is also a characteristic form of my "interior" life, for this life is that of "one" who is constitutionally divided from itself, other than itself — the one who is never merely one, the unity of an ever self-fragmenting flux.

In general, subjectivity is the capacity to position oneself vis-à-vis others. Such positioning *takes place* not so much in an abstract physical space as in thickly sedimented historical places. The position of the chair on

which you are sitting vis-à-vis the floor on which it is standing is a *physical* relationship, whereas your relationship vis-à-vis me is an irreducibly *social* relationship and, as such, a densely sedimented *historical* relationship. Of course, my relationship to you is also physical and, as such, can be described in the highly abstract terms of theoretical physics (mass, weight, distance, etc.). But to limit ourselves to this level of description prevents us from grasping what is most characteristic of how you and I stand to one another as *subjects*, how we subjectively or (less misleadingly) subjectwise position ourselves in relationship to others. To say that anything is "subjective" all too often implies that it simply, or solely, depends on how the self feels or thinks about that thing; but what I want to stress is that subject positions are objective affairs, even if they are the results of what subjects do, feel, and imagine.<sup>6</sup> We might be in a subservient position without being aware of our actual position. That is, subject positions do not completely coincide with the consciousness of subjects regarding their own positionality. The consciousness raising so crucial for an earlier phase of feminist consciousness is not a task we have outgrown, however passé might be some of the forms by which consciousness was raised several decades ago.

Subject positions are characteristically the consequence of *discursive* and, thus, *dramatic* positionings. This can be taken to imply a connection between positionality and performativity. The emphasis upon performativity is of course an echo of Judith Butler's writings on the engendering of subjectivity, writings in which the performance of culturally scripted roles is crucial for the formation of a gendered identity. But let me move from positionality to performativity via George Herbert Mead's notion of gesture, rather than directly by way of Butler's own discussions of positionality, performativity, and identity. We as infants (i.e., non-talkers) were caught up in what Mead calls a "conversation of gestures", a symbolic interaction more rudimentary and pervasive than our predominantly verbal exchanges (i.e., than our conversations in words). Moreover, at every stage in our lives, we are participants, however unconscious, of such a conversation; in fact, our words are verbal gestures characteristically embedded in a conversation of gestures so readily deciphered that we take no notice of any act of deciphering on our part. The complex process by which I recognize immediately a familiar face is, despite the ease and immediacy with which it is executed, nonetheless a complex process. Our efforts to pro-

gram computers to recognize auditory and visual patterns has brought the complexity of this process home to us. Mead suggests that: "We are reading the meaning of the conduct of other people when, perhaps, they are not aware of it" (1934: 14). I would add that we are reading this meaning *without ourselves* being aware of any process of interpretation.

To anticipate one of the main trajectories of the following discussion, for the sake of helping to orient the reader, let me stress two points. First, any historical place (e.g., a lecture hall) is always, in some respects, a dramatic space; accordingly, positionality is always an instance of performativity. Second, our capacity to position yourself is of a piece with capacity to perform antecedently scripted roles and to inhabit these roles in consciously subversive ways (e.g., femme lesbians). Performativity itself is always culturally constrained and personally improvised, cultural constraints being necessary for personal improvisations.

In our efforts to read the conduct of other people, there is (in Mead's words) something that reveals to us what the purpose is – just the glance of an eye, the attitude of the body[,] which leads to the response. The communication set up in this way between individuals may be very perfect. Conversation in gestures may be carried on which cannot be translated into articulate [or verbal] speech. This is also true of the lower animals. Dogs approaching each other in hostile attitude carry on such a language of gestures [cf. Sheets-Johnstone]. They walk around each other, growling and snapping, and waiting for an opportunity to attack. Here is a process out of which language might arise, that is, a certain attitude of one individual that calls out a response in the other, which in turn calls out a different approach and a different response, and so on indefinitely. In fact [...] language does arise in just such a process as that. We are too prone, however, to approach language as the philologist does, from the standpoint of the symbol that is used. We analyze the symbol and try to find out what is the intent in the mind of the individual in using the symbol, and then attempt to discover whether this symbol calls out this intent in the mind of the other. We assume that there are sets of ideas in persons' minds and that these individuals make use of certain arbitrary symbols which answer to the intent which the individuals had. But if we are going to broaden the concept of language in the sense I have spoken of, so that it takes in the underlying attitudes, we can see that the so-called intent [...] is one that is involved in the gesture or attitude which we are using. (1934: 14-15)

The self arises when the conversation of gestures is incorporated (as we significantly say) into the organism which virtually from birth has been enveloped by such conversations. "The self is not so much a substance as a process in which the conversation of gestures has been internalized within an organic form" (i.e., with the animate form of an individual organism) (Mead 1934: 178).

Thus, what Mead's notion of a conversation of gestures helps us to see is that subjectivity qua positionality (subjectivity as the capacity to assume an indefinite number of positions in relation to a boundless array of "others") can be related to both performativity and reflexivity. While our subject positions result from our bodily positionings (even if complexly mediated by our most sophisticated technologies, e.g., an electronic conversation in a chat room), our positionings are characteristically gestures. In turn, our gestures are part of what is ordinarily at least an inchoate drama; accordingly, they are part of a dramatic performance, though one in which the actor and the role may be so completely fused that the language of performativity is somewhat misleading. The concluding two lines of William Butler Yeats's "Among School Children" (1927) immediately come to mind here:

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,  
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

Some of the roles which we perform are ones with which we so deeply identify that the suggestion that these are mere roles is an affront.

The conversation of gestures is one that goes on not only between (or among) different beings but also within the same being. Very quickly the conversation in which we are caught up is itself one caught up in the innermost recesses of each of our somatically individuated psyches, so much so that sociality is inscribed at every level of our interiority. I acquire the capacity of self-addressed discourse. What is crucial here is not so much the private (or inaccessible) character of this discourse as the fact that the speaking and listening subjects are one and the same being. The incorporation of this conversation into an "individual" psyche means that the psyche is not at all individual in the etymological sense (undivided); rather the psyche or subject comes into being by virtue of its capacity for self-discourse and, thus, for self-distancing and self-differentiation. The subject as subject is divided from itself, other than itself. Reflexivity and alterity cannot be separated from one another: the capacity of the self to observe itself, to address itself, etc., is one with the capacity of the self to treat itself as other, of the ego (Latin for *I*) to position itself toward itself as an *alter* (Latin for *other*). Mead stresses those cases of "communication involving participation in the other" (1934: 252). The principle of such communication "requires the appearance of the other in the self, the identification of

the other with the self, the teaching of self-consciousness through the other" (252).

Our subject positions are intimately associated with, and ultimately referable to, our bodily assumed positions, though in certain contexts we may identify and discuss these subject positions with little or, indeed, no reference to our somatic positionings. But it is never possible completely to abstract from the gestural and thus dramatic import of our subject positionings: the human subject is ineluctably a gesturing actor improvising a role always already culturally overdetermined. Despite this overdetermination, these improvisations can have subversive and transgressive consequences for others as well as oneself.

## Conclusion

My subjectivity and yours are not given, but are (insofar as they are fixed or determinate) the sedimentations and thus solidifications, primarily in the form of somatically rooted habits, of countless experiments in somatic and discursive *positionings*.<sup>7</sup> We have tried out, and we have tried on (cf. Butler), countless postures and positions, guises and disguises. In the course of doing so, an experiment has *taken place*, though not necessarily one conscious of itself as an experiment, a trial, a trying out and trying on an array of positions. This array of uniquely enacted subject positions is related in an exceedingly complex way to a variety of culturally required roles. But the very institution of norms virtually guarantees the transgression of these norms, just as the required roles of specific cultural locations invites resistance, reversals, and subversions on the part of somatic, thus irrepressibly active, agents (cf. Butler; also Foucault). To repeat: we have tried out and tried on countless postures and positions, guises and disguises, though not necessarily in a deliberate or even conscious manner. Originally, there was no doer behind the deed done, the experiments performed – no substantial agent or transcendental subject underlying the fleeting improvisation of subject positionings. But in the course of such improvisations the functions of subjectivity – self-interrogation, self-criticism, self-denial, self-justification, etc., the capacity of the organism not only to identify itself as I but also to identify itself with the one who made

a promise yesterday or an assertion a moment ago (I am *not other than* that person) – emerge, take more or less determinate shape; and to some degree these functions attain *solidity* in the form of somatically rooted habits and *integration* in the form of mutually supportive habits.<sup>8</sup> Originally there is no doer behind the deed, save the human organism in its blind groping; eventually, however, there emerges a characteristically unique orientation to experimentation. *The experimentalist*, the subject as a center of purpose and power as well as a locus of error and ignorance (Colapietro 1989), *emerges in the course of experimentation*, the role-player in the course of role-playing. What we have done and continue to do willy-nilly, is something we might do more effectively and, indeed, gracefully, if we do it more consciously and cooperatively. Such, at least, is the council of pragmatists.

## Notes

- 1 This paper was presented at the Freud Museum in Vienna, the former residence of Sigmund Freud and his family.
- 2 Though James's stress on corporeality is manifest in this text, Dewey in "The Vanishing Subject in the Psychology of James" is correct to point out that, especially in James's *Principles of Psychology*, there are two conflicting tendencies. On the one hand, there is the traditional tendency to identify the subject with consciousness or mind, a *mental* being. On the other hand, there is evident especially in James's phenomenological treatment of specific topics, "the reduction of the subject to the vanishing point, save as 'subject' is identified with the organism, the latter, moreover, having no existence save in interaction with environing conditions" (LW14: 155).
- 3 A contemporary linguist who has devoted considerable attention to the Jamesian emphasis on "I" as a term of positionality, though without reference to James's writings, is Emilie Benveniste. Benveniste asserts that: "It is in and through language that man constitutes himself as a subject, because language alone establishes the concept of the 'ego' in reality, it is reality which is that of the being[...]. The 'subjectivity' we are discussing here is the capacity of the speaker to posit himself as 'subject' [...] 'Ego' is he who says 'ego.' That is where we see the foundation of 'subjectivity', which is determined by the linguistic status of the 'person'" (1966: 224). "Language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up [i.e., positions himself] as a *subject* by referring to himself as I in his discourse. Because of

this, I posit another person, the one who, being, as he is, completely exterior to 'me,' becomes my echo to whom I say *you* and who says *you* to me. This polarity of persons is the fundamental condition of language, of which the process of communication, in which we share, is only a mere pragmatic consequence" (225). Though I prefer the term *position to posit*, since it captures more evidently the corporeal character of our subject positions, Benveniste's insights into the connections between language and subjectivity can, despite appearances (despite, e.g., using such expressions as "a mere pragmatic consequence"), be incorporated into a pragmatic account of human subjectivity.

4 In "Selves Into Persons: Another Legacy from John Dewey," Darnell Rucker argues that, at least in his mature thought, Dewey moved from discrimination of organism to that of a person, *by way of the self*: "the argument should go from any individual [organism] to self and only then to person" (106). In Dewey's lexicon, the term individual "is an adjective [though one derived from adverbial force and function] describing a particular serial history of behavior of any living creature; and what is described is an observable uniqueness within an association" (106; emphasis added). "The distinction of a self [from an individual] requires something more by way of difference in behavior, of course." Rucker suggests that, for Dewey, this difference concerns reflexivity: "The important difference between a thing and a self is that [...] the individualization of a self, as both Mead and Dewey point out, is not merely individualization in the observation and description of another but also individualization of the self *by the self*" (106-107; emphasis added).

5 "Personality, selfhood, subjectivity are eventual functions that emerge with complexly organized interactions, organic and social. Personal individuality has its basis and conditions in simpler conditions" (LW1: 163).

6 As Dewey notes in a very late manuscript, "we live in a world of objective acceptances and compulsions long before we are aware of attitudes of our own, and of the action of say the nervous system, in bringing us into effective relationship with them" (LW1: 381).

7 In Dewey's language, human subjectivity is an eventual function, not an antecedent existence. This conception of our own subjectivity requires us to ascertain how subjectivity is engendered, maintained, and inevitably (though not necessarily either consciously or deliberately) modified.

8 "Everything that a man who has the habit of locomotion does and thinks he does and thinks differently on that account [...] Were it not for the continued operation of all habits in every act, no such thing as character could exist. There would be simply a bundle, an unaided bundle at that, of isolated acts. Character is the interpenetration of habits. If each habit existed in an insulated compartment and operated without affecting or being affected by others, character would not exist. [...] But since environments overlap, since situations are continuous and those remote from one another contain like elements, a

continuous modification of habits by one another is constantly going on. A man can give himself away in a look or a gesture. Character can be read through the medium of individual acts" (MW14: 29-30, emphasis added; cf. *Theory of the Moral Life*)

## References

- Benveniste, Emile (1966). *Problèmes de linguistique générale*. Paris: Editions Gallimard [all references in this paper are to *Problems in General Linguistics*. Corral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press 1971, the English translation by Mary Elizabeth Meek]
- Butler, Judith (1993). *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of a Sex*. New York: Routledge
- Colapietro, Vincent M. (1989). *Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press
- (1995). "Notes for a Sketch of a Peircean Theory of the Unconscious." *Transactions of Charles S. Peirce Society* (Winter) XXXI(3): 482-506
- (1997). "Peircean Reflections on Gendered Subjects". In: *Semiotics 1996*. Ed. by C.W. Spinks & John Deely. New York: Peter Lang, 179-188
- (1998). "Further Consequences of a Singular Capacity: Developing Teresa de Lauretis' Peircean Approach to the Freudian Unconscious". In: *Peirce, Semiotics, and Psychoanalysis*. Ed. by John P. Muller & Joseph Brent. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press [forthc.]
- Dewey, John (1917). "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy". In: *idem. Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 3-69 [all references in this paper are to *The Middle Works of John Dewey*. Vol. 10. Carbondale, IL: SIU Press 1980; cited as MW10].
- (1920). *Reconstruction in Philosophy* [all references in this paper are to *The Middle Works of John Dewey*. Vol. 12. Carbondale-Edwardsville, IL: SIU Press 1982; cited as MW12]
- (1922). *Human Nature and Conduct* [all references in this paper are to the *Middle Works of John Dewey*. Vol. 14. Carbondale-Edwardsville, IL: SIU Press, 1983; cited as MW14]
- (1925). *Experience and Nature* [all references in this paper are to *The Later Works of John Dewey*. Vol. 1. Carbondale, IL: SIU Press 1988; cited as LW1]
- (1927). *The Public and Its Problems*. New York: Henry Holt & Co. [all references in this paper are to the *Later Works of John Dewey*. Vol. 3. Carbondale & Edwardsville, IL: SIU Press 1984; cited as LW3]
- (1939). "Experience, Knowledge, and Value: A Rejoinder". In: *The Philosophy of John Dewey*. Ed. by Paul Arthur Schlipp. Evanston & Chicago, IL:



- Northwestern University Press, 517-608 [all references in this paper are to *The Later Works of John Dewey*, Vol. 14 (1939-1941), Carbondale, IL: SIU Press 1988; cited as LW14]
- (1940). "The Vanishing Subject in the Psychology of James". *Journal of Philosophy* 37(Oct. 24): 589-599 [all references in this paper are to *The Later Works of John Dewey*, Vol. 14 (1939-1941), Carbondale, IL: SIU Press 1988; cited as LW14]
- (1941). "The Objectivism-Subjectivism of Modern Philosophy". *Journal of Philosophy* 38(Sept. 25): 533-542 [all references in this paper are to *The Later Works of John Dewey*, Vol. 14 (1939-1941), Carbondale, IL: SIU Press 1988; cited as LW14]
- Fisch, Max H. (1986). *Peirce, Semiotic, and Pragmatism*. Ed. by Kenneth Laine Kerner & Christian W.C. Kloesel. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press
- Freud, Sigmund (1917). *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*. Leipzig-Vienna: Heller [all references in this paper are to *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1966, the English translation by James Strachey]
- James, William (1912). *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. New York: Longmans, Green [all references in this paper are to the critical edition of *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1976]
- Mead, George Herbert (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society*. Vol. 1 of the *Works of George Herbert Mead*. Ed. by Charles W. Morris. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Rucker, Darnell (1980). "Selves Into Persons: Another Legacy of John Dewey". *Rice University Studies* 66(4, Fall): 103-118
- Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine (1994). *The Roots of Power: Animate Form and Gendered Bodies*. Chicago-La Salle, IL: Open Court
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1958). *Philosophical Investigations*. Transl. by G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan Co.