

**Abstract:** Michel Foucault's American commentators have frequently charged that his critiques of the Modern Age exclude the possibility of a meaningful course of action for addressing the problems that his critiques highlight. By considering the interpretations of Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow in *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* and French philosopher Philippe Sabot's *Lire les mots et les choses*, I argue that Foucault is unjustifiably understood to be offering a new metaphysics in which language is causally efficacious. I then argue that Foucault is read in such a way because Enlightenment normative criteria for critique still obtain today, and Foucault's work is unwittingly held to these standards. Lastly, given the fact that Foucault's critiques are largely aimed at Enlightenment thought systems, I consider what Foucault's peculiar form of critique consists in, and the degree to which it is practical and effective.

## **Foucault's Archeology: Metaphysics or Pragmatics?**

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In his archeological works, Foucault introduces the notion of an historical a priori that frames his work much in the way that the synthetic a priori framed Kant's. Foucault's notion of the "historical a priori" is intended to capture the idea that the conditions for the possibility of knowledge are historical rather than transcendental. This concept poses a continuing interpretive problem for his work; a problem exacerbated no doubt by methodological changes to his project over time. Foucault addresses the historical a priori most explicitly in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, which was an attempt to elaborate the methodology that he had developed during the course of his early works (*The History of Madness*, *The Birth of the Clinic* and *The Order of Things*), but it remains central in all of his subsequent works. I am concerned here with this early formation of the historical a priori and specifically with two interpretations that hinge on their treatment of a paradox at the heart of the historical a priori. My argument proceeds as follows: I begin with a brief exposition of the historical a priori as it is explained in *The Archeology of Knowledge* in terms of what Foucault calls "the archive". I then consider the way in which Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow's commentary, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (hereafter BSH), brings Foucault's explication of the archive to bear upon Foucault's archeological critique of the human sciences in *The Order of Things*. In doing so, I show that an understanding of the historical a priori as causally efficacious, as is suggested in BSH, fails to

recognize the degree to which Foucault's brand of critique has departed from the more traditional Enlightenment paradigm. Having clarified the Enlightenment standards for critique to which BSH holds Foucault's critique, I offer an alternative interpretation of Foucault's critique of the human sciences that relies upon Philippe Sabot's analysis of the historical a priori in *Lire les mots et les choses*. While BSH searches for the historical a priori as an underlying cause for the existence of a group of statements, Sabot locates the historical a priori *within* the group of statements as the structural relationship among them.

### *The Paradox of the Archive*

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault is concerned with "[...] restoring to our silent and apparently immobile soil its rifts, its instability, its flaws; and it is the same ground that is once more stirring under our feet" (OT XXIV). To state this in a less dramatic and more familiar way, Foucault is exploring the ways in which a language game is deployed and displaced. In doing so, he is accounting for the ways in which an identical utterance can mean something different given its location in one or another such game. In dealing with these concerns, Foucault proposes the archive, by which he means the discursive formation of meaningful statements and the rules that exist internal to those statements that provide them with their meaning and truth value. In Foucault's words,

"The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities [...]" (AK 129).

The archive is the language game itself (rules and laws) and the body of statements that the peculiar form of any specific game render meaningful and truth functional.

An apparent paradox immediately presents itself. On the one hand, the 'laws of what can be said' are the regularities through which statements relate to one another and constitute an enclosed discursive formation. These laws are inscribed within the discursive formation as that

which amalgamates<sup>1</sup> the individual component statements. On the other hand, the archive, as the historical a priori, is that which constitutes the possibility of such an amalgamation, and in this sense the laws must precede the formation of their corresponding discursive structure. In this way, the laws come into existence as a way of relating statements to one another and thus unifying a certain set of statements under a set of common laws, yet the formation of a discursive structure requires that the laws for guiding its formation already exist. According to Foucault's exposition it seems that the laws, the historical a priori, constitute the condition for the possibility of the formation of a discursive structure, and the discursive structure constitutes the condition for the possibility of the formation the laws that govern it.

### *A Different Approach to the Paradox*

Commentaries on Foucault have dealt with this apparent paradox in various ways, but some of these interpretations – especially Dreyfus and Rabinow's – are informed by certain expectations as to the nature of a successful critique. Thus by juxtaposing the two commentaries at hand, I can bring into relief the ways in which Foucault is unjustifiably<sup>2</sup> held to the Enlightenment standards for critique, and in effect depreciating the originality and value of his own nascent form of critique: The paradox only threatens the validity of Foucault's work if he seeks to move beyond description of discursive formations to account for the existence of discursive formations in general. *The Archeology of Knowledge* amounts to such an overstepping, yet Foucault realized the nature of his error and so too must his commentators.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Statements have meaning by virtue of their place within a discursive formation. The discourse is more than the individual statements that compose it, since statements are invested with meaning only when they form a discourse. I use the term "amalgamation" to signal the fact that component statements form a whole that is distinct from the sum of its parts.

<sup>2</sup> "Unjustifiably" in that both commentaries acknowledge the cogency of Foucault's critique of the Enlightenment tradition, and differ only on their position regarding the need for, and viability of archeological discourse as a successor to that which Foucault has criticized.

<sup>3</sup> My criticisms of BSH follow from Foucault's reinterpretation of his own work. When BSH was written Foucault was committed to the idea of transgression. Initially, Foucault thought that the proper role of critique was to transgress, or in other words get outside of and beyond, Modern discourse. He later realized that archeology could not accomplish this task, and more importantly nor could any form of critique. In this way, BSH offers an interesting and clear evaluation of Foucault's project. However, my aim here, in part, is to recast archeology given

To sketch the differences in strategy, Dreyfus and Rabinow accept the distinction between the archive's laws and its contents as described above. Such an interpretation entails that Foucault's work is an instance of the very cogito / unthought double<sup>4</sup> that his archeological method criticized. They conclude that since archeological discourse relies upon the historical a priori of the human sciences, that it is not in a position to criticize that discourse. BSH demands an entirely new discourse that is separate from the discourse of the human sciences, if the former discourse is to be effectively debunked. Sabot's commentary on the other hand, makes possible a reading of Foucault that takes the paradox as a clue to what Foucault cannot be doing: offering temporally prior rules that generate statements. On his reading, the historical a priori is much less the metaphysical underpinnings of a given discourse, than the discourse's overarching structural composition, apparent within the empirically real discursive structure. Since the paradox derives from attributing causal power to the historical a priori, I find that Foucault is ill suited to the ambitious project of accounting for the existence of a discursive formation, and must settle for a mere description of it in its real, historical manifestation. Thus, the value of Sabot's structuralist interpretation of *The Order of Things* is that it takes Foucault to be engaged in a descriptive, as opposed to explanatory project. What hangs on their interpretive differences? The Dreyfus and Rabinow reading implies that Foucault's archeological discourse is both a successor to the discourse of the human sciences, and also a means of accessing a previously undiscovered metaphysical layer of reality, the historical a priori. Following from this understanding, they ultimately conclude that archeological discourse fails as the successor to the human sciences, because it remains caught within the historical a priori that serves as background condition for their possibility. Sabot's structural interpretation acknowledges the need to locate the historical a priori on the surface<sup>5</sup> of a discourse, rather than in its background.

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some of Foucault's later insights, and to show how this recasting escapes the problems that the archeology initially faced.

<sup>4</sup> The cogito and the unthought double is a characteristic of the Modern historical a priori. It is a manner of resolving the positive and the fundamental aspects of humans by which one argues that there is an unthought background that provides context and meaning to a statement. I return to the specific ways in which BSH argues that Foucault falls into this trap later in this paper.

<sup>5</sup> Foucault's term for "the surface" is "positivity." The positivity of discourse or statements refers to the historical fact that something was said or written without reference to the speakers intended meaning or understanding of the statements truth value.

I argue that this reading serves as a launching point for a reevaluation of how archeological critique is successful, effective and practical critique. The two interpretations cast Foucault as metaphysician or positivist respectively; the former interested in explaining the later interested in describing. This difference will allow me to consider contrasting conceptions of critique (what I call loosely an Enlightenment paradigm as supposed to genealogical paradigm), to suggest what critique becomes for Foucault, and finally, how Foucault might respond to frequent charge that his work fails at or undermines normative aims. To anticipate, when Foucault is read as a positivist, his histories offer descriptive accounts that create friction with the received view of our norms, and thus show us the degree to which we could think differently.

*Dreyfus and Rabinow's Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*

*Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* begins its discussion of Foucault's critique of the Modern Age by attempting to clarify its peculiar historical a priori, which Foucault calls the analytic of finitude, or more concisely "Man." "Man emerges not merely as both subject and object of knowledge, but even more paradoxically, as organizer of the spectacle in which he appears" (BSH 29). Man, understood in his finitude, is the condition for the possibility of knowledge in the Modern Age<sup>6</sup>. Finding its most complete articulation in Kant is the notion that knowledge is possible, though limited, only through the finitude of Man. Following their discussion of Man, Dreyfus and Rabinow define three sets of opposing strategies, or "doubles" for reconciling the empirical and foundational aspects of Man: the transcendental and empirical double, the cogito and the unthought double and the retreat and return of the origin double. For the purposes of this discussion, I will not recount the specific description of each double, but explain what they have in common insofar as they would be called "doubles." The analytic of finitude poses a certain problematic: the incommensurability of the essential and empirical aspects of Man. The doubles are ways in which a human science attempts to capture both the positive and essential aspects of Man in one image. In doing so, the human sciences incur a perpetual oscillation between the two poles of the double, never achieving the desired resolution

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<sup>6</sup> In *The Order of Things* Foucault is concerned with tracing the discontinuity of knowledge across three principle epochs: The Renaissance, which relied upon resemblance as its principle technology of knowledge, The Classical Age, which takes representation as its principle technology, and the Modern Age, which grounds knowledge in the existence of Man. Also, I use the work "Man" only as Foucault used it: as a technical term that refers to the existence of humans as empirical existent and as the transcendental condition for the possibility of knowledge.

but merely reducing one into the other, and thus losing sight of the former. Given this traditional metaphysical dualism of essence and accident, it follows that we must think of human beings as necessarily both transcendental and empirical. Yet, in attempting to resolve the transcendental into the empirical, as Kant does in the *Anthropology*, one merely reduces the transcendental into its empirical manifestations, and in effect loses the transcendental all together. The same reduction occurs when Fichte attempts to resolve the empirical into the transcendental by arguing for the existence of a self-positing mind. In this way, the human sciences perpetually oscillate between one or another of a double's poles.

Dreyfus and Rabinow understand the doubles as "the three strategies available to the analytic of finitude for uniting the positive and the fundamental," and these strategies are, for each doublet respectively, 'reduction, clarification and interpretation' (BSH 43). Thus the doubles are general forms made available by the historical a priori of Man's finitude to which all attempts at representing Man must conform. Dreyfus and Rabinow understand these strategies as conceptual formulations of more specific approaches taken by the human sciences. In other words, the doubles are choices (the only choices) made available by the historical a priori of the Modern Age for implementing a human science. Each doublet indicates a different approach to resolving the antithesis between the essential and positive. On this view, the doubles constitute pre-established "places" for discourse about humans to unfold.

The upshot of these considerations is that the historical a priori is a logic specific to each historical epoch: Man's finitude is the condition for the possibility of knowledge. This is to say that all meaningful discourse is built upon the presupposition of a small set of propositions that assert Man's finitude and its specific relationship to knowledge. These propositions form a scaffold upon which the discourse of the human sciences is to be built. The preservation of these foundational propositions is the general rule for a statements being meaningful. With these foundational propositions in hand, and their denial a logical impossibility, the implication is that every meaningful statement is given all at once. However, Archeology starts with the statements and accesses these foundational propositions and the logic that they establish, the historical a priori, through a hermeneutic analysis.

It is just such a *hermeneutic interpretation* of Foucault's methodology which Dreyfus and Rabinow are interested in providing. Their critique argues that beneath the surface of the

archeological perspective one can see Foucault relying upon the empirical / transcendental doublet and the cogito unthought doublet. Having discovered two of the doubles within the archeological discourse through an interpretation of that discourse, they conclude that it fails to transgress the discourse of the human sciences. Thus, Dreyfus and Rabinow count a discourse as belonging to an episteme if the doubles can be located, through interpretation, at the source of that discourse.

*Sabot's lire les mots et les choses*

In contrast to Dreyfus and Rabinow's interpretation of archeology as hermeneutics, Sabot claims that archeology is a descriptive undertaking. I call this a pragmatic approach because it makes no appeal to underlying foundations. It follows from a descriptive interpretation, such as Sabot's, that *The Order of Things* is not accounting for shifts in discursive structures by discovering the rules that cause a discourse to unfold at a specific point in history; Foucault is not offering an account of linguistic meaning. Rather, *The Order of Things* describes the composition of discourses as they are relevant to the formation of the discourse of the human sciences. Reading Foucault in this way reveals the critical function of his work, and changes the nature of the historical a priori such that it is an unproblematic notion.

Foucault argues that given our finitude one can study human's from any of three angles: life, labor and language. Dreyfus and Rabinow do not go into detail about these three topics presumably because they think they could find one of the doubles beneath a discourse about any of these three. While Dreyfus and Rabinow search for the doubles beneath discourse, Sabot takes the three discourses as his starting points and attempts to analyze their peculiarly Modern structure. Sabot takes 'the place of analysis to be neither Man in-himself, nor as he appears empirically, but Man insofar as he is capable of representing his own functioning' (Sabot 154). In other words, Sabot reads Foucault to be describing the structure that a discourse inevitably follows when attempting to resolve the foundational and the positive, given the positive. Thus, Sabot does not discuss specific discourses or perspectives, but the structure that all those discourse share. The story that Foucault is telling in *The Order of Things*, then, is one of the emulations and parallel evolution of a number of discourses such that they reach a state in which they are susceptible to a single strategy for structuring discourses. The discourses that eventually compose the discourse of the human sciences, and the strategy for structuring the discourse of

the Human Sciences develop separately in history and their amalgamation marks the inception of Modernity.

Life, labor and language are the specific discourses discussed, and finitude is a strategy that structures these discourses in a specific way. According to Sabot the peculiarity of that structure is that it sets them on an endless regress towards the origin. Sabot explains that the analytic of finitude and the production of discourse regarding Man's life, labor and language will result in a knowledge structure that perpetually confuses the *conditioned* for a condition.

The above mentioned confusion that Sabot describes requires some explaining. As Sabot interprets Foucault, the analytic of finitude is directly observable as the structural relation between discourse and things. This relation is characterized by three "plans en commun": the rendering of life, labor and language mathematizable, the reduction of the transcendental to the empirical, and the implementation modalities of formalized thought (Sabot 153). Sabot explains that the human sciences are searching for the condition that gives rise to facts. Furthermore as the condition is exposed, it itself is taken as a fact and in effect the new object of the human sciences. Thus, Sabot is accounting for the possibility of the positivity, epistemology, scientificity, formalization development within the human sciences. This development is best illustrated by example: one begins with an understanding of the human sciences as necessarily modeled on the natural sciences, i.e., as interested, like the natural sciences, in developing several laws that cover particular instances and then treating Man from all angles as an overt, visible physical presence whose measuring is inevitable. The biological facts about humans (positivity) are explained by a set of conceptual rules (epistemology). In turn, those rules are taken up as an object of inquiry and attempts are made to justify and refine them (scientificity). Finally, this refined set of rules is systematized and formalized (formalization). Sabot's reading suggests that this perpetual regress from positivity, this increasing abstraction, is the manifestation of the Modern Age's historical a priori.

Returning to Sabot's argument, the historical a priori initially seems to make it possible for humans to appear as finite. The object of the human sciences must then be to find the condition which makes the *conditioned* appearance of Man possible. Thus, the human sciences

are asking the right question, by the standards of *The Archeology of Knowledge*<sup>7</sup>, but they are looking in the wrong places. The object of the human sciences, being the unknown condition for the possibility of the conditioned appearance of Man, is purely negative. It is for this reason that Sabot refers to the human sciences as “contra-sciences”: while science is supposed to consider the positive facts, the human sciences consider the opposite, the condition for those facts. The human sciences create objects by searching for the unthought that conditions appearances. In capturing that unthought in a representation, the task of another branch of the human sciences becomes to search out the unthought condition making *that* conditioned representation possible, and so forth.

Finitude is not the starting point, the logic,<sup>8</sup> that generates all of the statements that could possibly belong to the discourse of the human sciences as soon as the logic is in place. More accurately, finitude is a strategy that ties a number of discourses together. Finitude is a strategy in the sense that the contra-science structure is a way of rendering level after level of explanation finite: one begins with a discourse that describes human behavior for example. The elaboration of the psychological norms that account for these behaviors renders them finite in the sense that the norms account for not only all observed behavior, but one should be able to generate all possible behaviors from these norms if their elaboration is complete. In order to ensure complete elaboration, these norms then stand in need of a further level of explanation that will render them finite.

Finitude as a strategy for structuring discourse also develops out of a context that is foreign to the discourse of the human sciences. Classical representation, as an epistemic model which precedes the Modern project, calls for the accurate representation of the order of the world as given by God. However, representing how humans represent proved problematic, until Kant revolutionizes the epistemological project by claiming that human finitude was the condition for

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<sup>7</sup> The human sciences are correct to look for the condition that makes Man appear in a certain positive way, but they are wrong in searching for that condition within Man himself. The mistake of the human sciences is that the condition for Man's appearance, and the subsequent discourses about Man, is history itself, the historical a priori.

<sup>8</sup> It seems that Dreyfus and Rabinow's conception of the historical a priori parallels Wittgenstein's conception of logical form in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Wittgenstein claimed that all propositions followed at once from commitment to a specific logical form. Furthermore, there was nothing logically necessary about any one specific logical form, and propositions about the world are contingent upon a specific logical form.

the possibility of knowledge. By generating finite experience out of necessary transcendental concepts which are themselves finite, Kant provides a new strategy for structuring discourses. More importantly, discourse regarding finitude become central because it responds to the fundamental question of the epistemological project of Classical Representation, which had itself taken up a primary importance due to previous contingent historical circumstances.

The point here is that finitude comes to permeate discourse, because of the precise historically contingent circumstances out of which finitude emerges. Thinking about finitude emerges at this point in history, because of the state of Newtonian physics, because of the need to make room for faith in a world of reason, because of a question that Classical Representation cannot resolve but is responsible for posing. Sabot's reading is valuable because it recognizes the dispersion of events whose contingent collision at a specific point in history provokes a composition of effects. In other words, finitude develops as the fundamental strategy because it can respond to the fundamental question of what at the time was the quintessential discourse. Furthermore, other discourses could similarly be structured by the strategy of finitude, and thus the discourse of the human sciences began in a qualitatively distinct way.

Dreyfus and Rabinow, and Sabot have different interpretive perspectives but they both arrive at the same conclusions: Foucault's archeological discourse is not external to that of the human sciences. Dreyfus and Rabinow make this conclusion based on the fact that a hermeneutic interpretation of Foucault's discourse exposes the presence of one or more of the doubles. Sabot reaches this conclusion because he acknowledges the impossibility of being external to the discourse of the epoch within which one speaks. For Dreyfus and Rabinow, Foucault's inability to be outside of the discourse that he criticizes means that his critique is unsuccessful. On a pragmatic reading, the interiority of Foucault's critique is its strength.

To state the interpretive differences concisely: Dreyfus and Rabinow focus on the discrete shifts in meaning noted in *The Order of Things*, and wish to read Foucault as accounting for these shifts. Reading Foucault as Sabot does, the discrete shifts in meaning are secondary to the continuity of discursive and non-discursive practices. For example, Sabot's perspective can account for the fact that Classical Representation and the Modern epistemological project are both concerned with representing. Yet, representing becomes a different activity by virtue of how other discourses and practices are related to it. Secondly, for Dreyfus and Rabinow,

historical change is a matter of changes to the set of rules that structure discourse. A pragmatic reading of Foucault shows us that historical change is a product of the dynamic relationship between discourses and strategies. Furthermore, the type of rules conceived by Dreyfus and Rabinow only develop because of the dynamic development of discourses. Third, Dreyfus and Rabinow fail to appreciate the dynamic quality of discourse that is made evident by Foucault's work. In conclusion, the pragmatic reading initiated by Sabot can account for epistemic shifts without referring to any rules that govern discursive formations. The pragmatic approach overcomes the paradox of the archive by more deeply appreciating the notion of the composition of effects developed in Foucault's later works. Finally, this pragmatic account is meant to create internal dissonance: the critical function of the work is derived from the fact that it shows Man to be a product of the historically contingent composition of effects in contrast to the received idea that Man was an ever present object waiting in the dark to be discovered. By showing that the discourse of the Human Sciences is a product of contingent historical circumstances, its essentiality is called into doubt. Having discussed how Dreyfus and Rabinow's assessment of Foucault is inferior to a pragmatic reading, I will show why they evaluate Foucault as they do.

### *Renewing the Foundations of Critique*

Ultimately, Dreyfus and Rabinow's interpretation leads to the conclusion that in moving from describing the positivity of statements to trying to account for the rarity of those statements, Foucault has overstepped the bounds of his archeological perspective. By "rarity of statements" Foucault is referring to the idea that of all serious speech acts, a small number of them are considered meaningful at a given point in time. The idea is that all serious speech acts were at one point meaningful. Dreyfus and Rabinow take Foucault to be accounting for the conditions under which a speech act has meaning. The valuable point that Foucault is making, is that we don't dismiss one set of serious speech acts because others tell us that the former are wrong. Rather, a displacement of the truth conditions within which the statements were made renders them meaningless. However, if this is what Foucault is up to then he is positing the unthought conditions for the meaningfulness.

Dreyfus and Rabinow devote the rest of their book to a reading of the genealogical works as interpretive analytics; as a methodology which situates inquirers so that they can speak about their objects from a distance, while simultaneously being within that object. In short the

genealogical perspective solves the problem of the archeological perspective by becoming a brand of hermeneutics. Dreyfus and Rabinow's criticism and attempt at resolution is only valid insofar as the hermeneutic level of meaning is necessary for the intelligibility of statements. In other words, Dreyfus and Rabinow's interpretation requires that Foucault's study of positivity cannot be divorced from his failed attempts to account for the rarity of those positivities.

Sabot offers a reading that does not cast Foucault as accounting for discourses by positing rules that are implicit within them: by considering the analytic of finitude to be a modality of relating statements, there is no hidden level of meaning. A pragmatic reading recognizes the fallibility of proposing laws that account for the rarity of statements, since the laws would paradoxically exist through the formation of the archive but also constitute the possibility of that very formation. Instead, Sabot considers only how the analytic of finitude manifests itself; how it exists in its positivity as a mode of relating statements. By describing the analytic of finitude as the contra-science structure Sabot offers a reading of *les mots et les choses* that returns the historical a priori to the level of positivity that the archeology was meant to describe. Thus, the later works do not resolve the shortcomings of the archeology, as Dreyfus and Rabinow suggest. Rather they address different aspects of the same problem. The archeology and its failure motivate the later works, but those works are not attempts at resolving only the problem of perspective that arises in the archeological method.

The divergence of these two interpretations hinges on the stance that they take towards the seemingly paradoxical relationship between the rules of the archive and the statements that they structure. Dreyfus and Rabinow acknowledge the paradox, and take it as evidence that Foucault's archeological critique fails. A causal interpretation of the historical a priori, such as Dreyfus and Rabinow's, necessarily entails this paradox. However, the historical a priori need not be interpreted as possessing causal power, or a foundational ontological status. Rather it should be understood as an aspect of discourse's positivity. One must not attempt to explain the way in which the historical a priori "causes" a discursive structure to form. Rather, the intelligibility of a discourse consists in recapitulating the modulations and composition of discourses over time as they are relevant to the discourse in question. To understand why this pragmatic interpretation offers a better path to be followed, I will begin by more thoroughly evaluating the reasons that Dreyfus and Rabinow mistakenly think Foucault's critique is a failure.

Dreyfus and Rabinow are begging the question by presupposing the Enlightenment framework for critical activity whose efficacy and legitimacy Foucault has called into question. According to BSH, in order for Foucault to offer a successful critique, the archeological perspective must be external to that which it critiques. In other words, Dreyfus and Rabinow first, take an objectivist stance about discursive structures, they expect a critique to be something that will second, expose perceived truth as appearance, and third, thereby liberate discourse from this deceptive appearance by overcoming the problems that this conditioned discourse faces. Above all, Dreyfus and Rabinow ask about the degree to which archeology can accomplish the third criteria; and finding that archeology fails do so, they dismiss archeological critique as invalid.

In his critique of Foucault, Charles Taylor, elegantly outlines this kind of objectivistic expectation for critique:

“You would think that implicit in all this was the notion of two goods which need rescuing, and which the analyses help to rescue: freedom and truth; two goods which would be deeply linked granted the fact that the negation of one (domination) makes essential use of the negation of the other (disguise). We would be back on familiar terrain, with an old enlightenment-inspired combination. But Foucault seems to repudiate both” (Taylor 70).

Taylor's characterization of the traditional expectations for a successful critique provides just the right measure for evaluating Dreyfus and Rabinow: they reject Foucault's archeology because it does not “liberate” discourse from the “disguise” that the analytic of finitude imposes. In other words, they take Foucault's critique to be aimed at unmasking of the discourse of the human sciences as conditioned by the historical a priori. On this model of critique, one exposes appearance and frees one's self from it by asserting the Truth. In this case one would expect Foucault's archeological model to be the successor, the necessary Truth, that revealed the contingency of the human sciences. But, since archeology is also said to be contingent, it cannot satisfy the demands of an Enlightenment critique: Archeology may expose Man as contingent, but it does not offer a new foundation in its stead.

It is Dreyfus and Rabinow, then, that produce the real paradox. For they recognize the value of Foucault's critique to be its ability to destabilize the Enlightenment legacy, and in the

same breath denounce Foucault for his failure to conform to the Enlightenment paradigm of critique. They demand that liberation from one appearance be followed by the instatement of a new Truth. Yet, this demand for progress is fundamentally at odds with Foucault's project to restore the rifts and ruptures to history.

### *Creating Internal Dissonance with Genealogical Critique*

So to what end does Foucault in fact restore these rifts and ruptures? If one resists the urge to impose an Enlightenment paradigm of critique upon Foucault, what can we make of Foucault's critical project? If Foucault dispenses with the Enlightenment paradigm, then what is critique? In the second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault pauses to reevaluate the overarching goals of his project:

“Considered from the standpoint of ‘pragmatics,’ [these studies] are the record of a long and tentative exercise that needed to be revised and corrected again and again. It was a philosophical exercise. The object was to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently (HS vol. II 9). After all, what would be the value of a passion for knowledge if it resulted only in a certain amount of knowledgeable-ness and not, in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower's straying afield of himself?” (*ibid.* 8).

While the Enlightenment paradigm demands that the appearance be exposed relative to the revealed Truth, Foucault's archeology lends itself to a more pragmatic option by measuring the extent to which we could think history differently. This is achieved in three ways: first, the measuring is done from within the historical epoch, the discursive formation being measured; not objectivistically as if the mind were detached from that discursive formation. Second, the source of the measurement's power is the internal dissonance that the critique creates; not reference to some external criterion i.e. Truth. Third, liberation is a perpetual process not a gestalt shift from domination to liberty. The critique is affective in its ability to think history differently, to expose the silent history that exists beneath our beliefs, and to measure the one against the other, just as Socrates measures belief against the reality of action and speech. In this way Foucault's brand of

critique operates inside of a discursive structure, and in face of its apparent necessity reveals the ways in which things could be thought differently.

Given this new form of critique Sabot's reading takes on a new importance. Kant established Man's finitude as the condition for the possibility of knowledge. Dreyfus and Rabinow wish to read Foucault such that transcendental Man is still the condition for the possibility of knowledge, but Man is an historical a priori rather than a cognitive structure. Foucault, however, refrains from offering a foundational account of knowledge. His object is the observable fact of historical shifts in discursive structures, and he is merely concerned with strategically isolating and exposing the degree to which we could think those structures, and ourselves, differently. Following Foucault's analysis, the human sciences are believed to enjoy their tenure due to the necessary and natural limits that the transcendental ego imposed. Thus, knowledge was formerly perceived to proceed from Man's rational and finite nature. However, Foucault offers an alternative story: Classical knowledge was characterized by representation: God, or the infinite, was the necessary condition that insured that everything could be placed on a table of representations. Things were known by their relations position to all other elements on the table. However, in trying to represent Man, Classical representation found itself in the impossible position of needing to represent how representation could happen. In doing so, the limits of Man became the condition for the possibility of knowledge and peculiarly Modern Knowledge emerged. In this descriptive account of the emergence of Man, there is nothing natural or universal about him. Man is merely the product of the overflowing of Classical Representation. Foucault is offering a critique precisely in that the Kantian a priori is measured against the historical fact of changes to knowledge's guiding paradigm. In effect we find that we can think our history differently.

Foucault's critique consists in playing those beliefs that we hold to be necessary against the positive real events of history. I call this a *genealogical critique* precisely in that it involves bringing to the fore the inconsistency between our beliefs and ideologies, and the positive record of history that underpins and allegedly serves as the basis for those ideologies. If we understand archeology as the exposition of a new metaphysics we do so in order to render Foucault's critique consistent with the Enlightenment paradigm. If on the other hand, we recognize

Foucault's archeology as a new and unique descriptive perspective on positive historical facts, then a pragmatic course of action emerges.

It follows, then, that Foucault's repudiations of Truth and Freedom do not entail nihilism. Rather, in doing so Foucault repudiates metaphysics; he refuses to continue the fruitless task of erecting a new foundation that is equally as unstable as its predecessor, and makes possible a realistic, although less robust, conception of liberating practice: Foucault searches for the extent to which we can think differently precisely with the end of discerning the extent to which we can be free of clinging to dogmatic foundation after dogmatic foundation. The value of Foucault's work is that it can provide a viable strategy for inducing historical change that brackets the normative concerns that render Enlightenment critique archaic: by creating internal dissonance Foucault need not appeal to metaphysical conceptions of human nature or natural right in order to level an effective criticism. This pointed study of the interpretive stakes surrounding the paradox of the archive is intended to show that the tacit nihilism of Foucault's work was imposed upon it rather than following from it. A non-causal / non-foundational interpretation of the historical a priori opens the possibility of what I call here a renewed genealogical critique.

Foucault dispenses with concerns about the metaphysical nature of reality, or the just social configuration, and pragmatically considers the consequences of these thoughts and practices, so as to consider how we might free ourselves from their governance. In this case freedom is not a single ideal, or an achievable state, but the practice of perpetually identifying the ways in which we are governed to the end of loosening the constraints of governance. This practice is liberating in that the governance of behavioral norms and discursive rules are often hidden by their familiarity and our dependence upon them in our day to day coping. Thus, exposing them as inessential is the first step in reevaluating and loosening these norms and rules.

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