Georgia State University
Digital Archive @ GSU

Philosophy Theses | Department of Philosophy

8-11-2010

Foucauldian Genealogy as Situated Critique or Why is Sexuality So Dangerous?

Ian Douglas Dunkle
Georgia State University, idunkle1@student.gsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/philosophy_theses

Recommended Citation
Dunkle, Ian Douglas, "Foucauldian Genealogy as Situated Critique or Why is Sexuality So Dangerous?" (2010). *Philosophy Theses.* Paper 60.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Philosophy at Digital Archive @ GSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophy Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Archive @ GSU. For more information, please contact digitalarchive@gsu.edu.

FOUCAULDIAN GENEALOGY AS SITUATED CRITIQUE

OR WHY IS SEXUALITY SO DANGEROUS?

by

IAN DUNKLE

Under the Direction of Sebastian Rand

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues for a new understanding of criticism in Foucauldian genealogy based on the role played by the values of Michel Foucault's audience in motivating suspicion. Secondary literature on Foucault has been concerned with understanding how Foucault's works can be critical of cultural practices in the contemporary West when his accounts take the form of descriptive history. Commentaries offered heretofore have been insufficient for explaining the basis of Foucault's criticism of cultural practices because they have failed to articulate the relation of the genealogist to her present normative context —the social and political values and goals that, in part, define the position of the genealogist within her culture. This thesis shows why previous accounts are insufficient for explaining Foucauldian genealogical critique, and it argues for a simple alternative warranted by Foucault's writing.

INDEX WORDS: Philosophy, Michel Foucault, Genealogy, Critique, History, Historiography, Sexuality, Political Theory, Nietzsche

FOUCAULDIAN GENEALOGY AS SITUATED CRITIQUE

OR WHY IS SEXUALITY SO DANGEROUS?

by

IAN DUNKLE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts
in the College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University

2009

Copyright by
Ian Douglas Dunkle
2009

FOUCAULDIAN GENEALOGY AS SITUATED CRITIQUE

OR WHY IS SEXUALITY SO DANGEROUS?

by

IAN DUNKLE

Committee Chair:	Sebastian Rand
Committee:	Jessica Berry Vincent Lloyd Andrew J. Cohen

Electronic Version
Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
March 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS Error: Reference source not found

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION Error: Reference source not found

Historiographical Corruption 2

Genealogical Critique Error: Reference source not found

The Dilemma 8

2. *THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY, VOLUME 1*: AN EXAMPLE OF GENEALOGICAL CRITIQUE Error: Reference source not found

Repressed Sexuality 11

A Genealogy of Sexuality 13

A Critique of the Deployment of Sexuality 17

3. MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF FOUCAULDIAN GENEALOGY Error: Reference source not found

Transcendental Critique Error: Reference source not found

The Historical *A Priori* as an Alternative Transcendentalism Error: Reference source not found

Anti-Transcendental Critique Error: Reference source not found

Internal Critique 31

4. GENEALOGY AS SITUATED CRITIQUE Error: Reference source not found

Genealogy and Critique Error: Reference source not found

The Destructive Work of History Error: Reference source not found

The Bodies and Pleasures of Foucault's Audience 38

Disposable Norms and the Internal Critique of the Present 42

The Motivation to Genealogy Error: Reference source not found

CONCLUSION Error: Reference source not found

Philosophical Criticism: Between Transcendentalism and Relativism 50

Political Theory: Between Metaethical Realism and Antirealism 52

Epistemology: Beyond Sociology and Conceptual Analysis 55

BIBLIOGRAPHY 59

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HS Foucault, M., *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*

NGH Foucault, M., "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"

WE Foucault, M., "What is Enlightenment?"

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I argue for a new way to articulate Foucauldian genealogy. In the secondary literature on the work of Michel Foucault there has been much dispute over whether, and how, his historical works are critical of practices within contemporary Western culture (e.g. penal institutions, psychiatry, psychology, ethnology, and political activism regarding norms of sexuality). Much of the dispute has revolved around how to understand the sort of criticisms Foucault offers in his histories. On the one hand, if we understand Foucault to be openly objecting to such cultural practices, then it is difficult to situate the normative basis for the criticism within his account. On the other hand, if we resist attributing openly, or fully, critical intentions to Foucault, then we have trouble explaining his critical-sounding passages and, thereby, the overall import of his projects.[1] This dilemma has led many to reject Foucauldian genealogy entirely, while others have sought more complex philosophical explanations of Foucauldian "critique."

I argue that attempts to escape this dilemma so far have failed and that there is a more plausible alternative available. I show that many have supposed, wrongly, that Foucault's criticisms are intended to proffer universal and necessary grounds for critique. Assuming Foucault intends to ground a timeless critical project prevents us from articulating the basis for Foucault's criticisms of present practices. A more appropriate approach is to first question how Foucault understands his historical accounts to relate to the norms of the present context in which he writes. Instead of looking for ways that Foucault can legitimate a normative framework

[1] This question has been brought up in two distinct ways. The first is as a problem for Foucault's ability to offer a neutral, objective historical account. The second is a problem with grounding criticism within these histories. In the body of this thesis I will be concerned solely with the latter problem. Ultimately, however, a robust treatment of this latter problem will bring us back to the former in the conclusion (see pp.55 ff.).

for "critique," I will argue that his goal is to criticize certain present day practices by showing these practices to conflict with the value-commitments that his audience already holds. Foucault's work challenges the timeless and unquestionable nature of our present practices and values by constructing an account of the formation of these values and practices in history. Removing this timeless status makes possible a critique of these practices. And after opening up these practices and values to the possibility of being criticized, Foucault orients these practices within other value-commitments of his audience so as to render the practices suspicious to his audience. Put another way, Foucauldian genealogy confronts the seemingly unquestionable norms of the present by, first, historicizing them and, second, confronting them with other values shared between him and his audience.

In order to unpack my proposed understanding of Foucauldian critique, it will be necessary first to develop the difficulty that Foucauldian genealogy is thought to face and then to explain why prior attempts to resolve this difficulty have come up short. In the remainder of this chapter, I will motivate this concern with the grounds for Foucault's objections to cultural practices. In chapter two, I will offer an example of Foucauldian genealogy. In chapter three, I will motivate my account by showing the inadequacies of older, more familiar models of criticizing practices. Then, in chapter four, I will lay out in detail and defend my proposed understanding of "genealogical critique."

Historiographical Corruption

In the 1970s, Michel Foucault began referring to his historical and philosophical projects as "genealogies." In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (*NGH*), Foucault offers his only explicit methodological reflection on what he calls genealogy. Foucault's discussion of Nietzsche in *NGH* is primarily an argument concerning what constitutes proper historiography. Foucault

describes Nietzsche as giving arguments against a writing of history that involves "the search for 'origins'." [2] According to Foucault, Nietzsche is chiefly concerned with pointing out the problem with appealing to entities outside the domain of historical events when writing history.[3] This appeal to extra-historical entities when writing history is what Focuault calls the search for "origins." An origin, Foucault explains, is a point in time at which "metahistorical" norms are taken to enter history.[4] These norms, as metahistorical, are abstract entities that can neither be found in nor reduced to history.

---

[2] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 (New York: The New Press, 1998), 370.

[3] Foucault's reading of Nietzsche may be up for question. Foucault identifies himself heavily with Nietzsche (see, for example, Michel Foucault, "On the Ways of Writing History," in *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 (New York: The New Press, 1998), 294; and Michel Foucault, "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism," in *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 (New York: The New Press, 1998), 447). And insofar as he explicitly adopts a historical method he finds in Nietzsche, his reading of Nietzsche is very illuminating for understanding his own work. Whether Foucault gets Nietzsche right, of course, is a question for Nietzsche scholarship. It is sufficient for my purposes to take Foucault's portrayal of Nietzsche at face value as a reflection on the genealogical method Foucault takes up.

[4] The term "norm," as I am using it here and throughout this thesis, is standing in for a complex relation of power-structures and knowledge or facts. In their classic text on Foucault, Dreyfus and Rabinow offer a concise description of this complex relationship: On the one hand, "[p]ower is a general matrix of force relations at a given time, in a given society." These relations are unequal, some persons are in advantageous positions over others, but they are more nuanced and entrenched in our culture than the sort of power a sovereign wields over subjects. These relations are constituted by "micropractices" (such as "rigid scheduling, separation of pupils, surveillance of sexuality, ranking, individuation, and so on") in which so much of our lives are deeply enmeshed. "For Foucault, unless these unequal relations of power are traced down to their actual material functioning, they escape our analysis and continue to operate with unquestioned autonomy" (Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 186). On the other hand, "knowledge is one of the defining components for the operation of power in the modern world." Distributions of power make possible certain forms of knowledge, and yet power also presupposes knowledge. "But power and knowledge are not *identical* with each other…. [Foucault] attempts to show the specificity and materiality of their interconnections. They have a correlative, not a causal relationship, which must be determined in its historical specificity. This mutual production of power and knowledge is one of Foucault's major contributions" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 203).

In chapter two, I will discuss a particular example of this mutual production of power and knowledge, without dedicating much space to elaborating this relationship. The example is that of "sexuality," which is a product of history but one that is placed within discourse as a metahistorical norm. Foucault is interested in analyzing the place that this norm comes to take in the power structures and discourses of knowledge in our society. But he is also interested in showing the historically contingent nature of this location and, in turn, of the very notion of sexuality itself. "Norm" will suffice to refer to the location of sexuality in Foucault's analyses.

The search for origins takes one of two forms. First, it can look in the past for principles to order the succession of events that constitute history. For example, one might look in the past for the origin of physical science. Such a history would look for an original instance of contemporary physics—for instance, Isaac Newton—and attempt to show how physics can be seen as a linear development from that original instance. This sort of history would seek the essence of the modern discipline of physics in that originary instance exemplified by Newton. To engage in such a search is to offer a transcendental history. The second form of the search for origins is a search for some present or future *end* as the point of reference for analysis and an interpretation of the historical succession of events that constitute history as progressing toward this end. Consider as an example a theoretical physics that expresses all operations of matter and energy in terms of internally-coherent mathematical models—models that are often thought to be so successful because they get at something essential about the physical universe. This latter form of the search for origins would describe the events of the past as slowly working to culminate in these successful explanatory models. This sort of history would give descriptions of past events as partial successes insofar as they resemble, more and more, the present—or future—ideal physical models. To offer this sort of account is to offer a teleological history. In both transcendental and teleological histories, particular points in time—past, present, or future respectively—are taken by the historian as grounding metahistorical norms—in my example, the norms of successful physical science—in temporal events.[5]

[5] It is important to distinguish *metahistorical norms* from the *historical norms of the present.* All writing of history involves appeal to the latter, or so it may be argued. After all, the historian is caught up in a certain, historically contingent culture with values and beliefs unique to that point in time. But such an appeal is distinct from appealing to the former in at least two ways. First, the historian whose understanding of the past depends on her epistemic and normative position in the present need not assume that her present condition *transcends* history in any way. Second, the historian who engages in a *search for origins* does more than attribute timelessness to entities. She also attempts to *ground these timeless entities in time*, i.e. in the events that constitute history.

Both sorts of historiography are prevalent. The point Foucault highlights in *NGH* is that these histories are unwarranted; they rely on metaphysical assumptions that can never, in principle, be borne out by examining past events. Nietzsche, according to Foucault, thinks that historians who search for origins (a) must presuppose metahistorical norms as principles of order and unity regulating the events that constitute their object of investigation and, at the same time, (b) search for past events that mark the introduction of these metahistorical norms into historical time.[6] The essence of physical science—although offering some assistance in ordering the writing of history—is something that can never be *found* in past or future events. The metahistorical norms have to be taken as given before such a history is possible. Thus, all historians who search for origins are offering—or, more accurately, assuming—metaphysical assertions and are, therefore, doing something more than writing history. On Foucault's reading, Nietzsche understands the search for such origins in history—which amounts to a postulation of these origins in history—to be a historiographical corruption, since it brings in unjustified metaphysical assumptions.

Genealogical Critique

According to Foucault, Nietzschean genealogy "will never confuse itself with a quest for…'origins,' will never neglect as inaccessible all the episodes of history. On the contrary, it will cultivate the details and accidents that accompany every beginning." [7] In other words, by refraining from analyzing past events in terms of metahistorical ordering principles, the genealogist can take seriously the historical status of past events and analyze them without engaging in metaphysics. And by refraining from metahistorical postulates and limiting analysis to historical norms, genealogy purports to make possible the recognition of the historical

[6] Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 370-73.

[7] Ibid, 370-73.

contingency of present norms. This amounts to a historicization of the same norms others try to universalize by the search for origins.

This last point is especially significant. Foucault's interpretation of Nietzsche's argument against the search for origins is twofold and wholly historical. Metahistorical norms are necessarily unaffected by the changes of history—that's what it means to say that they are metahistorical. The result of this immutability of metahistorical norms is that, if writing history is an analysis of the succession of past events, then the historiographer does not attribute timeless to the succeeding events and, therefore, nothing recorded by such a history is metahistorical. The inquirer of origins attempts to situate metahistorical norms within the succession of past, present and/or future events. But to do so, she must write about something that lies beyond the field of historical analysis—she must write about something outside past, passing, or oncoming events. Thus, the search for origins can reach metahistorical norms only by bringing such norms into history from outside a consideration of past events—no historical analysis can reveal these norms as anything other than contingent norms. Thus far, however, the only conclusion reached is that historical analysis fails to legitimate the metahistoricity of particular norms.

Searching for origins collapses into making metaphysical assertions about norms in history. And this is where Foucault's positive understanding of Nietzschean historiography comes in. Nietzsche also attempts to identify the "historical beginnings" of certain norms—i.e. the first time that a given, would-be metahistorical norm comes into play. Indeed, the genealogist may very well identify as a historical beginning the same events that the metaphysician picks out as the past origin. But once these norms have been located within the succession of past events, the genealogist is in a position to deny the metahistoricity of the norms in question. He does so by revealing the *production* of these very norms by contingent and prior cultural practices. If a

given, would-be metahistorical norm can be shown to have been produced by past events, then its metahistoricity would become questionable if not utterly implausible. And thus, history not only fails to offer a legitimization of such metahistorical norms, it also dissolves their metahistorical status by revealing their dependence on past events.

This exact sort of genealogical historicism occupies much of Foucault's work, especially in the 1970s. Yet, there is another element in his work that cannot be adequately described in terms of positive historiography, an element that seems in tension with the historicity just described—a *critical* element.[8]

Just as Foucault's genealogical element is brought out well in his essay on Nietzsche, Foucault's critical element is brought out in an essay he wrote on Kant a few years later entitled "What is Enlightenment?" In this essay, Foucault discusses Kant's reflection on the Enlightenment in order to think through his own discourse. The connection he sees between himself and Kant consists in an inherited "philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era." This ethos is an attitude of disaffection with the current limits on possible ways of being (i.e. possible ways of valuing, knowing, and behaving) imposed by our culture. This ethos is not equivalent to a commitment to a particular set of doctrines or values such as those given the title "humanism." Neither is it to be equated with a transcendental critique. Rather, this ethos is merely a disposition of opposition to the constraint of our present culture.[9]

These negative definitions of the philosophical ethos of the Enlightenment point toward the tension I am concerned with in this thesis. Foucault's work seems problematically committed

---

[8] Even in *NGH*, Foucault exhibits ambivalence to what he calls "critical history." He suggests that this is something Nietzsche rejected early on but came back to from a new perspective. Foucault is not explicit, however, about how Nietzsche is supposed to have reconciled this with his genealogy. See ibid, 387-91.

[9] Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 312-17.

to a combination of Nietzschean genealogy and, loosely, Kantian critique, a combination that seems to elude positive articulation. This is why Foucault's sort of criticisms of cultural practices have taken on the title: "genealogical critiques" within the secondary literature. Foucault is clearly interested in bringing his histories to bear critically on various practices and discourses. But Foucault is not very clear as to how we are to understand the way in which his work can be both *critical* and *historicist.*

The Dilemma

The tension between Foucault's critical and historicist intentions can be expressed quite simply. In order for him to object to some practice, he must appeal to some value that the practice transgresses—i.e. he must have some normative ground from which to object to the practice. And, of course, in order for his objection to be persuasive, he must be able to give some account of the ground for the value(s) to which he appeals. But if, as Foucault argues in *NGH,* all values are historically contingent, Foucault is unable to offer a universal basis for the values to which he would appeal. Moreover, it is also unclear how else Foucault can arbitrate between conflicting values. His historicism seems to render all values—both those that he assumes as a ground for critique and those that he wants to criticize—equally questionable (or unquestionable); his historicism seems to eliminate the possibility of his giving an account of his normative ground that is any more beyond question than those he criticizes. To compound this problem, Foucault often resists articulating the values that underlie his objections. Rudi Visker summarizes this problem well: "Either genealogy remains genealogical, but then it is hard to see how it can be critical, or it is critical and then seems to lose its main conceptual instruments." [10]

[10] Rudi Visker, "Can Genealogy Be Critical? A Somewhat Unromantic Look at Nietzsche and Foucault," in *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments*, ed. Barry Smart (New York: Routledge, 1998), 119.

Some, including Visker, have argued that Foucault is merely offering transcendental criticisms and fails to recognize it.[11] It has also been argued that his objections are transcendental, but in a modified way that insulates them from inconsistency.[12] Still others have argued that he is not offering a criticism in anything like the traditionally understood sense, and that his sort of objection-making just fails to fall prey to the paradox summarized above.[13] Finally, it has been argued that Foucault's ability to be both genealogical and critical was misguided in his work of the 1970s, and that Foucault had to rethink his methodology in order to escape this inconsistency.[14]

I will argue in what follows that all of these attempts to understand Foucault's genealogical critique fail to account for Foucauldian critique and do so because they overlook the genealogist's relation to the normative commitments of the present. The reason Foucault describes genealogical critique as "permanent" or constantly "beginning again" is because it is engaged in a continual process of calling into question certain clusters of practices, and the would-be metahistorical norms that underpin these clusters, from the vantage of other shared values within its current context. Foucault is first concerned with tearing down the pretenses of objectivity and universality of certain contemporary norms, and this destructive work enables him to present descriptions of these norms in such a way that they are seen as dangerous or

---

[11] See, especially, Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990); Rudi Visker, *Michel Foucault: Genealogy as Critique*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1995); and Visker, "Can Genealogy Be Critical? A Somewhat Unromantic Look at Nietzsche and Foucault."

[12] See, especially, Beatrice Han-Pile, "Is Early Foucault a Historian? History, History and the Analytic of Finitude," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 31, no. 5-6 (2005); and Beatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, trans. Edward Pile (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[13] See Geuss; T. Carlos Jacques, "Whence Does the Critic Speak? A Study of Foucault's Genealogy," in *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments*, ed. Barry Smart (New York: Routledge, 1998); and Todd May, *The Philosophy of Foucault*, Continental European Philosophy (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).

[14] A noteworthy example of this view is Kevin Thompson, "Forms of Resistance: Foucault on Tactical Reversal and Self-Formation," *Continental Philosophy Review*, no. 36 (2003).

objectionable from the value-laden perspective of his audience. Genealogical critique does not aim to dissolve the ahistorical status of the values propping up all practices and forms of knowledge at once. Neither does it attempt to offer one critique to end all critiques. This interpretation, I will argue, best accounts for Foucault's objections and does so in a way that is fully consistent with his genealogical commitments.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY, VOLUME 1: AN EXAMPLE OF GENEALOGICAL CRITIQUE

Repressed Sexuality

In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (*HS*),[15] Foucault offers a genealogy of what he calls the "repressive hypothesis," especially as it regards sexuality, and an objection to its place in the politics of twentieth-century Western society.[16] The repressive hypothesis claims that in our culture there is a consciousness of sexuality as private and embarrassing, and thus unsuitable for public discourse. And so, our culture has developed certain practices that repress our sexuality. The current forms of repression are often identified with a prudishness that developed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. According to this hypothesis, we are still under the effects of this repression and only, imperfectly, with the work begun by Freud have we even become aware of it. Finally, it is supposed that by enabling awareness of our sexual

---

[15] I consider the secondary literature to have shown decisively that *Discipline and Punish* and *HS* offer a methodological development of Foucault's thought that is continuous with his earlier works—especially, in terms of its historicity and critical attitude, which are the themes crucial to my account—but also importantly refined. Whether his analyses are concerned with "discursive formations" or cultural practices, and whether the relation between power and knowledge is articulated explicitly, are inconsequential to the issue that preoccupies this thesis. Thus, *HS* serves as a helpful case to consider here, as we can expect it to exhibit a more clearly thought-through genealogical critique that is, nonetheless, a quality exhibited by his earlier works as well. (For a thorough examination of the methods of *HS* and the continuity between them and the less refined methods of Foucault's earlier works, see Dreyfus and Rabinow, 104-25. See also Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Thomas Flynn, "Foucault's Mapping of History," in *The Cambridge Guide to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); May, 122-23; Joseph Rouse, "Power/Knowledge," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 96-97; Visker, *Michel Foucault: Genealogy as Critique*, 32-48.)

[16] As others have insightfully pointed out, this rejection of the repressive hypothesis is closely connected with a rejection of a certain theory of power—repressive power. Foucault's rejection of this conception of power can be seen earlier in *Discipline and Punish* and is commonly thought to be a positive shift in Foucault's thought. This shift in his analysis of power is tangential to the discussion of this thesis, and so I will not address it at length. But I will suggest here that this shift in the analysis of power seems necessitated by Foucault's genealogical prescripts—if genealogy is to contest the assumption of unity among certain entities, then it does not make sense to speak of a power that merely acts negatively against (what would need to be) unified entities—and this serves as one more reason to turn to *HS* for an exemplary genealogy.

repression, the repressive hypothesis itself can serve as a rallying point for political resistance and, eventually, for sexual liberation.[17]

The repressive hypothesis understands cultural forces (e.g. scientific discourses and institutional practices) to act upon sexuality negatively, as a repressive power. Because the repressive act happens in time, predicating repression of an object logically requires continuity between the object before and after the repression in question. Thus, the repressive hypothesis supposes a continuous sexuality. This continuity can be expressed either as an originary sexuality (a sexuality found first in the past and persisting beyond the point of repression) or as a transhistorical rule according to which cultural forces relate to changing notions of sexuality statically. Either way, the repressive hypothesis requires the assumption of a *transhistorical* sexuality (whether it be one cluster of notions or a variable in a constant structure) to serve as a metahistorical reference for historical analysis. On any variation of the repressive hypothesis, there is assumed to be a thing repressed that is distinct from the thing as it is seen in history—which always appears qualified by some particular repressive act (or lack thereof). In keeping with his genealogical method, Foucault aims to dissolve sexuality's supposedly transhistorical status. And, as he does so, he will also argue that the power that has an effect on our sexuality is best understood as having a positive, constitutive effect—that is to say, an effect of producing and deploying our sexuality, rather than one of confining and repressing it.[18]

---

[17] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1, an Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 3-13.

[18] We have seen in *NGH* that the genealogist "takes history seriously" as a succession of events and abstains from using metahistorical ordering principles. Moreover, we have seen that the genealogist, in offering an account of the historical beginnings of cultural practices, also dissolves the metahistoricicty of certain norms by showing how these norms were formed over time in the past. Implicit in this attempt to trace out the historical formations of the norms of the present—the norms that are falsely taken by some historians to be metahistorical—is a commitment to understanding the effects that cultural practices bear on these norms as positive and constitutive.

A Genealogy of Sexuality

Foucault's genealogy of sexuality and the repressive hypothesis begins with a simple historical observation: rather than merely constraining language regarding sexuality and sexual etiquette, the Victorian era triggers a proliferation of discourses regarding sexuality. Foucault shows that what is established within these discourses is a concerted effort to discover the *truth* of sex. This effort culminated in what Foucault calls "confessional science." Foucault does not characterize this science as a discrete discipline—its name picks out the introduction of previously private and religious notions of sexuality into various scientific discourses—but the characteristics of confessional science are especially prevalent in psychiatry. Discourses that constitute the confessional science are a merger of, on the one hand, the ritualistic encounter between the one who confesses the intimate details of his life and the authority that comes to know and, on the other hand, scientific principles (especially those of cause and effect and sickness and health) and scientific practices (especially, examination and interpretation). The result of the various practices that constitute the confessional science is that sexuality is brought to the surface of discourse, questioned in its essence, and articulated in terms of facts rather than banished to silence, as the repressive hypothesis would have it. This confessional investigation of sexuality results in the *production* of objective knowledge about sexuality. Confessional science takes there to be an essential human truth the access to which lies within sexuality, and this truth is pursued through an investigation that, in fact, creates this truth in the form of knowledge claims.[19]

Thus, in modernity's early discourses on sexuality, there is an altogether different operation of power than the repressive hypothesis claims. The repressive hypothesis, in its various forms, regards sexuality as an originary entity which can be said to have been repressed

[19] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 53-73.

at certain points in time by certain cultural practices. But Foucault argues in his genealogy that sexuality was not a pre-existent entity available for repression. By analyzing discourses that preceded the form of repression alleged to have taken place in the Victorian era, Foucault shows the construction of a sexuality purported by others to be timeless. Foucault argues that the sexuality taken by the repressive hypothesis to be originary is a historical, political, and scientific construction, endowed with significance that goes beyond the mere contingency of current politics and scientific projects, and deployed as a means for understanding and relating to ourselves and others. The hysterical woman, the masturbating child, and the perverse adult are not found and restrained in the modern era. They are constituted in a scientific-confessional discourse that acts to deploy sexuality on individuals. As Foucault summarizes:

> In actual fact, what was involved…was the very production of sexuality. Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a *historical construct*….[20]

Foucault's historical dissolution of sexuality undermines the repressive hypothesis. Without a fixed point of reference—transhistorical sexuality—it is unclear that cultural power can be said to be repressing anything.

Foucault's discussion of the deployment of sexuality takes up a major theme of his work in the seventies: "disciplinary power." Foucault argues that overlapping with the shift from the monarchic state to the bourgeois state in Western Europe is a shift from sovereign power to disciplinary power. Two main differences set these forms of power apart. First, disciplinary power derives from the overall arrangement of political and extra-political institutions and practices instead of being centralized in any one person or office. Second, disciplinary power acts primarily through the simultaneous operation of instruction and surveillance instead of

[20] Ibid, 104-05 (emphasis mine).

solely by restricting behavior; this new form of power physically and *positively* molds the behavior of its subjects.[21] This same disciplinary model of power is present in Foucault's articulation of the deployment of sexuality; the cluster of practices that constitute confessional science collectively acts on subjects so as to produce certain sexualities attached to certain valences in the modern subject instead of by merely restricting sexual behavior.

While writing *HS*, Foucault begins to conceive of disciplinary power in a slightly more refined way, which he calls biopower. Biopower names a sort of controlling and shaping of individual bodies (their behavior and arrangement) and populations (their reproduction, sustenance, and work) that brings about special societal effects, and it is the form of power that Foucault argues characterizes various practices and institutions within our present culture. The operations of biopower take many forms on Foucault's analyses, e.g. the ways contemporary employers seek to organize individual bodies and so attain efficient arrangement of their entire workforce; the cubicle with its separation of the worker from others that might diminish her productivity is an example of this. In the last chapter of *HS*, Foucault argues that the deployment of sexuality is one "concrete arrangement" through which biopower was enacted and secured. Thus, "sexuality"—far from some metaphysical essence needing liberation—was deployed as an element (a tactic) of the disciplinary power-arrangement that constitutes the modern normalizing society.[22] And thus, the repressive hypothesis and its attendant practices are, in principle, incapable of liberating us from what may be considered the *more pressing* threat on freedom: normalizing, disciplinary power. Freeing our sexuality from the "repressive power" that threatens it—and thereby making possible a more thorough deployment of our sexuality—fails to free us from the normalizing power that has constituted our sexuality and presented it to us as a

[21] Cf. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) for a more robust working out of Foucault's account of disciplinary power.

[22] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 135-45.

point of access to a timeless feature of ourselves. In fact, wanting to free our sexuality assists the deployment of sexuality insofar as it reinforces the belief in the timelessness and value of sexuality. That is, the repressive hypothesis forms a part of the operations of biopower rather than an opposition to it.

It may seem that in arguing for the historical constitution of sexuality, Foucault has missed an obvious response: it is our ability to engage in *sex* that needs liberation from particular deployed sexualities. One may concede that sexuality (or sexualities) is something shaped by our culture's history and deployed on us by current social institutions and mores but still suggest that our ability to engage in physical acts of sex is something repressed by our culture. Thus, by deflating "sexuality" into sexual encounters—i.e. the activity of sex—one may try to preserve a stronger version of the repressive hypothesis.

In response, Foucault turns his genealogical gaze toward sex and argues that sex is "a complex idea that was formed inside the deployment of sexuality." Sex is a "fictitious unity" of "bodies, organs, somatic localizations, functions, anatomo-physiological systems, sensations, and pleasures." The historical construction of this vague and abstract unity makes possible the positive knowledge of sex by forming a discrete and transhistorical activity as a reference for investigation. But far from being a secure and timeless grounding point for political resistance, "sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures." [23]

One may try to dig one's heels in further in defense of the repressive hypothesis by appealing to necessary and sufficient conditions of what counts as "sex." By suggesting that coital penetration—which necessarily has had a role in all enduring human societies heretofore—

[23] Ibid, 150-57.

is the object of repression, we may resist Foucault's genealogical dissolution of the repressive hypothesis. But, responding to Foucault by offering some minimal definition of sex, such as coital penetration, would seem to sacrifice much of the aims of those who express the need for sexual liberation from repressive power. Part of the impetus for the repressive hypothesis, at least in its more recent formulations, has been to resist the forces of heterosexual normalization, and the above limitation would fail to provide a rallying point for such resistance.

A Critique of the Deployment of Sexuality

Foucault argues that the repressive hypothesis is, ultimately, contributing to the very effects of power it claims to be opposing—although, it does so by first misunderstanding the operations of this power. The hypothesis presumes historically contingent norms of sexuality and sex to be metahistorical, and it thereby obstructs "liberation" from the real power at play, the power that deploys these norms on us. Thus, Foucault objects to the strategy of opposing power's effect on our sexuality by means of reclaiming our "repressed" sexuality or our "lost" sex. And at the end of his account, Foucault offers a suggestion that seems difficult to orient in his genealogical problematic: that "[t]he rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality *ought* not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures." [24]

With this imperative, Foucault explicitly suggests that bodies and pleasures can serve as a basis for attacking the operation of biopower of which he has described the repressive hypothesis to be a part. And, in the final pages of the book, Foucault begins to levy precisely such an attack against biopower.[25] Thus, it seems that Foucault is both attempting to dissolve the "transcendental narcissism" of the repressive hypothesis by correcting its history and implicating the repressive hypothesis in an operation to which Foucault seems to be objecting—finishing his

[24] Ibid, 157 (emphasis mine).

[25] Ibid, 157-59.

account with an imperative. However, it is not immediately clear to what values Foucault appeals when he criticizes the repressive hypothesis and the deployment of sexuality. Foucault has genealogically dissolved the basis for the repressive hypothesis—sexuality and its value for us—and has offered a redescription of the power that acts on our bodies. But in order for Foucault to criticize biopower—or, at least, the deployment of sexuality—it would seem incumbent upon him to offer some new normative basis for his criticism. Criticism requires an appeal to some value that the thing being criticized is seen to transgress. And so, without finding some value that biopower transgresses, Foucault seems to have no basis for objecting to it. But Foucault cannot, it would seem, appeal to any such value without admitting that it too is merely historically contingent.

At the end of the book Foucault seems to suggest that *bodies and pleasures* are what underlie the historical constructs of power (i.e. sex and desire), and that they can serve as a rallying point—or normative-political basis—for resisting normalizing biopower. In other words, he seems to say that we can object to normalizing power because it deploys its complex arrangement of our bodies and our pleasures on us. If Foucault understands disciplinary power to constrain our bodies and our pleasures and holds that the freedom of expression of bodies and pleasures is valuable, then Foucault may be able to ground his criticism of the deployment of sexuality. But if Foucault means for bodies and pleasures to serve as a new normative basis for his objections to biopower, then he would seem to be open to a historicist dissolution of "bodies and pleasures" and their associated values as historically contingent, in a way similar to sexuality and sex. Foucault offers us no reason to think that such a dissolution would be difficult to construct, and he would seem committed to the idea that dissolutions of such a kind are always in principle available. And so, it seems that Foucault's offering bodies and pleasures as an

alternative normative basis for political resistance merely replaces the problematic norms of sex and sexuality that Foucault's genealogy dissolves and faces the same difficulties. In order for Foucault's objection to the deployment of sexuality to be compelling, we must understand and articulate his basis for such an objection and explain why it is not threatened by his own genealogical historicism. We are now prepared to consider various attempts to understand Foucauldian critique in the secondary literature.

CHAPTER 3

MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF FOUCAULDIAN GENEALOGY

It is difficult to understand, much less articulate, the basis for criticism within Foucauldian genealogy. As we have seen, fundamental to his genealogical methodology is a rejection of transhistorical values through a historicization of the values of the present. We have also seen that, in *HS,* Foucault is critical of certain present practices. But if Foucault is committed to the historical contingency of all present-day values, then it is unclear to what values he can appeal to ground his criticisms of present-day practices. And to compound matters, he seems to introduce bodies and pleasures as an explicit basis for political resistance in *HS*. Much of the secondary literature on Foucault has been concerned with understanding how genealogy is supposed to be critical and what status the norm(s) of bodies and pleasures has in Foucauldian discourse. Various interpretations have been offered to clarify the basis for Foucauldian criticisms, but I will show that all of these fail in crucial respects to capture what is going on in the works of Foucault.

It is helpful to introduce a basic distinction between possible ways of understanding criticism. There is a crucial difference between *transcendental critique*, on the one hand, and *genealogical critique*, on the other. Transcendental critique appeals to some universal ground for reasons to offer against some position. The motivation for searching out such a universal ground is to get beyond—or transcend—the specific positions of that which criticizes and that which is criticized. By finding a universal ground that justifies the position of the one criticizing—a ground that transcends these two contingent positions—transcendental critique can overcome the contingency of its position in the debate and offer universally valid reasons against whatever it is

that it is criticizing.[26] Genealogical critique, by contrast, is a way of problematizing values that are currently thought of as benign by offering a historical account that makes us suspicious of them. By historicizing the norms that inform these practices, the critical genealogist is able to shed light on a danger where it was previously indiscernible. Genealogical critique does not aim at giving absolute reason to reject a position outright. Rather it makes a problem of the norms implicit in the position criticized by suggesting that they are historically contingent and that their apparent timelessness hides dangerous operations.[27]

Some commentators understand Foucault to be offering a transcendental critique. Others understand him to be giving a genealogical critique. The former have argued that Foucault is unable to offer a transcendental critique consistently, whereas the latter have given various articulations of what a genealogical critique is exactly. In order to assess the best model for understanding Foucauldian critique, we will have to consider both of these models in more detail. I will begin by considering the former—transcendental critique. I will show that understanding Foucault as offering any sort of transcendental critique is fundamentally mistaken. Then I will turn to genealogical critique and show that its current articulations fail to be fully

---

[26] Although this summary of "transcendental critique" is borrowed from Raymond Geuss' contrasting Kantian critique to Foucauldian-Nietzschean critique (see fn.27), there is an important sense in which transcendental critique, on the construal just presented, is an oversimplification of that which is offered by Kant. The critique of pure reason that Kant offers is not simply an effort to find the unquestionable metaphysical basis for settling disputes, rather it is an attempt to locate the limits of reason itself and thereby delimit the boundaries of acceptable discourse: "[B]y [the critique of pure reason] I do not understand a critique of books and systems, but a critique of the faculty of reason in general, in respect of all the cognitions after which reason might strive independently of all experience, and hence the decision about the possibility or impossibility of a metaphysics in general, and the determination of its sources, as well as its extent and boundaries, all, however, from principles" (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 101). Kant's critique does function analogously to the caricature that I am calling "transcendental critique" in that both seek to transcend any particular debate by means of obtaining universally applicable knowledge, but it is important to note that Kant's effort to determine the limits of all human knowledge is not assimilable to a technique of criticizing practices by appealing to unquestionable normative grounds. If, following Geuss, I equivocate on the notion of transcendental critique within this thesis, it is out of an effort to accurately represent contemporary view of philosophical critique which, although influenced by Kant, may not be easily transposed onto Kant's own "critique" (see my discussion of Habermas, below).

[27] This distinction is inspired by Raymond Geuss. His specific understanding of "genealogical critique" will be considered in the section below entitled "Anti-Transcendental Critique." (See Geuss: 209-15.)

persuasive. After considering the various interpretations of Foucauldian critique, I will, in chapter four, develop a new model of genealogical critique that resolves the difficulties latent in prior attempts.

Transcendental Critique

Those who understand Foucault to offer a transcendental critique have argued that offering a critique without the use of any sort of indissoluble normative foundation is in principle incoherent. And so Foucault is either implicitly giving such a transcendental critique—which would seem to contradict his historicism—or else he is utterly unable to object to the practices he means to—in which case he would seem to contradict his critical intentions. Either understanding of Foucault implicates him in contradiction.

Consider Foucault's account in *HS.* Foucault is intent on objecting to the repressive hypothesis and the normalizing power that deploys sexuality, of which the repressive hypothesis is part. Foucault dissolves the transhistorical status of the norms that ground the disciplinary power he aims to resist, and, qua genealogist, he would seem to do so without offering a comparable transhistorical basis for his own critical position.

But if Foucault wants to argue that the deployment of sexuality is somehow bad, he must offer his readers some value that this deployment violates. Moreover, merely appealing to some arbitrary counter-norm would be insufficient. In order for Foucault to *convince* us that this deployment is dangerous he needs some secure basis for his counter-norm—some universal basis for his critique. So even if "the new economy of bodies and pleasures" is thought to smuggle in the counter-norms necessary for his critique, this remains insufficient for grounding a persuasive transcendental critique against the deployment. Foucault, it would seem, owes us some explanation of why the norms that he appeals to (e.g. the value of unencumbered bodies and

pleasures) have priority over the norms that ground the opposing position (e.g. the value of free sex). Thus on this reading, Foucault's refusal to offer explicit values derives from his refusal to offer a basis for his critique that transcends his contingent position and that of the repressive hypothesis.[28]

The above reasoning has led many to look for implicit value claims—or "cryptonormativism" to use Habermas' phrase—in Foucault's histories and to show that Foucault is unable to ground these values in his genealogical accounts. Rudi Visker specifically argues that, in *HS,* Foucault treats biopower as *repressing* bodies and pleasures in much the same way his antagonists have argued it represses sex and desire. And if Foucault is criticizing the deployment of sexuality for its repression of bodies and pleasures, he is replacing one transcendental norm (sex and desire) with another (bodies and pleasures), staying within a variation of the repressive hypothesis, and thereby directly contradicting his genealogical historicism.[29] In short, Foucault's historicism cuts off his ability to provide a transcendental ground (which would necessarily transcend history) for his critique, and this inability, in turn, threatens to render his critiques arbitrary. Merely articulating the value assumptions Foucault makes is insufficient for solving the problem, for it would either show us the concrete ways in which he contradicts his historicism (by assuming transhistorical values) or it would fail to answer the further question, "Why *these* values?"

We have already seen that Foucault explicitly argues against a transcendentalizing reading of history (*NGH*), and that he further rejects all attempts at transcendental critique (*WE*). At one point he even described his historical writings as primarily aiming to "cleanse

---

[28] Jürgen Habermas offers one of the best-known versions of this transcendental reading of Foucault. See his "problem of relativism" and "problem of arbitrariness" in Habermas, 279-86.

[29] Visker, "Can Genealogy Be Critical?" 118.

[historiography] of all transcendental narcissism." [30] With all of Foucault's explicit disavowals of transcendental critique, we have some reason for expecting Foucault to have an answer to the relatively simple objections just summarized. And, indeed, a Foucauldian response to this criticism need not, at first, be terribly complicated. Foucault's histories do more than problematize his search for transhistorical grounds for critique. Foucault's histories serve as arguments against any transhistorical normative ground—or, more precisely, arguments against each particular transhistorical basis with which his genealogies are explicitly concerned, e.g. the normativity of liberated sexuality. It is in this sense that Foucault's histories are importantly *anti-transcendental*. The result of this is that those who criticize Foucault for his crytonormativism are importantly begging the question against him by supposing, falsely, that all critique must be transcendental. Foucault has, in fact, given us reason to think that *no* transcendental critique is possible. And so, naturally, there is no reason at all for thinking that a transcendental model will support any mode of critique he offers—since, on his view, it would fail to support any critique.

But this only responds to part of the critical philosopher's concern. Habermas and others are certainly right to say that Foucault owes us some account of where his counter-norms are coming from if his critique is to avoid being arbitrary. What is question-begging about the transcendentalist reading of Foucault is the insistence that he offer a *universal* basis for his counter-norms. But Foucault does indeed owe us some alternate account of the basis for his counter-normativity—of his normative ground. Foucault has shown us the impossibility of transcendental critique. But, I will argue in this chapter and chapter four that he does offer an coherent, alternate mode of critique. For now it suffices to isolate the critical question that

[30] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 203.

transcendentalists leave the Foucauldian to address: Given that Foucault cannot, and claims he does not, appeal to bodies and pleasures as a timeless, universal, transcendental value, what alternate ground does he offer?

The Historical *A Priori* as an Alternative Transcendentalism

A related reading of Foucault is that instead of offering a properly transcendental critique, which aims to ground its objections in a universal *a priori,* Foucault is offering a historico-transcendental critique grounded in a historical *a priori.*[31] This reading agrees with the transcendental reading that Foucault is offering some implicit value that biopower is seen to transgress with the deployment of sexuality. But this reading differs from a straightforward transcendental critique insofar as the value that underlies Foucault's critique is not purported to be metahistorical. This value is still thought to transcend the debate in which it is deployed, but this transcendence remains bound to a broader historical context. On this reading, something like the free arrangement of bodies and pleasures would serve for Foucault as a norm grounding his criticism of the deployment of sexuality. The basis for this value, however, is our particular historical epoch in which the value is established as currently unquestionable. It is this epoch which grounds the value's relative priority over other values (e.g. sexual freedom), rather than a universal *a priori*. Unlike a properly transcendental critique, Foucault's objection understood as a historico-transcendental critique would not need to postulate metahistorical norms and so would not obviously contradict his genealogical historicity.

[31] Beatrice Han-Pile has argued that much of Foucault's work—at the least, his earlier archaeological projects (especially *The Order of Things*)—can be understood as a type of transcendental critique. She considers his early historical tools to be transcendental, with the key difference from Kant that Foucault renders the (would-be) *a priori* historically contingent. It is worth noting that her reading applies much better to *The Order of Things* than it does to his work of the 1970s, although I think that it ultimately faces difficulty even when applied to Foucault's early works. (See Han-Pile, "Is Early Foucault a Historian?" and Han, *Foucault's Critical Project*.)

However, there are at least two good reasons for thinking that Foucault is not grounding his objections in a historical *a priori*. First, his historical account does nothing to establish the historical significance of the value of bodies and pleasures. That is, we do not find anywhere in *HS* an argument that this value is unquestionable within our historical epoch; he never explicitly grounds bodies and pleasures in a historical *a priori*. If anything, Foucault's history can be seen to ground *sex and desire* in the current historical *a priori*. He carefully traces out the importance sexuality has come to have in modern discourse as an allegedly timeless normative cluster and the location of the essence of our persons. The very fact that sexuality required an elaborate genealogy to be revealed as historically contingent is a reason to suppose that it serves as a part of our historical *a priori*. As a part of our historical *a priori*, sex and desire, not bodies and pleasures, can serve as a legitimate ground that lies beyond question for contemporary discourse, i.e. as a ground for a historico-transcendental critique. If Foucault's history can be seen as an argument for including sex and desire within our historical *a priori*, then Foucault must somehow ground bodies and pleasures as a, somehow, more fundamental historical *a priori*. But Foucault in no way attempts to do so.

Second and to repeat a point I made above, Foucault's genealogies are not only *non*-transcendental but also *anti*-transcendental; Foucault's genealogy not only abstains from the postulation of metahistorical norms, it also sets out to oppose all transcendentalizing histories. In *NGH,* for example, Foucault writes that genealogy sets out to reveal "the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things which continue to exist and have value for us." [32] That is to say, Foucault is interested in challenging both the timelessness of cultural norms and practices as well as the norms and practices themselves. (Consider his lines in *WE,* where

[32] Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 374.

Foucault describes his critical ethos as an experimental test of the limits of who we are.[33]) Although historico-transcendental critique avoids appealing to timeless values, it still constrains the possible scope of critique to that which is currently not unquestionable within our culture. And this constraint on Foucault's ability to critique would utterly fail to account for Foucauldian genealogies that have brought certain practices to question for the first time.

This tension is easily seen in *HS.* In Foucault's historical analysis, he is clearly intent on dissolving the transcendental status of the normative cluster tied up with sexuality. His emphasis on the historical beginning of sexuality in discourse is intended to illuminate the temporary nature of the values tied up with sexuality and to challenge accounts that see these values as being beyond question. In order to demarcate a historical *a priori,* one attempts to identify the norms that are currently beyond question for us, with a caveat that unquestionableness is confined to a historical context. But Foucault's account is organized so as to lure us to look beyond the unquestionable values of our era, and not to accept them as a basis for critique. In short, if Foucault's historical discussion has any relation to historical *a priori* it appears to be a destructive relation. And so, Foucault would also appear to be offering an anti-historico-transcendental critique.

Anti-Transcendental Critique

The anti-transcendental intentions of Foucauldian genealogy bring us to Raymond Geuss' "genealogical critique" as a possible alternative to the varieties of transcendental critique considered so far. On Geuss' view, Foucault does not set out to give universal—or transhistorically valid—reasons for thinking that certain practices are *bad*. Rather, Foucault tries

[33] For example: "[I]f we are not to settle for the affirmation or the empty dream of freedom, it seems to me that this historico-critical attitude must also be an experimental one. I mean that this work done at the limits of ourselves must, on the one hand, open up a realm of historical inquiry and, on the other, put itself to the test of reality, of contemporary reality, both to grasp the points where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take" (Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" 316).

to show why certain practices are *dangerous*. Danger, in this sense, is a contrary to benign or unquestionable. On Geuss' account, Foucault intends to persuade his audience that the practices they have taken to be of universal value are only of contingent value. And since they are only contingently valued, it is possible that they could come to be disvalued. If the positive or neutral value of certain practices depends on the perceived timelessness of the norms that inform these practices, then a historical dissolution of these norms threatens the status of the practices as good or benign. And, according to Geuss, Foucault intends, first, to demonstrate the reliance of certain practices on this transhistorical universality and, second, to dissolve genealogically that transhistorical status.

On Geuss' interpretation, Foucault is interested in putting the acceptability of certain practices into question, but not in answering the question for or against these practices once and for all. The important assumption, on this reading, is that certain cultural practices can appear benign only when they are based on certain transhistorical norms and values. For example, discourses that seek to determine the truth of sex and sexuality are taken to be benign only when sexuality itself is taken as a metahistorical object of which true things can be predicated. According to Geuss, by showing these practices to rely on historically contingent norms, the practices' unquestionable nature evaporates. And the possibility of practices being normatively questionable when they appear utterly benign is supposed to motivate us to be suspicious of the danger of these practices. Thus on this reading, Foucault's project is limited to the demonstrably historical nature of would-be transhistorical norms.[34]

On this interpretation, the incommensurability between Foucault's account of the deployment of sexuality and that of the repressive hypothesis is supposed to serve as a reason to be suspicious of the rhetoric of the repressive hypothesis and the operations of confessional

[34] For a good representation of a more thorough treatment of this way of reading Foucault, see Jacques.

science. The place of sexuality in contemporary discourse is supposed to make us suspicious, in part, because it presents itself to us as timeless (we have always been sexual) and, in part, because it purports to get at the very essence of our being (we are sexual beings or sex lies on the axis of our essence). This practice may remain neutral without conflicting with Foucault's account, on Geuss' view. But Foucault's account is successful insofar as it illuminates a danger (or possible harm) previously unrecognized—the danger of what the deployment of sexuality might *really* be up to behind the mask of metahistorical norms.

Geuss' interpretation of Foucault seems promising, for it distances Foucault from transcendentalizing moves. It does so by understanding Foucault's entire problematic in terms of his historicism and how these implications might change the way we view contemporary practices so much that their normative status is put in question. And it also does so without robust value assumptions. I take this approach to be insightful for understanding much of what is going on in the criticisms within Foucault's works. However, there remains an as yet unaddressed normative question. Geuss suggests that the critical force of Foucault's accounts derives from their ability to make its readers suspicious of certain practices which had previously been thought of as being benign. But what, exactly, is supposed to make us suspicious of these practices once they have been revealed to operate on the basis of historically contingent norms? Something is rendered suspicious when that thing, formally thought of as being innocent, is revealed to be dangerous. We might describe becoming suspicious as *suspending* the tacit approval of something. The question that Geuss' account faces is what exactly motivates this suspense of approval in Foucault's audience (which is the same as asking what motivates the perception of danger).

If I (even only tacitly) approve of some practice—for example, the psychiatric investigation of sexuality—this is because I am (at least tacitly) committed to the possible or actual benefit of this practice. Thus, if I am to suspend this approval, it would need to be motivated by some other commitment with which this practice conflicts—e.g. some notion of harm which this practice may possibly or actually bring about. Although the suspense may not be final—I am suspicious, not necessarily condemning—I still must have some reason for suspending my approval of these psychiatric discourses. Finally, whatever commitment it is with which Foucault's analysis enables us to see psychiatric discourse on sex to come into conflict, Foucault still must address the question of the basis for endorsing this commitment over and against the psychiatric discourse one had previously endorsed.

What Geuss appears to isolate as the problematic or dangerous element of the practices that form a part of the deployment of sexuality is their appearing one way upon the assumption of the transhistorical status of sexuality—as searching for the truth and freedom of sexuality—and appearing another in the eyes of the genealogist—producing and deploying sexuality as a meaning- and value-laden way of controlling the behavior of peoples. That is to say, this objection to the repressive hypothesis and confessional science assumes that the illusory status of their apparent function is a reason to regard the practices as (possibly) bad—dangerous. But this assumption may easily be denied, and Foucault, on this view, has no means of defending it. After all, philosophers have for some time suggested that social practices are not necessarily accompanied by the most incisive understanding of what it is they are doing. Foucault may be offering an original and even radical interpretation of what certain cultural practices are up to, but whether this interpretation compels one to a radical suspicion, or any suspicion at all, is another issue altogether. A mere difference between the apparent way things operate and the way

they are revealed to operate upon careful analysis is insufficient for deciding that the practice is dangerous unless we have some independent reason to object to the revealed operations. Take, for example, the apparent fluid motion created by the projection of moving film. To the naïve mind of a child, the projected images are apparently displaying the motion of visible figures (subject) in a given space (frame), or the motion of that given space (frame) within a broader implied space (by panning). But, upon inspection, what the video-display equipment is actually transmitting is a quick succession of still images which together *appear* as uninterrupted movement. Surely, when the child learns about the operation of film, she has gained no reason to be suspicious of it. What need a better articulation are the values that are at stake in the various understandings of these practices and the ground for these values.

Internal Critique

We might offer a related but distinct account of Foucauldian critique by cashing out danger a little bit differently; it might be thought that Foucault's criticism could be understood as internal critique. On this view, Foucault would be understood to be undermining certain cultural practices by showing how they conflict with the very value-commitments they espouse. The sense of danger that genealogical critique is attempting to establish, on this view, would be that of an internal conflict within the cultural practices it examines. This reading seems to be advantageous over reading danger as mere illusoriness, because if something fails on its own standards we need not worry about giving an independent ground for critique—i.e. the genealogist need not explain why illusoriness *per se* is dangerous. It is worth noting that this model of critique is not employed to explain Foucault's critiques anywhere in the secondary literature. Although it is related to Geuss' account, it is importantly distinct. And this model does have something to offer our understanding of Foucault, but only in a highly qualified sense that I

will come back to in chapter four. On its own, however, it fails to account adequately for genealogical critique for three significant reasons.

We can articulate a reading of *HS* as internal critique in the following way: Political activism that is inspired by the repressive hypothesis is committed to resisting the power that controls sexuality. If such activism is seen to actually contribute to this power, then it is internally inconsistent. Upon Foucault's analysis, this activism does, in fact, assist *normalizing* power through the deployment of sexuality. Thus, it is internally inconsistent.

The first problem with the model of internal critique as an explanation of genealogical critique is that it overlooks an important component of Foucault's analysis, which amounts to employing an equivocation. Continuing to use *HS* as an example, Foucault at no point argues that political action for sexual liberation actually contributes to sexual repression. The very target of this activism is called into question by Foucault. Sexual repression is a fictitious operation of power on Foucault's account; the institutions that are the target of this activism are not, in the final analysis, repressing anything. Rather, they are caught up in a larger cultural context that produces and *deploys* sexuality. That which Foucault shows the political activism of sexual liberation to assist (the effective deployment of sexuality) is not the same thing as that which it is committed to opposing (sexual repression). Thus, such political action is not shown on Foucault's analysis to be implicated in a contradiction.

But internal critique also fails to account for genealogical critique in a second and more profound way. The instance of internal critique offered above criticizes the repressive hypothesis. But Foucault is explicitly interested in inciting resistance to the deployment of sexuality, and not merely to movements, based on the repressive hypothesis, which fail to recognize the deployment. An internal critique of the repressive hypothesis does not amount to a

critique of the deployment of sexuality at all. The model of internal critique only enables the genealogist to problematize cultural practices from within. But Foucault is not suggesting that the deployment of sexuality is internally incoherent. Rather, he is attempting to persuade his audience to oppose this deployment from a particular normative context: a new economy of bodies and pleasures.

This brings me to the third difficulty with the internal model of critique. Setting aside the equivocation between repressive and normalizing power, one might respond to the last objection by understanding Foucault to show a tension between one practice (sexual-liberation activism) and another (any of those practices that constitute the deployment of sexuality). This would broaden the scope of the internal critique to some larger context than merely, e.g., the repressive hypothesis. But this broader internal critique still does not explain why Foucault's readers would —much less ought to—suspend their approval of one of the practices (the deployment) in favor of the other (political action). Foucault wants to motivate us to be suspicious of the deployment of sexuality *in particular*. And so, he still needs to provide some ground for his critique. This ground needs to explain why, when faced with a tension between practices to which I am tacitly committed, I will be persuaded to find the one dangerous and not the other. This brings us back to the same concern that the critical theorists have raised to Foucault (see the section "Transcendental Critique" above), and none of the models of critique considered thus far have established a basis for addressing it. How can Foucault's histories motivate his audience to take a particular side in the conflicts he describes?

CHAPTER 4

GENEALOGICALLY AS SITUATED CRITIQUE

Genealogy and Critique

Our survey of the various attempts at accounting for the ground of Foucault's objections to cultural practices has revealed several ways in which Foucault cannot ground his critiques. He is not attempting to give a transcendental critique because he is clearly not seeking a universal or timeless basis for his critique. Neither is he attempting to offer a historico-transcendental critique because his histories do not appear to locate anything that could be considered a historical *a priori*. I have argued that Foucault's genealogies are better understood as explicitly anti-transcendental, which is to say that it seems to be an important element of his criticisms that he closes off the possibility of all transcendental critiques.

Alternatively, we have seen that understanding Foucault's criticisms as anti-transcendental does not on its own constitute an explanation of the ground of his critique. Merely showing practices to be the product of biopower does not, on its own, constitute a critique of these practices. Although Foucault may not be arguing for why, e.g., the deployment of sexuality is bad, wrong, or to be rejected outright, he is trying to show the potential and heretofore unrecognized *danger* this deployment poses. And motivating a suspicion of the danger regarding these practices still requires some value-commitment with which the practice in question is seen to (at least potentially) come into conflict.

But our survey of the various understandings of Foucault's criticisms of cultural practices has clarified the important and paradoxical question it is now my task to answer directly: Whence the ground for criticizing cultural practices as dangerous in Foucault's historical accounts? In response to this question, I argue that Foucault is offering a historical dissolution of

practices and the norms they rely on, which, in turn, enables a confrontation between the these practices and other value-commitments within our present context. Thus, what is afforded by Foucauldian genealogy is a confrontation between certain practices of our present culture and other present-day values already held by Foucault's audience to which Foucault is always implicitly appealing. That is to say, the normative ground for Foucauldian critique is the collection of contingent commitments of his audience which he precisely does *not* attempt to establish as timeless, universal, and transcendental.

With Geuss, I understand Foucault's anti-transcendentalism to be an effort to make possible the recognition of danger where it was previously closed off by transhistorical values. But with Habermas, I agree that in order for Foucault's genealogy to motivate the suspicion of certain cultural practices, Foucault must, explicitly or implicitly, appeal to some ground of normative commitments. However, this ground need not be cryptonormative in such a way that threatens to implicate Foucault in contradiction; they are not values that he attempts to ground as in any way universal. Rather they are already present (and therefore accessible for the critical genealogist) as the contingent commitments of Foucault's audience.

In this chapter, I will elaborate on this model of genealogical critique, explain why it best accounts for the genealogies Foucault gives, and consider some of the implications of this mode of critique.

The Destructive Work of History

In order to clearly articulate my explanation of critique in Foucauldian genealogy, it is helpful to clarify a distinction that has already been offered. Recall Geuss' distinction between transcendental and genealogical critique. This distinction consisted, in part, in the difference between searching for universal normative grounds for objecting, in the former case, and merely

putting certain practices into question by making a problem out of them, in the latter. I want to sharpen this distinction by suggesting that whereas a transcendental critique seeks to put certain norms beyond question by granting them a timeless status, genealogical objection seeks to remove *precisely such a metahistorical status* and thereby open these very norms back up to question. The transcendental critique seeks to close off questions regarding the value of certain norms, and Foucault is seeking to open these questions back up.

But, as we have already seen, merely opening these questions back up does not, on its own, show how the practices that depend on these norms are dangerous. Any suspicion of these now-historically-exposed norms must be grounded in some value-commitment with which they are seen to come into conflict. And this is why I, here, depart from Geuss by adding that Foucault's genealogical critique must have recourse to certain values.

Now, if the values in question are sought in timeless (or even relatively timeless) origins, then we have not ultimately gotten away from the effort to establish, hopeless on Foucault's view, a transcendental ground for critique. Foucault argues explicitly in *NGH* that careful examinations of history reveal the historical status of all would-be metahistorical norms. So, Foucault explicitly closes off the option of replacing one timeless norm (sex and desire) with another (bodies and pleasures). Rather, to be consistent with his Nietzschean historicism, he must always recognize the historical contingency of present-day values and practices.

From the perspective of the genealogist, though, the world need not be valueless. On the one hand, Foucault dissolves the timelessness of our values and the practices and discourses built upon them. But, on the other hand, by acknowledging that this dissolution is *not* on its own an objection to these values, the Foucauldian can resist a lapse into a nihilistic pessimism. The

genealogist remains, to some degree at least, rooted in the admittedly historically contingent value-commitments of the present (a fact evinced in Foucault's non-academic life[35]).

Foucault's genealogies are indeed intended to lead his readers to be suspicious of practices within their own culture. But this suspicion is neither a valueless paranoia nor a mere reaction to the discontinuity between the way a practice presents itself (as grounded in timeless values) and how it is seen to operate upon genealogical analysis (distributing normalized behavior). Foucault does aim to render certain practices suspicious, but he does so by putting the practices into question—which is accomplished by stripping away their ability to appeal to unquestionable and objective values—and then bringing them into conflict with other commitments that his readers already possess. Thus, the Foucauldian genealogy does not offer any sort of *new* ground for criticism. Rather, genealogy makes possible criticisms that were formerly impossible, not because they lacked a basis, but because they lacked a transhistorical basis that was thought to be necessary to oppose practices that, themselves, claimed to be rooted in such transhistoricity. Once the allegedly transhistorical norms that ground various practices in our culture have been shown, by genealogy, to be historically contingent, other competing historically contingent norms are brought to an equal footing with the formerly unassailable practices that Foucault puts in question by means of genealogical investigation.

One final and crucial move is necessary. So far, I have described how it is possible that historically contingent practices can be brought into conflict with the value-commitments of Foucault's audience. But in order for this to provide a solution to the problem I have repeatedly emphasized, we need some ground for settling this conflict in favor of the commitments of his audience and not in favor of the current operations of power. Without this ground, Foucault's

[35] I mean, here, to allude to Foucault's involvement in various political actions. For an especially brief summary of Foucault's life and political involvements, see Michel Foucault and Jean Khalfa, *History of Madness*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006), v-vi.

critique would appear to oppose the way things are in our culture arbitrarily. Foucault takes the value-commitments of his audience to be the very ground for his critique. His analyses reveal the conflict between his audience-ground and the various historico-cultural practices that he investigates. But since one side of this conflict is also the group of persons Foucault is attempting to persuade to be suspicious of these practices, there is no difficulty in his taking his audience as the *de facto* ground for critique. Foucault is attempting to persuade a particular group of persons with a particular set of commitments to be suspicious of something specific. He is not attempting to persuade all persons everywhere (or some universalized abstract group of persons). And the contingent set of commitments that this particular group of people happen to have will certainly be relevant to precisely this particular group. Thus, Foucault need not offer any more elaborate justification for treating these commitments as the ground for his critique than that which I have just offered.

The Bodies and Pleasures of Foucault's Audience

To see both why Foucault's ability to problematize current practices requires only an appeal to the values of his audience as the ground of critique and how this amounts to a novel project, it will be helpful to enumerate the key claims of *HS*: (1) Sexuality is historically contingent. More precisely, the bundle of norms that constitutes sexuality (or particular sexualities) is the historically contingent product of networks of recent but ongoing historical practices. Put another way, Foucault attempts to show that sexuality is not metahistorical. (2) Practices that apparently *appeal to* the preexisting notion of sexuality are, in fact, *deploying* sexuality and thereby contributing to its constitution. The implementation of this bundle to understand others, ourselves, or our culture valorizes sexuality and normalizes its usage. Sexuality has cultural significance only so long as it is employed within the discourses and

practices of our culture. This contingent significance follows from the claim that sexuality has no metahistorical significance. But the contingency of the significance of sexuality entails that the more it is employed, the more likely it is to remain significant. And so, employing sexuality as a significant notion obstructs attempts to deplete its cultural significance. Moreover, the use of this notion in new practical or discursive contexts broadens its application and strengthens its perceived naturalness and even its apparent timelessness. By spreading the use of this notion, it becomes more entrenched in our cultural self-understanding. This is what makes possible Foucault's remarks that the repressive hypothesis, in a certain sense, works for the very power it thinks it is opposing; this hypothesis further entrenches the deployment of sexuality by extending the cultural significance of the notion as a meaningful point to rally behind. (3) The deployment of sexuality is an expression of biopower. That is to say, the deployment of sexuality is not an isolated operation of our culture. This deployment is intimately tied up with an overall trend in our culture to monitor, control, and homogenize the behavior of individual persons. And its role within this trend can be demarcated and analyzed.

These three claims do not, as of yet, warrant any conclusion to the effect that there is something *bad* or even *dangerous* about the repressive hypothesis, the deployment of sexuality, or biopower as a whole. What they do is to put the repressive hypothesis into question as a method of obtaining any significant liberation, and thereby they might give us reason to abandon the repressive hypothesis as impractical. And so we might think that if Foucault intends solely to show that this one hypothesis is ultimately uninteresting, his competing account suffices. But he goes beyond the claim that the repressive hypothesis is naïve to the stronger claim that it is counter-productive at achieving some end related to—but necessarily distinct from—its

articulated goal of sexual liberation.[36] He even proposes an alternative rallying point for political resistance—a new economy of bodies and pleasures.[37] By both suggesting that this hypothesis is, in some way, counter-productive and proposing an alternative strategy to achieving some related political goal, Foucault appears to be in an agreement with the repressive hypothesis' goals in some scarcely articulated way. Indeed, this agreement is precisely what I believe others have failed to articulate correctly. This agreement between the position of Foucault's genealogy and the repressive hypothesis consists in the devaluation of the current cultural structures that bear on —for Foucault, deploy, and for the repressive hypothesis, repress—sexuality. But this brings us right back to the question of how Foucault grounds this devaluation.

Our minimal interpretation of Foucault's genealogical critique—the three points above—has not yet accounted for the critical aim of undermining the deployment of sexuality and making the repressive hypothesis appear dangerous. In order for Foucault to suggest that the repressive hypothesis amounts to something dangerous, Foucault has to offer *some variation* of the value that motivates the repressive hypothesis. The limited agreement he needs to locate can be articulated as making apparent why biopower might be understood to be dangerous in some way analogous to the danger formerly recognized in repressive power over sex. And, as we have seen, there is a passage at the end of *HS* that seems to offer just such a basis for danger: a danger to bodies and pleasures. Therefore, to the three claims above, I add: (4) The operations characteristic of biopower—most significantly, the deployment of sexuality—conflict with exploring bodies and pleasures in new ways by deploying only particular arrangements of them.

---

[36] Consider: "My purpose in introducing these three doubts [regarding the repressive hypothesis] is not merely to construct counterarguments that are symmetrical and contrary to those [of the repressive hypothesis]…" (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 10-11), and "The irony of this deployment is in having us believe that our 'liberation' is in the balance" (ibid, 159).

[37] See ibid, 156-59.

Claim (4) captures the significance of Foucault's suggestion that instead of rallying behind sex and desires we ought to rally behind a new economy of bodies and pleasures if we want to oppose biopower.[38] When Foucault makes this suggestion, he is explicitly appealing to the values of his readers. But the conditional nature of this proposition is important. Foucault is not attempting to ground this value as universal in any way. The value of new ways of exploring bodies and pleasures is not a new metahistorical basis for critique. Rather, it is taken up as a more historically conscious[39] articulation of a value present in his audience. By suggesting this value as a better articulation of the practical efforts of his audience than free sexuality—while appealing to a very similar commitment in his audience—Foucault is appealing to the very adherents of the position to which he has been offering a corrective in *HS.* He is opening up practices to criticism, which were previously thought invulnerable, and he is doing so on the basis of values we already have. By recommending a new application of the values that inspired the repressive hypothesis, Foucault gives his readers reason to think of biopower and its operations as dangerous *for them*—threatening possible ways of exploring bodies and pleasures.

One way to capture concisely this crucial component of Foucault's critical strategy is to see him as taking seriously the demonstrably contingent set of values that his readers actually have, whereas a transcendental critique requires abstraction away from one's particular audience and to some universal ground for critique when one argues. Foucault—who challenges the *a priori* that would ground such abstract value-appeals through genealogical dissolution—recognizes the contingency of his audience's values. And by appealing to these values, Foucault can be seen to be interested in the actual commitments of his audience over and against critical theorists, such as Habermas, who abstract away from their actual audience to a universal,

---

[38] Ibid, 157.

[39] See fn. 4.

timeless audience that *necessarily* does not exist and the importance of which Foucault attempts to show is only the contingent product of the history of thought. Ultimately, my understanding of Foucault's relation to his audience, as the ground to which his genealogical critiques appeal, can easily be recognized as following from Foucault's own anti-transcendental project and his attempt to take philosophically seriously our historically situated condition—a condition he attempts to capture with the image of a new economy of bodies and pleasures.

Dispensable Norms and the Internal Critique of the Present

Although the value of new ways of experiencing bodies and pleasures is, in an important sense, what makes possible the criticism of the deployment of sexuality, it is also, in the end, dispensable to Foucault's genealogical criticism. Since this value is not grounded by his analysis —i.e. from within his historical account—but rather is grounded in the contingent values that his audience is thought to share, the value can be rejected without threatening any of the claims (1)-(4), which we have attributed to Foucault. And so, the value *per se* is a dispensable one.

The dispensable status of these values can be easily demonstrated if one considers that the criticism of the deployment of sexuality, which the valuation of new distributions of bodies and pleasures makes possible, can be made possible in other ways. Claim (4) need not be articulated in terms of the conflict between biopower and bodies and pleasures. This value is one of many that his audience, at least ostensibly, holds. The force of Foucault's problematization of current practices rests on more than any one particular value. It certainly does depend on the contingent values of the present, which is what keeps his account from nihilism. I expressed this above by saying that Foucault's audience—or his broader normative-cultural context—serves as the ground for his critique. But the problematic itself requires only that his audience find *some* value-commitment or set of value-commitments to be in conflict with the operations of power he

describes, such as the deployment of sexuality. The value of new ways of experiencing bodies and pleasures is not only contingent historically. It also serves a contingent role in his criticism. But the example of bodies and pleasures is important, since it is intended to capture the practical, present-day concerns that motivated the repressive hypothesis. Thus, this particular example has appeal to what is likely to be the largest audience of a work on the history of sexuality.

In the last chapter, I argued that Foucault's mode of undermining current social practices should be understood as distinct from internal critique. I argued that his opposition to these practices depends on reference to values outside of these practices. But, it is now clear that the values to which Foucault appeals are not outside of all articulable contexts. They lie precisely within the practical concerns of the present. This makes possible a view of his genealogical critique of practices of the present as a sort of *internal critique of the present.*

Foucault approaches the present as a collection of historically contingent discourses and practices analyzed on the level of power structures that produce norms. The production of norms in the past makes possible reference points for present discourses and practices. And when we forget that these norms have been so produced, the practices of the present carry the veil of universality and timelessness. As a result, these same practices make possible a ground for new norms, and so on. This process encloses thought, precluding the possibility of thinking and valuing otherwise. And so, Foucault illuminates the historical contingency of these grounding norms for discourses and practices. Then he redescribes the operation of these discourses and practices as being without universal and timeless grounding norms. Such a redescription makes possible an opposition between these very practices and the values of his audience who, at the end of the day, are also engaged in the various contingent discourses and practices of the present.

The clash between the practical values of Foucault and his readers and the operations of power, which are no longer protected by transhistoricity, amounts to a sort of internal critique of the normative conditions of the present. But this broad sort of internal critique is still distinct from the narrower sort I considered in chapter three. To problematize the overall conditions of our present culture by drawing out internal tensions—its power-structures, its discourses of knowledge, the values we hold, and the things we do—is not the same as criticizing a particular component of our culture—say, a particular practice—by pointing to its internal conflicts. Foucault attempts to persuade us to be suspicious of the deployment of sexuality based on a commitment to new distributions of bodies and pleasures, and not the other way around. The simple model of internal critique does not, on its own, allow for this distinction, and, so, Foucault cannot be offering an internal critique of these practices.

However, part of what *results from* his critique of particular practices—a critique situated within the normative context of his audience—is the problematization of the current configuration of the present. This problematization makes possible thinking beyond the conditions of our present culture; it opens up room to imagine new ways of cultural being. Expressing Foucauldian critique as enabling a sort of internal critique of the present is an insight heretofore unrecognized. And it expresses well the way in which Foucault's particular genealogical critiques aim to open up new, possible futures.

In summary, the ability of Foucault's genealogies to be wielded against cultural practices requires an appeal to his audiences' values—it requires reference to certain historically contingent values that these practices can be seen, upon historical investigation, to (at least potentially) transgress. This context of the audience is the ground of Foucauldian critique. However, Foucault is not committed to any particular commitments within this ground; he only

ever needs this ground to provide *some* value-commitments (perhaps different for different persons) that can be seen to conflict with the practices he analyzes. And neither does Foucault attempt to establish this contingent ground as in any way universal. It merely provides a particular and historically situated context in which to operate and from which to critique.

The Motivation to Genealogy

A couple of pressing issues remain to be considered. First, on the surface, my account of Foucault's appeal to the values of his audience may appear to be the very cryptonormativism of which Habermas accused him. We have admitted, after all, that Foucault is appealing to the values of his audience in *HS* in order to offer a critique of certain operations of biopower. But, as my discussion of the dispensability of the values underlying Foucauldian critique makes clear, Foucault avoids a quasi-transcendental move. These values to which he appeals are not taken to be anything other than the contingent commitments of his audience, and even his account itself only requires that his audience have some commitment that can be seen to conflict with the cultural practices as he describes them. Thus, Foucault is not committed to any particular set of value-commitments as having a timeless or universal status.

There is a second and more pressing issue that concerns Foucauldian critique. If genealogical critique of the deployment of sexuality was made possible only by first dissolving the seemingly unquestionable—i.e. transhistorical—status of sexuality through an appeal to other currently unquestioned—but in principle equally questionable—present-day norms (bodies and pleasures), then one might wonder whether the accusation of arbitrariness might stick to Foucault. We may ask him to account for why he calls into question only the norms that he does. We may be suspicious that his appeal to bodies and pleasures could be undermined, in turn, by

further genealogical critique. And in addition to asking Foucault why he offers the particular genealogy that he does, we may ask him why he offers any at all.

The answer to these questions will be related, but it should first be anticipated that any answer to these questions that is supposed to be convincing to everyone at any time would supplant Foucault's anti-transcendental endeavors in his genealogies. And so, if the question is put in terms of what *transcendental* ground legitimizes a motivation to construct genealogies, then we must answer on behalf of Foucault that no such ground is to be had. And this response can be taken as an indictment of his account only if we assume, wrongly on his view, that such a transcendental basis could ever be given.

I will divide my response to this concern into two parts. First, Foucauldian genealogies should be understood as deriving from the practical concerns in the present. That is to say, genealogy takes up its investigations from an orientation within present socio-political conflicts.[40] This claim is, doubtless, not surprising considering my interpretation of the situatedness of Foucault's criticism of the deployment of sexuality. Foucault is not writing in a normative vacuum. Neither, contra Habermas, is he pretending to achieve a transhistorical vantage from which to write history. Standing outside of history is precisely what Foucault aims to problematize. So, his motivation for his critical project must also begin in the present.

In *HS,* Foucault begins writing his genealogy from a perspective interested in the stakes of resistance to seemingly oppressive cultural norms regarding sexuality. These stakes demarcate the questions of interest for Foucault and his audience. But the genealogist, motivated to avoid and oppose appeal to metahistorical norms, works to undermine our cultural understanding of

[40] Cf. Dreyfus and Rabinow's discussion of the pragmatic situatedness of Foucauldian genealogy. They suggest that Foucault's works are motivated out of "some socially shared sense of how things are going," to which I would add: "how things are going *poorly*." This is right. But Dreyfus and Rabinow fail to articulate, what I have here, that Foucault's overall critical project is similarly situated. (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 200-02.).

sexuality and to turn our sense of danger toward the very notion of sexuality itself rather than attempting to clarify the essence of sexuality or the value of its freedom. This particular genealogical critique is not arbitrary. It is motivated out of the very same practical context that motivates the repressive hypothesis. But, on Foucault's view, activists operating on the basis of that hypothesis fail to appreciate the magnitude of the forces with which they struggle. Insofar as sexuality can be seen to be a historical construct, freeing it hardly amounts to a substantive resistance to the normalizing effects of our culture.

Second, Foucault's genealogy only dissolves the transhistoricity of *certain* norms—in this case, sex and sexuality. Similarly, he only brings his analysis to oppose *certain* practices—in this case, the deployment of sexuality and the repressive hypothesis. And, indeed, his opposition to the deployment of sexuality involves an appeal to *certain other* norms. Even if one concedes that the norms and practices Foucault opposes are not arbitrarily chosen and that the norms of his audience to which he appeals are neither seen as transhistorical nor caught up in the same objectionable practices he puts in question, one may still suggest that another genealogy can be constructed to oppose the norms that Foucault implicitly takes for granted. And, indeed, such a possibility is fathomable. Moreover, it is insufficient for the Foucauldian to respond by saying that the situated context of his genealogy is somehow valorized above some other context. To do so would be to ascribe a transcendent status to his position, and to do that would be thoroughly ungenealogical. A counter-genealogy to Foucault's is certainly possible. And it could very well serve as an objection to Foucault's critique. But to suppose that this possibility is an objection to Foucauldian genealogy is to misunderstand his methods.

Foucauldian genealogies are as contingent as the norms it dissolves and the practices it problematizes. A genealogy strives neither for objectivity nor for finality. This is why Foucault

writes in *WE* that the philosophical ethos he adopts when he writes genealogy is one that is "a *permanent* critique of our historical era." [41] This attitude is one Foucault takes to be characteristic of modern Western philosophy. And it is one that persists because time always continues and with it our culture continues to form new power-relations, which situates new practical concerns, making possible new analyses, and motivating new critiques. To propose a properly genealogical critique of one of Foucault's genealogies is to share his ethos and, ostensibly, his very endeavor of bringing the status quo of the present into question. And thus, a genealogical critique of Foucault's work, far from being a critique of Foucault, is quintessentially Foucauldian.

Foucault is not compelled to give an incentive for genealogy. The philosophical ethos he describes in *WE* serves merely as an explanation of the attitude that the genealogist in fact has taken up. Therefore, even though the permanence of the project that this attitude takes up sounds suspiciously transhistorical, the admission of the contingency of this attitude (even if pervading an entire era of thought in the West) prevents it from having any transcendental pretensions. It is sufficient, for the genealogist, to demonstrate how cultural practices that we once thought were benign can be seen to come into conflict with other values to which we are committed. The role that his audience plays as ground for critique necessarily means that his genealogies do not aspire to permanent critiques of our cultural practices. But that would be an absurd in any case, goal given that the practices themselves are not permanent. So long as the historical analyses continue to pick out cultural practices relevant to his historically situated audience and so long as no persuasive counter-genealogies have been yet arisen, his works may continue to be seen as meaningful for our self-understanding and our political activity. But as the context of the persons who would read his works change, the importance of his accounts will diminish. This, however, is the very point Foucault is driving at when he says that the work of the genealogist is never

[41] Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" 312 (emphasis mine).

done. The historically contingent significance of the genealogist's work stresses the importance of a proliferation of genealogical activity. She must continue to proffer new genealogies of different practices based on different contexts. It is conceivable that a genealogist would eventually come around full circle to problematize the very values that made prior problematizations possible. But this possibility is not a criticism of the genealogical method since genealogy aims at no more than a situated criticism of cultural practices—not at a universally valid critique of them.

Thus, we have come back to answering the question of the purpose of genealogy. Insofar as Foucault would accept the challenge to give an account of the purpose of genealogy, his response would be to say that genealogy is the endeavor to challenge the timelessness of our own present, to bring into contrast who we are, who we have been, and who we want to be, to draw out the tension within who we now are, and thereby to bring into question the practices that shape our culture so as to make possible new ways to exist collectively.[42]

[42] Cf. May who expresses this thematic of Foucault's work well.

CONCLUSION

I have offered a novel, and yet straightforward, understanding of genealogical critique. The key to my account is to understand the situated context in which the genealogist finds herself, and from which the genealogist offers her genealogy. It is this normatively situated context of the genealogist—and, more importantly, that of her audience—that provides a perspective from which the elements of our culture that she analyzes can be revealed to be dangerous—a dangerousness that will always be a danger *for someone in particular*. The particular values she appeals to, however, are dispensable to her analysis. At the end of the day all that is necessary for Foucault's genealogies to criticize cultural practices is the historical dissolution of their timeless status and the presence, within her audience, of any value-commitment that threatens to conflict with these contingent historical practices. Foucault's goal is not to establish a timeless historical critique, but to offer a history that problematizes the present.[43]

By way of conclusion, I will consider the import that this understanding of Foucauldian critique can have on broader issues. First, I will make more explicit the contribution that Foucault, on my reading, makes to critical philosophy. Then, I will point to the ways my reading of genealogical critique can be seen to contribute to political theory. And finally, I will outline how genealogical analysis can be a mode of social analysis that provides insights beyond those of traditional sociology and conceptual analysis.

Philosophical Criticism: Between Transcendentalism and Relativism

The effort it has taken to articulate Foucauldian critique, and the coherence and originality of the resultant mode of criticizing cultural practices, reveals the profound

[43] Or, to use Foucault's own expression, he is offering "the history of the present," (*Discipline and Punish*, 31).

contribution Foucauldian genealogy can be seen to make to philosophical discussions of criticism. As discussed in chapter one, Foucault considers a careful analysis of history to reveal the contingency of norms that we often think of as transhistorical. Much effort to philosophically criticize various positions has attempted to locate universal (or non-contingent) norms that can serve as the ground for settling disputes of various sorts and attaining objective certainty (e.g. epistemological, ethical, etc.). Foucault's genealogies aim to show that the very norms that would serve as a transcendental ground for critique are actually products of historical practices (such as political institutions) and discourses (such as found in the sciences), which are, in turn, products of earlier practices and discourses. By thus describing the history of present-day norms, Foucault gives us reason to question the timeless status of these norms. And in order for the critical philosopher to defend their universal, timeless status, she will have to appeal to something other than the events of the past. But it is unclear how anything other than the study of past events can show the timelessness (or timeliness) of any norm. Thus the genealogist puts the critical philosopher in an awkward position of being unable to provide a non-question-begging account of the timelessness of the would-be universally valid ground for critique. Moreover, Foucault's ability to account for a purely historical way in which these very norms are produced threatens to undermine the certainty of any (question-begging or no) account the critical philosopher can give of the universal grounds for critique.

It has been thought, however, that acceding to arguments such as those that Foucault's genealogies offer[44] prohibits one's ability to engage critically with one's current norms. If one opposes all attempts to provide a universal ground for criticizing practices within our culture, it

[44] Foucault's genealogies, of course, are not the only efforts that have been made to undermine the universal (or objective) status of Kantian-style grounds for critique. He takes himself to be inspired, along with others, by Nietzsche's genealogy. (Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).)

seems difficult to understand how one could ever non-arbitrarily oppose, for example, hate crimes against homosexuals. Insofar as critics of transcendental philosophy, such as Foucault, are unable to offer an alternative basis for principled opposition, critical theorists can appeal to their ability to do so as a reason to preserve their project.[45]

Therefore, my account of how Foucault's orientation within the norms of the present reveals Foucault to offer a genuine alternative to transcendental critique. My explication of Foucault does more than just explain how we can understand Foucault to put forward a consistent account, it also articulates an alternative mode of philosophical criticism—one that does not rely on the problematic ascriptions of timelessness to norms that we currently find in our historical epoch.

Political Theory: Between Metaethical Realism and Antirealism

Following very closely from the last point, Foucault's genealogical critique also enables a philosophical engagement with political issues without recourse to speculative metaethical theory. Deliberation within political theory faces a very similar dilemma to that of critical philosophy. On the one hand, disputes over the best way to structure political institutions rely on normative notions like justice. For example, one way of arguing about how wealth ought to be distributed within a society is to attempt to account for what distributions would be commensurable with justice. But on the other hand, the notion of justice itself is always in question. Thus, in order to offer persuasive proposals for, e.g., an economic distribution, it is necessary to first address the question of the normative ground for values such as justice—i.e. it is necessary to address the question of what makes (a particular conception of) justice universally

[45] And, indeed, we have seen that the criticism above is precisely the sort that Habermas gives of Foucault. Moreover, the context of Habermas' criticism of Foucault performs the very function of motivating his own critical project that Foucault's analyses obstruct.

(or quasi-universally, as with a historico-transcendental critique) binding. This latter question is a question of metaethics.

The problem is that, much like in critical philosophy generally, metaethical arguments that attempt to ground norms of justice face various forms of skepticism that put the universality of would-be metanormative principles into question. And so, it would seem that those who attempt to establish a universal normative ground for ethics (whom we might loosely call ethical realists) are susceptible to opposition by Foucault's anti-transcendental genealogy. But, at the same time, those who oppose establishing a universal ground for justice (who we might call ethical anti-realists) find themselves facing the difficult task of providing groundless norms for political action. And, if they are unable to offer a persuasive alternative to the arguments of ethical realists, then efforts to find a workable ground for justice remain desirable.

A good example of what I am calling an ethical realist position, or a transcendental political theory, is John Rawls' *Theory of Justice.* In this text, Rawls attempts to provide a ground for norms of justice which accounts for the currently prevalent notions of justice and allows room for criticizing present-day conceptions and practices. This ground is argued for by a thought-experiment in which one abstracts away from the morally biasing particulars of one's life and attempts to establish principles of justice from this disinterested perspective.[46] If Foucault's anti-transcendentalism is found to be persuasive, however, this sort of project is doomed to question-begging metahistorical assumptions. Specifically, the parameters of the hypothetical "original position" are, themselves, an articulation of many contingent norms that already constitute our culture's notion of justice (including that of obtaining disinterested objectivity).

---

[46] See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971).

A prominent example of an attempt to offer an anti-realist political theory is Richard Rorty's notion of solidarity. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty argues that the normative contexts in which we find ourselves are wholly contingent. And by engaging in a project of imagining other sorts of contexts in which one might participate (through a careful engagement with literature and philosophy), Rorty thinks that one is able to distance oneself from one's own normative context and thereby escape potential ethnocentrism. However, in order to account for the possibility of continued political activity (having a shared sense of justice that enables us to have laws, obey them, enforce them, and generally cooperate as a people), Rorty appeals to a formal notion of solidarity—any cluster of norms (specifically, beliefs and values) that allows for a thinly shared context and thereby cooperation.[47] But Rorty's robust anti-realist commitments—which he expresses as a sort of "postmodern virtue" called "irony"—constantly threaten any basis we might find for shared political commitments (i.e. solidarity). Without an explicit orientation within present-day social commitments, Rorty's attempts at solidarity threaten to be wholly arbitrary.[48]

Foucault does not attempt to settle the question of whether there are universal grounds for justice. From his perspective, discourse regarding what is meta-right and meta-wrong is susceptible to the same sort of historical analysis as the discourse regarding what is right and

---

[47] See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[48] Ironically, this is exactly the sort of criticism Rorty thinks he can make stick to Foucault (see ibid, 61-65). He criticizes Foucault in this way because, in short, he fails to appreciate Foucault's normative enrootedness within his contingent context. But upon careful consideration, Rorty is the one whose commitments (solidarity) seem groundless. Rorty seeks to establish solidarity in fictional literature. He thinks he can ground the disvalue of torture there. But this faces several objections. For instance, many classic texts can be seen to extol torture as much as condemn it. Homer sings praises of the most horrible acts of warriors. The Marquis de Sade depicts vicious acts in a context explicitly intent on inducing the pleasure of arousal. And much contemporary popular film and fiction carve out careful spaces (usually surrounding the antagonist) for exploring horrifyingly cruel acts (consider, for example, the movie *Seven* and the franchise of *The Silence of the Lambs*). These obvious counterexamples to Rorty's thesis suggest that he does not intend ground the disvalue of torture in literature alone. Rather, it is likely that this disvalue could be seen to derive from a context Rorty is already participating in, and that, over and against Rorty's own description, he could be better described to be offering exactly the sort of "ground" for political action that I have described to underlie genealogical critique.

wrong, allowed and disallowed. Rather than engage in metaethics, he attempts to problematize attempts to gain access to universal grounds and provides an alternative analysis that puts the particular norms of justice within our culture into question. Through an analysis of power-structures and discourses of knowledge, Foucault can get behind the norms of justice within our culture (thus doing better than, e.g., Rawls), explain their relation to larger social forces, and orient these forces within the contingent normative context of his audience (thus doing one better than Rorty). Therefore, my version of Foucault presents a viable alternative to political theory that neither delves into transcendental arguments regarding the essence of justice nor disables all bases for political commitments.[49]

Epistemology: Beyond Sociology and Conceptual Analysis

In addition to helping us understand and articulate the theoretical and political contributions of Foucault, my reading of Foucault enables us to take seriously his social analysis as a concrete alternative to traditional sociology and contemporary conceptual analysis when it comes to understanding social structures, the norms they employ, and the ethical implications they may bear. Foucault analyzes many subtle practices that exert force over persons' bodies within our culture. His goal is to identify patterns and trajectories in the way in which these individual "micropractices" shape the behavior of both individuals and groups—a task which is accomplished, in part, by analyzing the change of these practices and strategic patterns of practices over time. This analysis of the overall operation of biopower is meant to do two things for his readers: it is meant to (1) contribute to a positive understanding of the operation of the

[49] Of course, this should not be taken as a final argument against competing political theories. Clearly, my choice of two figures is for the sake of concision and not comprehensiveness. I mean merely, here, to point the way toward an application of Foucauldian genealogy to political theory.

way cultural forces act on us and (2) situate this understanding so as to make possible and motivate resistance to the particular operations that prevail in our culture currently.

My articulation of Foucault's ability to perform the latter of these two functions of his analysis—which is the critical element of his genealogical work—can also be carried over to contribute to our understanding of the former function—the positive work of describing operations of power within our current epoch. Foucault has attempted to show how the historical operations of power within a particular cultural practice (such as psychoanalytic psychiatry), in part, produce the positive knowledge that that practice produces in discourse (e.g. about the importance of sex for self-formation) and are, also in part, produced by the knowledge already in play within the relevant discourse (e.g. a pleasure-drive heuristic for explaining human behavior).[50] This insight is part of what allows him to show the constitution within history of would-be metahistorical knowledge about sex and sexuality. But, as a matter of fact, the same structures of power and discourse of knowledge provides the context in which Foucault is writing his own academic work. This fact implies that Foucault's positive discourse is susceptible to the same sort of historical dissolution as his critical element.

Therefore, Foucault's positive method of historical analysis (which includes a theoretical understanding of the relation between knowledge and power) is historically, culturally, and normatively situated. But, as with the necessarily situatedness of his critique, this should not be taken as a criticism of Foucault. Foucault's genealogical project is indeed thoroughly rooted within a cultural understanding of the world and is invested with institutional power. But, as I have argued in relation to his critique, this does not invalidate his discourse any more than it invalidates that of any other. When he opposes various practices within our culture, he does not oppose them merely because they have a (positively and normatively) situated position. He

[50] See fn.4 above.

opposes their specific position from his specific position. And it is his audience that arbitrates, as it were, between the two conflicting positions.

And this insight, which is essentially a restatement of the one I made in the last chapter now applied to Foucauldian epistemology, is precisely the one so many commentators have failed to realize.[51] If we assume that Foucault's criticism of other practices is based solely on their historical contingency, then Foucault's own discourse *must* be suspect to the same criticism. But, if we recognize that Foucault's objections interact with the particular commitments of his audience, then we have no problem admitting the contingency of Foucault's own claims to factuality. The only "negative" result of this admission is that Foucault's factual claims are as susceptible to diminish in the face of either counter-genealogical analysis or the passing of time as is his critical force. But, as I said before, for the genealogist to want more than that from his positive analysis is to want something that cannot be achieved—metahistorical objectivity.

It follows from these implications that Foucault's analysis of power, which extends far beyond *HS*[52] and has influenced a variety of more recent projects from others, can be taken seriously as an alternative to various traditions within sociology and the conceptual analysis of social norms. Moreover, I have articulated how Foucault is successful at critically orienting his readers toward the subject of his analysis. This critical potential combined with the explicit

---

[51] The development of this suggestion is something that cannot possibly be fit into this thesis. But I would direct my reader to some of the work done on Foucauldian epistemology (which, from time to time, overlaps with the epistemological discussion of Nietzsche). See Todd May (*Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics, and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993)) whose interpretation is especially amenable to being expressed in conjunction with my understanding of genealogical critique. But see also C. G. Prado (*Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995)) who takes issue with key components of May's argument.

[52] See especially Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*; *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1974-1975*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, Valerio Marchetti, and Antonella Salomoni, trans. Graham Burchell, 1st ed. (New York: Picador, 2003); and *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1973-1974*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson and Jacques Lagrange, trans. Graham Burchell, 1st ed. (New York: Picador, 2006).

situatedness of Foucauldian genealogy presents genealogy as a compelling alternative to (or at least a strong variant of) sociological analysis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Deleuze, Gilles. *Foucault*. Translated by Seán Hand. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Paul Rabinow. *Michel Foucault, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Flynn, Thomas. "Foucault's Mapping of History." In *The Cambridge Guide to Foucault*, edited by Gary Gutting, 29-48. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

_____. *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1, an Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990.

_____. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. 2nd ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

_____. "What Is Enlightenment?" In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 303-19. New York: The New Press, 1997.

_____. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, edited by James D. Faubion, 369-91. New York: The New Press, 1998.

_____. "On the Ways of Writing History." In *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, edited by James D. Faubion, 279-95. New York: The New Press, 1998.

_____. "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism." In *Michel Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, edited by James D. Faubion, 433-58. New York: The New Press, 1998.

_____. *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1974-1975*. Translated by Graham Burchell. 1st ed., Edited by Arnold I. Davidson, Valerio Marchetti and Antonella Salomoni. New York: Picador, 2003.

_____. *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1973-1974*. Translated by Graham Burchell. 1st ed., Edited by Arnold I. Davidson and Jacques Lagrange. New York: Picador, 2006.

_____. *History of Madness*. Translated by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa. London: Routledge, 2006.

Geuss, Raymond. "Genealogy as Critique." *European Journal of Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (2002): 209-15.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Translated by Frederick G. Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990.

Han-Pile, Beatrice. "Is Early Foucault a Historian? History, History and the Analytic of Finitude." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 31, no. 5-6 (2005): 585-608.

Han, Beatrice. *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*. Translated by Edward Pile. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.

Jacques, T. Carlos. "Whence Does the Critic Speak? A Study of Foucault's Genealogy." In *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments*, edited by Barry Smart, 3, 97-112. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

May, Todd. *Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics, and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.

_____. *The Philosophy of Foucault* Continental European Philosophy. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006.

Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Translated by Carol Diethe Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, Edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Prado, C. G. *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995.

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.

Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Rouse, Joseph. "Power/Knowledge." In *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, edited by Gary Gutting, 95-122. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Thompson, Kevin. "Forms of Resistance: Foucault on Tactical Reversal and Self-Formation." *Continental Philosophy Review.* No. 36 (2003): 113-38.

Visker, Rudi. *Michel Foucault: Genealogy as Critique*. Translated by Chris Turner. London: Verso, 1995.

_____. "Can Genealogy Be Critical? A Somewhat Unromantic Look at Nietzsche and Foucault." In *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments*, edited by Barry Smart, 3, 113-21. New York: Routledge, 1998.