

Fall 2018

The Underdevelopment of Foucauldian Subjectivity and Freedom

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The Underdevelopment of Foucauldian Subjectivity and Freedom

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Abstract:

This thesis reviews the work of Michel Foucault with the aim of investigating his definition, or lack thereof, of subjectivity and its relation to power and knowledge. In lieu of the traditional classification of Foucault's work according to the time periods of his writing (archaeological, genealogical, and ethical), it is argued that a more fruitful way to approach Foucault's work is through the heuristics of the triad (knowledge-power-subjectivity) and, in place of the overused and ill-defined notion of discontinuity, the notion of displacement. With these heuristics having been established, the thesis outlines Foucault's methodological approach to his object, namely, the field of power relations in society in Section II. Section III moves to a review and reconstruction of Foucault's analysis of power, paying close attention to the ways in which Foucault expanded his model of power through the process of displacement, moving from the dominant tradition of power as repression (or the juridico-discursive model) to the war model and, finally, to the governmentality model of power. Section IV then reviews Foucault's remarks on the relationship between knowledge and power, again reconstructing the theoretical shifts from ideological models to the model of power-knowledge to the final model of government of truth. After having reviewed these two components in the triad (power and knowledge), Section V reviews what little Foucault said about subjectivity, namely that the subject is always free in relations of power, and then reconstructs four elementary definitions of power: *plebian pluralism*, *plebian functionalism*, *agonistic vitalism*, and *elemental vitalism*. Each of these is critiqued and a final attempt to clarify freedom in Foucault's thought through the concept of thought. However, thought and its relation to freedom gives way to three possible interpretations: thought as the discovery of freedom, thought as the practice of freedom, and thought as the presumption of freedom.

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I. Introduction

Foucault's mature work, often referred to as his genealogical period, is chiefly concerned with power and its relationship to knowledge. Throughout that period, he developed a new outlook on power and consistently redefined its relationship to knowledge and truth, but he left the subject in his work undefined, his sparse references to the subject concerned with its basic freedom in relations of power and relations to itself. The secondary literature has developed a number of novel approaches to this issue of freedom in Foucault's work, but the many definitions can be classified according to two approaches: the plebian approach and the vitalist approach. These prior two approaches can be broken down further. The former consists of *plebian pluralism* and *plebian functionalism* and the latter of *agonistic vitalism* and *elemental vitalism*. These four approaches and different combinations of them make up the majority of the definitions of freedom offered up, but all suffer serious deficiencies, diverging in significant ways from Foucault's statements on freedom. In lieu of these, a third approach is considered that emphasizes the relation between thought and freedom. However, considering freedom in relation to thought leads to three different outlooks: thought as the discovery of freedom, thought as the practice of freedom, and thought as the presumption of freedom. Although each has its merits, it seems the third of these is the most likely, namely that Foucault assumes the subject is free in relations of power and knowledge, doing little to justify the freedom of the subject.

Traditionally, Foucault's work is classified according to a certain periodization. His early works – *History of Madness*, *Birth of the Clinic*, *Order of Things*, *Archaeology of Knowledge* – are referred to as archaeological, concerned with the uncovering of

discourse and the way it gives rise to bodies of knowledge. His middle works – *Discipline and Punish*, *Society Must Be Defended*, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* – are referred to as genealogical, concerned with the way in which power gives rise to historicized subjectivities and knowledges. Finally, his late works – *History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: Use of Pleasure* and *History of Sexuality, Vol. 3: Care of the Self* – are referred to as ethical, concerned with the subject's relation to themselves. This scheme also accords with Foucault's frequent re-characterizations of his own work. Throughout this genealogical period, Foucault reconsidered his works, stating on multiple occasions that, although he did not have the conceptual vocabulary to articulate the problem in terms of power, it was always the hidden element of his early analysis, and later, prior to the ethical period, he would again reevaluate his work and claim that it was always concerned with the subject.

Although immensely important in the scope of the secondary literature, this classificatory scheme has a number of important deficiencies. In the first part, this schema does not take into account the ways in which Foucault's works build into and influence each other. Even Foucault's own re-characterizations, far from implying that his work at a certain period departs from the work of a previous period, implies that his work consistently "uncovers" something that was implicit in his previous works or that his works were misunderstood in some serious way that distracted his audience from the issue at the heart of his writings. Second, this schema neglects the important ways in which previous works made later works possible. A simple issue at the heart of this deficiency is the question of the relation between Foucault's genealogical method and his earlier archaeological method. Scholars who strongly subscribe to this schema of

classification often view the two methods as incommensurable, or at the very least read Foucault's genealogical works as having abandoned the archaeological method of his earlier writings.¹ However, such simple classificatory boundaries between the works of Foucault distracts from the ways in which the works bleed over into one another, build into a greater project and vision of the object of his work.

In the place of this periodization of Foucault's work, it seems more prudent to employ the notion of Foucault's triad to understand his mature work. In other words, rather than implying that the object and method of Foucault's work shifted from one period to another, it seems both more fruitful and more faithful to his texts to approach his work as concerned with the relations between knowledge, power, and subjectivity. This triad – knowledge-power-subjectivity – and each terms relation to the other seems to animate the work of Foucault and the relations between each of these terms seems most explicit later in the works written in the 70's, for a number of reasons.² Furthermore, it seems apparent that this notion of Foucault's triad is capable of incorporating the earlier periodization while remaining attentive to the nuanced ways in which the previous works inform the later ones. The archaeological period is unique in that it is mainly concerned with the question of knowledge, seemingly independent of the subsequent two terms, although, if we are to take Foucault at his word, the question at the center of works like

¹ Gillan and Lemert (1982), Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983), and Cousins and Hussain (1984) each represent this quandary, as each takes the position that archaeology is something methodologically distinct from genealogy, and each takes a different view on the question of whether the move of abandoning (partially or completely) the method and object of archaeology was prudent within the work of Foucault. Despite the widespread publication of *Society Must Be Defended* (2003a) and Foucault's clarification that archaeology was the method of his study and genealogy defined the object of that study, opinions of this form continue to exert influence on the secondary literature and modern interpretation of the relation between archaeology and genealogy.

² The fact that this period holds such a cohesive picture of this triad and each terms relation to the other is due more to Foucault's early death, causing his late work, which is the period most explicitly concerned with the third term, to be underdeveloped.

History of Madness and *Birth of the Clinic* is that of power even though Foucault didn't have the conceptual vocabulary to treat the question properly.³ The genealogical period is both the period most concerned with power and the first period in which all three terms arise even if the relations between all three terms are never fully explicated. Finally, the ethical period is the one in which the final term is taken up most explicitly in Foucault's thought, even though this period is the least developed of the three. Using this scheme to make sense of Foucault's work allows us to appreciate that each era was chiefly concerned with a particular term in the triad, but also that each illuminated a unique aspect of the relation between each term.

Furthermore, to bolster this conceptual organization of Foucault's work, it is necessary to add and develop the notion of 'displacement'.⁴ Oceans of ink have been spilled on the question of Foucault's relationship to discontinuity. The question of discontinuity and its impact on historical practice is at the heart of *Archaeology of Knowledge*, however, the issue of his commitment to discontinuity as the general form of history of historical analysis, while widely assumed, is not sufficiently resolved at the end of the book.⁵ Discontinuity is most often taken to mean that history is a process of rupture, of discontinuous events unconnected to one another proceeding endlessly towards a future rupture that erases the organization of the world that we currently live in.

³ "When I think back now, I ask myself what else it was that I was talking about, in *Madness and Civilization* or *The Birth of the Clinic*, but power? Yet I'm perfectly aware that I scarcely ever used the word and never had such a field of analyses at my disposal...This task could only begin after 1968, that is to say on the basis of daily struggles at grass roots level, among those whose fight was located in the fine meshes of the web of power" (1980, 115-116)

⁴ "Once again, it is a matter of a line of displacement, that is to say not of a line of a theoretical structure, but of the displacement by which my theoretical positions continually change. After all, there are quite a few negative theologies; let's say that I am a *negative theorist*." (2014, 76; my emphasis)

⁵ "The use of concepts of discontinuity, rupture, threshold, limit, series, and transformation present all historical analysis not only with questions of procedure, but with theoretical problems. It is these problems that will be studied here" (1972, 21)

In other words, the organization of the social field now is absolutely distinct from the organization of the social field in the past and will be absolutely distinct from the social field of the future. On face, a full commitment to discontinuity seems impossible within the work of Foucault. Indeed, it isn't as though the prison-form arose from nowhere, or that the apparatus of confession and its spread throughout the social was unprompted or disconnected from the past. If history was pure discontinuity, writing histories would be useless, and, while it is true, Foucault writes non-traditional histories, those histories place even more importance on the relation of the past to the present. In lieu of the notion of discontinuity, a notion which was only ever evoked for the sake of testing and revising the process and method of historical analysis, the notion of displacement should be taken up. Displacement emphasizes both the object displacing and the object which is displaced, reminding the viewer that a process of displacement requires something to occupy the space before it is removed for the sake of something else. Furthermore, in the context of thought and the social field, much in the same sense as Bachelard's epistemological breaks, an object that is displaced might leave something behind, rub off on the space which the new object occupies. Further, an object that is displaced might not be completely displaced. It might be partially displaced; it might be built upon in the process of displacement. In other words, displacement does not preclude the possibility of pure discontinuity, but throws into doubt the notion that history is ever a process of pure discontinuity, emphasizing instead the process by which new dispositifs or institutions come into the social field by building upon previous dispositifs and institutions and, sometimes, finding ways to co-exist with what had previously occupied that field.

Another reason to further develop this notion of displacement is that the nature of Foucault's work takes the form of a thought or concept displacing a previous thought or concept. His practice of self-criticism and self-correction, his periodic revisions of his past work, led to his work developing by this model of displacement. Indeed, his most notable works are often histories that actively displace previous histories, dislodging them from their privileged positions as true or natural history. Take *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, the introduction of which is a set of brief remarks on the repressive hypothesis of sexuality, namely that sexuality is a natural aspect of any particular human the exercise of which is repressed. This comes to frame the entirety of the book, allowing him to not simply write, but to *re-write* the history of sexuality as it was once understood in the west. In *Discipline and Punish*, the history displaces the humanistic explanation of the universalization of imprisonment; in *Psychiatric Power*, the thought being displaced is *History of Madness*; in *Society Must Be Defended*, it is Foucault's previously used model of power (the war-model). So, Foucault's histories seek to displace the previous narrative by which we have made sense of the world around us, often seeking to de-nature those things about us that we find to be natural or given, such as sexuality or imprisonment. However, it is not only his histories that follow this general arc, but also concepts he invokes throughout his works. His definition of power progresses first by displacing the juridico-political model with the war-model and then the war-model with the governmentality model of power. In that sense, by being relentlessly self-critical and engaging in a process of self-revision, Foucault's own work progresses through a process of displacement, beginning with the development of a set of concepts concerning knowledge in direct response to what Foucault perceived as the conceptually

impoverished models of structuralism and phenomenology in his early work and then progressed in the 70s to develop a whole set of concepts which displaced outmoded notions of power and knowledge, which he would refine through a process of self-displacement.

This thesis takes seriously this arc of displacement in Foucault's work and, in particular, the way it interacts with Foucault's triad conceptually. In the following section, a series of questions concerning Foucault's method will be outlined and answered as best as can be. Then each term in the triad is taken in turn, and the displacements of these concepts are recounted and reconstructed. Because this work will mainly focus on the set of texts most explicitly concerned with power, where this triad is at its most mature formulation, I will be analyzing knowledge via its shifting relation to power, although from this relation a series of characteristics about knowledge itself will become apparent. First, Foucault articulates the concept power-knowledge to displace the concept of ideology as it was in critical theory at the time, and then displaces his own concept of power-knowledge with the concept of government of truth. After reviewing these displacements, power will be considered, and the models of power that Foucault conceived of throughout his writings will be recounted. First, in opposition to the juridico-political model, he theorizes the war-model, and then displaces that model with the governmentality model. After recounting these displacements in the first two terms, I will turn to the final term, subjectivity, in an attempt to show how its underdevelopment made possible the development of the other terms in the triad. Foucault's oblique references to freedom, by means of resistance and creativity, has left the final term immensely underdeveloped. Instead of recounting a series of displacements, I will

reconstruct this subjectivity-as-freedom and then survey a series of attempts to theorize the concept of freedom in Foucault, not with the aim of resolving the complex issue, but giving it more clarity.

II. Foucault's Method

That Foucault writes histories is apparent, but the nature of the histories is less so. Their goal is not the reconstruction of the past with the hope of a perfect reflection of how things once were. Indeed, Foucault's histories trouble the very idea that such a practice is feasible in the face of the myriad of power relations permeating the social field at any given time. He described his own writings as "fictions," although he insisted that this fictive element did not rob them of their transformative power. "It seems to me the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth, and for bringing it about that a true discourse engenders or 'manufactures' something that does not as yet exist, that is, 'fictions' it. One 'fictions' history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one 'fictions' politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth." (1980, 193) His interest was never the reconstruction of the past, but the political potential of fictive histories to affect the present. His focus on the past was at once tactically motivated and methodologically complex. He wrote about the past for the sake of writing a history of the present. His writings are fundamentally concerned with what he called a "critical ontology of ourselves." Foucault centered his work around the question, 'what is the present?' and so, as Todd May places it, it "is not a matter of delving into the Being of the present, but rather of asking the more pedestrian and yet more urgent question: What are things like for us today?" (2010, 1)

How then do these histories function? They function by dislodging those things we take to be natural (the prison-form, sexuality, madness), historicizing the process by which these things came to be, exposing the fault lines in the apparatuses that have played a part in the creation and maintenance of these non-natural constructs. In other words, these histories displace our common assumptions about the world, but not by an appeal to discontinuity, which would function by showing that the past was much different than the present, that sexuality was once foreign and will again be foreign, but by tracing the elements which arose to define the present as it is. Indeed, if discontinuity were the paradigm of history then the past could tell us only one thing: we were, at a time, not like we are. Foucault's work tells us more than that. It explains how we came to be as we are. Foucault would later re-characterize the question of our present as one deeply involved with subjectification. "My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different mode by which, on our culture, *human beings are made subjects*." (1984, 208; my emphasis) These histories are critically oriented to uncovering the means in which the modern beings find themselves within "modes of objectification which transform beings into subjects" through a study of the past. This means the triad can already be reconsidered. The two prior terms work in tandem to uncover something about the final term. Foucault was not a theorist of power, knowledge, or power-knowledge, or at least not a theorist of any of those things for their own sake, but for the service of his role as a theorist of subjectivity.

How did Foucault approach the study of modes of subjectification? Through the lens of power, or, in other words, by investigating the complex relations of power that the subject finds themselves implicated in. "It soon appeared to me that, while the human

subject is placed in relations of production and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations which are very complex...for power relations we had no tools of study.” (1984, 209) So, Foucault’s approach to a history of the present, a critical ontology of ourselves, is through the lens of power relations, the study of those which we find ourselves implicated in and produced through. As May clarifies, “It is not subjectivity *per se* that is an effect of power...Rather, specific forms of subjectivity are effects of specific ways in which power is exercised; and it is always in the name of a specific subjectivity that those who would and those who would not change things speak.” (2011, 39)

How does he approach the issue of power and study it? Three remarks are necessary here. Firstly, when the word power is used in the works of Foucault, it should always be taken as shorthand for relationships of power. As he explains, “I hardly ever use the word “power” and if I do sometimes, it is always a short cut to the expression I always use: the relationships of power.” (1985, 11) This is because a substantive sense of power is non-existent. In his own words, “The idea that there is either located at—or emanating from—a given something which is a ‘power’ seems to me to be based on a misguided analysis, one which at all events fails to account for a number of phenomena.” (1980, 198) So, power always implies “an open, more-or-less coordinated (in the event, no doubt, ill-coordinated) cluster of relations” and it does not exist as a substance held by subjects (1980, 199). Secondly, Foucault does not ask the question of what power is or why power operates as it does. Indeed, his rejection of the possibility of a substantive power means that, at the very least the question of ‘what’ is closed off to his analysis. Instead, Foucault asks how power operates within the social field at a particular time and in a particular space. Foucault begins with the ‘how’ of power because he wishes “to

present these questions [what, why] in a different way; better still, to know if it is legitimate to imagine a power which unites itself a what, a why, and a how...to begin the analysis with a “how” is to suggest that power as such does not exist.” (1984, 217) So, after the abandonment of the belief of the substantive of power, the ‘how’ of power is the only means of approaching the question available to Foucault. Lastly, Foucault did not pursue a theory of power, but what he called an analytics of power. This analytics of power was intended to move “toward a definition of the specific domain formed by relations of power, and toward a determination of the instruments that will make possible its analysis.” (1990a, 82) As Foucault remarked, “If one tries to erect a theory of power one will always be obliged to view it as emerging at a given place and time and hence to deduce it, to reconstruct its genesis.” (1980, 199)

Foucault’s histories, then, are nuanced and strategic, but the question of the type of concepts they produce has been left unstated thus far. Do Foucault’s histories construct a *theory* of knowledge-power-subjectivity or any of these terms independently? Do they uncover certain things which are natural to the world? Certainly Foucault made claims about each of these terms separately and the relations between them, but what those claims are is, as of yet, unclear. Foucault’s ‘analytics’ does not preclude a definition of relationships of power, only a definition of power as substance. Indeed, it seems the distinction between ‘theory’ and ‘analytics’ rests in the questions which drive the particular investigations. Theories ask ‘what’ and ‘why’, and, in asking those questions, aim to describe the emergence of power. As Mark Cousins and Athar Hussain remark, “The particular type of definition of power which Foucault is at pains to avoid is the one which would lay down *a priori* (1) the nature of power relations, and their boundaries in

the more general field of social relations, (2) the sources and aims behind power relations, and (3) the mode of their existence” (1984, 227). These are the things a theory of power aims to do. Analytics is the process of studying the ‘how’ of power with the aim of reconstructing the relations of power which have made us what we are today. This is why Foucault does not work towards a theory of power which would speak in the final instance as to what power looks like and the forms it can take, but, instead, studies the effects of power. As Foucault explained:

Do we need a theory of power? Since a theory assumes a prior objectification, it cannot be asserted as a basis for analytical work. But this analytical work cannot proceed without an ongoing conceptualization. And this conceptualization implies critical thought—a constant checking. (1984, 209)

So, at the very least a conceptualization of power is necessary for the work Foucault sees as necessary, and this conceptualization of power is possible through an analytics of power, or in taking seriously the question ‘how is power exercised?’.

How does Foucault conduct this analytics of power? How does he undertake the project of studying how relationships of power work to subjectify individuals that find themselves within those relations? Through the “gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary” process of genealogical study (Foucault 1997b, 369). This form of history is explicitly anti-presentist and anti-finalist. In presentism, “the historian takes a model or a concept, an institution, a feeling, or a symbol from his present, and attempts...to find that it had a parallel meaning in the past.” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1984, 118) In presentist histories, the aim is to write the histories of the past in terms of the present, rewriting the past such that one finds in it the same familiar concepts of the present. Finalist history “finds the kernel of the present at some distant point in the past and then shows the finalized necessity of the development from that point to the present.” (1984, 118) In this

case, one reads the past in order to find in it some hint of the present such that one can either justify it as the completion of the past or predict the past's completion in the future. In contrast, Foucault's history "locates the acute manifestations of a particular "meticulous ritual of power" or "political technology of the body" to see where it arose, took shape, gained importance, and so on." (1984, 119) In other words, it tries to isolate the field of power relations in a moment in time and space for the sake of clarifying the ways in which those relations influence us in the present. Rajchman describes Foucault's histories as "nominalist histories" not in the sense that Foucault is a nominalist, but in the sense that "They are not histories of things, but of the terms, categories, and techniques through which certain things become at certain times the focus of a whole configuration of discussion and procedure." (Rajchman 1985, 51) In other words, Foucault's histories are aimed at historicizing the very concepts about which he writes. Volume one of *The History of Sexuality* takes the concept 'sexuality' and writes with the aim of unearthing its history, troubling our often implicit assumptions that it is natural and unchanging, and undermining our assumptions that the things which he speaks about are in fact real entities in the world. "He writes histories of "pseudo-objects; he uses history to dispel the sort of routine, instituted self-assurance people have about the reality of such entities." (1985, 52) They are de-realizing histories and genealogy is a practice of de-realization. However, Foucault's project of de-realization does not imply that any arbitrary construction of history is acceptable. Foucault studies real practices that took place in real times in history, and the aim of his study is to analyze the way those practices gave rise to the entities that are now accepted as natural, such as sexuality and mental illness. Dreyfus and Rabinow place it like this: "Genealogy's coat of arms might read: Oppose depth,

finality, and interiority. Its banner: Mistrust identities in history; they are only masks, appeals to unity.” (1984, 107)

In *Foucault: His Thought, His Character*, Veyne undertakes the task of reconstructing Foucault’s thought. According to Veyne, the premise of Foucault’s work is that, “the object, in all its materiality, cannot be separated from the formal frameworks through which we come to know it, frameworks that Foucault...calls 'discourse'.” (2008,

6) By ‘discourse’, Foucault means:

a most precise and close description of a historical formation, stripped bare, a revelation of its ultimate individual difference. Reaching the *differentia ultima* of a dated singularity requires an intellectual effort of perception: it is necessary to strip the event of the excessive draperies that make it unexceptional and rationalize it. (2008, 6)

This position does not deny the materiality of objects. Take, for instance, Foucault’s writings on madness. Even though he thought that madness was distinct from the way it was constructed by the current discourse surrounding it, he did not deny that something called ‘madness’ existed. Foucault thought we viewed ourselves using concepts that never perfectly correlated to the world as it was, precisely because every event was ultimately singular, arrested by a fundamental *differentia ultima* and “every time we reach that *differentia ultima* of the phenomenon, namely, the 'discourse' that describes it, we invariably find that the phenomenon is bizarre, arbitrary, gratuitous” (2008, 13) This means that the history of philosophy is one of empty, false universals that have failed to understand man. As Veyne described it, “the ancient and recent past of humanity constitutes a vast cemetery of now dead great truths.” (2008, 14) How, then, does Foucault study discourse? How does he come to understand it if he swore off the possibility of universals or the possibility of understanding the thing as it is? He exercises

what Veyne calls ‘hermeneutic positivism’, or the view that “we can know nothing for certain about the self, the world or the Good, but between ourselves, whether living or dead, we can understand one another.” (2008, 16) What exactly is this method of hermeneutic positivism? As Veyne describes it:

instead of starting out with universals as a grid of intelligibility for 'concrete practices' that are both thought about and understood, even if they take place in silence, one takes as one's starting point those very practices and the singular and bizarre 'discourse' that they presuppose, 'so as to, as it were, pass these universals through the grid of these practices'. One then discovers the real truth of the past and 'that universals do not exist'. To cite Foucault's own words, 'My starting point is the decision, at once theoretical and methodological, that consists in saying: *suppose that universals simply do not exist*'; for example, suppose that madness does not exist, or rather that it is a false concept (even if something real corresponds to it). 'In these circumstances, what kind of history can be devised for these disparate events and these diverse practices that are apparently classified as some supposed thing called madness?' (2008, 18; my emphasis)

So, Foucault undertook to analyze the supposedly ahistorical universals in accordance with the concrete, historical discourses of a certain time belonging to a certain people with the intention of showing that those things accepted as universals, those truths touted as absolute, will pass and be put to rest in that great cemetery of human thought that constitutes the history of philosophy. “This rates as a hermeneutics because of the principle of 'the *irreducibility of thought*' (we should not forget, at this point, that the root of thought is not consciousness); 'There is no experience that is not, in some way, a kind of thinking.'” (2008, 16; my emphasis) So, all experience of the world is an activity of thinking, implicit or explicit, of fitting the facts of the world into the framework of discourse through which the world is viewed. The positivism of this method is the deferral to facts as facts, undressed of the garb of thought. As Veyne clarifies, “Leave little facts in peace, but make war on generalizations...historical facts do not exist readymade...they are constructions built on 'discourses' that are neutral with regard to

their truth.” (2008, 46) These little facts, these facts that are beyond doubt “can only ever be reached according to a particular point of view and through a 'discourse'. That is an inevitability that weighs heavily upon human knowledge.” (2008, 48) So, there are facts (i.e. that there is a thing like madness, the battle of Waterloo took place) and this belief is beyond reproach, but such small facts can only ever be approached by means of a framework of understanding, some as large, explicit, exhaustive as the DSM V and others as simple, implicit, commonplace as aligning with one side of a battle. So, hermeneutic positivism is intended to purge our thought of universalism, of the lingering remnants of an a-historicism that haunts our approach to ourselves and the world.

What does the method of positive hermeneutics yield? What do Foucault's studies say about man or thought or history? Is the only possible conclusion a tentative one, abandoned to constant revision or is even that too much, too concrete? Is the only proclamation possible for the hermeneutic positivist one that undermines any possible proclamation? Veyne, quoting Foucault, says something peculiar about this point: “When working as a historian, one needs to exercise 'a systematic scepticism with regard to all anthropological universals' and only acknowledge the existence of an *invariant* as a last resort, after having tried everything possible to resolve the matter: 'One must not accept anything of that kind unless it is, strictly speaking, *indispensable*.'” (2008, 19) So, this method can yield something beyond undercutting all knowledge of anything. When the hermeneutic positivist sifts universals through the grids of concrete practices and unearths patterns, consistencies, similarities between past discourses and the present, the historian has discovered the indispensable, the invariant. This is not a theory, because it is constantly subject to revision at the hands of the historian. In some sense, it is a

hypothesis, something assumed by the historian to make sense of the present by means of the past discovered by the practice of running universals through the concrete practices of history. There is still confusion at this level. Is the irreducibility of thought a hypothesis or an assumption at the outset which is incapable of being falsified because the procedure of falsification is predicated on the assumption itself? This confusion is not easily clarified, if it is possible to clarify at all.

III. Foucault and Power

In reconstructing a definition of power from the work of Foucault, it is important to remark that there is a distinction between what can be called the models of power he employed (juridico-political, war model, governmentality, etc.) and the paradigms or mechanisms of power he reconstructed in his histories (sovereign, disciplinary, biopower, pastoral), even though the evolution of the models of power he employed was motivated by the reconstruction of those specific mechanisms. For instance, his abandonment of the war model of power in SMD and his transition into a model of power as governmentality is implicated with his burgeoning investigation into biopower through sexuality. Mechanisms of power should be taken as descriptions of the strategic field of power relations at a point in time in a place in space, although such mechanisms never exhaustively describe the whole of the social field. On the other hand, models should be taken as the ‘definition’ of power Foucault gave throughout his work. Furthermore, Foucault’s analysis of power took place on multiple levels. “In my analysis of power, there are three levels: the strategic relationships, the techniques of government, and the levels of domination.” (1984, 19) Each of these levels corresponds to a mechanism of

power which Foucault reconstructed through his genealogical histories. The last corresponds to sovereign power and the juridico-political model, the second corresponds to disciplinary power and the accompanying war model, and the first corresponds to biopower or pastoral power and the accompanying model of governmentality. Thus it follows that these models which Foucault utilizes share characteristics and that the mechanisms of power coexist. “There is not the legal age, the disciplinary age, and then the age of security. Mechanisms of security do not replace disciplinary mechanism, which would have replaced juridico-legal mechanisms. In reality you have a series of complex edifices in which, of course, the techniques themselves change and are perfected, or anyway become more complicated, or more exactly, the system of correlation between juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms, and mechanisms of security.” (2004, 8)

Let us start with the model of power which Foucault himself never applies, but against which almost all of his writings on power are set: the juridico-political model of power.⁶ This model portrays power as something which essentially represses in the final instant, “that which represses nature, instinct, a class, or individuals.” (2003, 15) As Foucault further explains:

This reduction of power to law [of repression] has three main roles: (i) It underwrites a schema of power which is homogeneous for every level and domain-family or State, relations of education or production. (ii) It enables power never to be thought of in other than negative terms: refusal, limitation, obstruction, censorship. Power is what says no. And the challenging of power as thus conceived can appear only as transgression. (iii) It allows the fundamental operation of power to be thought of as that of a speech-act: enunciation of law, discourse of prohibition. The manifestation of power takes on the pure form of 'Thou shalt not'. (1980, 139-40)

⁶ Foucault often used the terms sovereign to describe both the model and paradigm of power in his earlier works and adopted the term juridico-political starting in *Will to Knowledge*. In this paper I will use the juridico-political to refer to the *model* of power and sovereign to refer to the *paradigm* of power.

From this passage three more characteristics of this model of power follow. First, power is homogenous at every level. The expressions of power within the family will parallel those of the state, and those of the state the family. Power in the classroom will repress students in the same way that power in the prison represses inmates. Every level of power relations, although they might possibly have different motivations or consequences, will look the same as every other. Second, power becomes a speech-act or, in other words, becomes law. Laws of prohibition is the form that power takes, whether it is the literal law of a sovereign or the rule of a father not to be out later than 11:00 p.m. Lastly, power according to this model emanates from a central figure or a sovereign. As Foucault describes it, this model portrays “an essentially negative power, presupposing on the one hand a sovereign whose role is to forbid and on the other a subject who must somehow effectively say yes to this prohibition.” (1980, 140) So, this power within this model has four important characteristics: (1) it is repressive, (2) it takes the law as its formula, (3) it is homogenous throughout all levels of the social field, and (4) it emanates from a central figure or sovereign. Also, resistance in this model is nothing more than transgression of the law (or whatever form the speech-act of power takes), and transgression is always a very real possibility when confronted with the law.

How the mechanism of sovereign power was initially promoted to the level of a model of power is told in both DP and *History of Sexuality: Will to Knowledge* (WTK). In WTK Foucault recounts two different criticisms which followed the juridico-political model of power. First, the 18th century criticism of the monarchic institution in France was made on behalf of an ideal system of law which the monarch often overstepped or violated. Thus, the criticism remained within the framework of power as prohibition

through law and availed itself to the same principles of law and power that the monarchy was founded upon. Second, the 19th century criticism of law which asserted that law was merely a means of exerting violence for the benefit of the few. However, the critique was still committed to the view that power ideally be exercised in accordance with some fundamental lawfulness. Thus, Foucault famously claims, “In political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king.” (1990a, 88-9) Indeed, the reformist’s criticism of the practice of torture also functions according to the juridico-political model of power. The process of punishment for the reformers was to “assure the process of redefining the individual as *subject of law*, through the reinforcement of the systems of signs and representations that they circulate.” (2009a, 128) So, the criticism of the spectacle of torture was founded not on a rejection of the sovereign model, but on the excessiveness of the sovereign himself who exerted the power to punish, in so doing, preserving the view of power as fundamentally bound to both the law and a sovereign.

However, this juridico-political model of power as an act of repression in the final instance is fragile and wholly incapable of describing the social field of power. *Discipline and Punish* (DP) could be read as an illustration of this argument. The history of the prison that Foucault writes is a history of the genesis of the disciplinary mechanism of power, which the juridico-political model fails to explain. Taking the opening vignette of DP, which compared the torture of Damiens the regicide in 1775 and a time-table drawn up by Léon Faucher in 1837 which contained rules for inmates, the purpose is to expose not the more humanistic treatment of criminals, for as Foucault says “They do not punish the same crimes or the same type of delinquent.” (2009a, 7) Instead, the comparison is intended to show the divergences between two “certain penal style[s]”

which the examples above exemplify. Foucault's aim is to reconstruct the disciplinary mechanism of power, exemplified by the figure of the panopticon, but in the process of unearthing the birth of carceral society, he also undermines the juridico-political model of power, exposing it as entirely insufficient to model the social relations that take place at the capillaries of power's function.

Essentially, this mechanism of disciplinary power sought to create soldiers, students, prisoners, patients, and workers from docile bodies by subjecting them to certain disciplines. Docile bodies were created through four practices that took root within disciplinary apparatuses, or were characteristic of disciplinary strategies. First, disciplinary institutions controlled the distribution of bodies in space through enclosure, partitioning, and the creation of functional sites, or spaces dedicated to several specific uses. Foucault uses the serialization of space within Jesuit classrooms to illustrate the implementation of this principle. In the classroom, pupils are enclosed within the space of the class and the room itself is partitioned according to achievement, in other words, the pupils were distributed in space according their rank. "And in this ensemble of compulsory alignments, each pupil, according to his age, his performance, his behavior, occupies sometimes one rank, sometimes another; he moves constantly over a series of compartments" (2009a, 147). By means of this organization, "the disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional, and hierarchical." (2009a, 148) Second, they control the activity of the individual through the use of the timetable, the temporal elaboration of the act in such a way that no movement in the body is useless and the relationship between the body and the object it manipulates is exhaustively defined, and the arrangement of a positive economy of time concerned not with the elimination of

waste, but the extraction of more and more time through its subdivision. Here, Foucault references the regulation of the Prussian infantry in which time was endlessly broken down and elaborated within a set of rules concerning the infantries' actions, such as the movement of one's weapon to their foot, which consisted of six stages, and in each stage the movement of the body and its relation to the object was exhaustively explained. Through this process of subjection, the 'natural body' was created, "the body susceptible to specified operations, which have their order, their stages, their internal conditions, their constituent elements. In becoming the target for new mechanisms of power, the body is offered up to new forms of knowledge." (2009a, 155) Third, they organize geneses through the division of time into parallel segments ending at specific times and organized within an analytical plan the finalization of which is an examination with the triple aim of measuring whether the subject has completed their learning, guaranteeing all are subjected to the same process, and differentiating subjects according to their abilities. After this examination, another series will be drawn up for every group, those who prove deficient, those that prove to be advanced, etc. At the center of this serialization of time and the organization of geneses is the concept of exercise, a "technique by which one imposes on the body tasks that are both repetitive and different, but always graduated. By bending behavior towards a terminal exercise makes possible a perpetual characterization of the individual either in relation to this term, in relation to other individuals, or in relation to a type of itinerary." (2009a, 161) Finally, discipline constituted a productive force superior to the sum of the elementary forces of which the production was composed through unique compositions of force within which the individual body and the chronological series of times those bodies were subjected to were treated as fragments as

“part of a multi-segmentary machine.” (2009a, 164) This machine requires a system of command not predicated on the elementary parts (i.e. the subjects) *understanding* the injunctions of the commander, but of *perceiving and reacting* to the injunctions in the proper way. So, the tactics of discipline created four types of individuality:

...it is cellular (by the play of spatial distribution), it is organic (by the coding of activities), it is genetic (by the accumulation of time), it is combinatory (by the composition of forces). And, in doing so, it operates four techniques: it draws up tables; it prescribes movements; it imposes exercises; lastly, in order to obtain the combination of forces, it arranges ‘tactics’. Tactics, the art of constructing, with located bodies, coded activities and trained aptitudes, mechanism in which the product of the various forces is increased by their calculated combination are no doubt the highest form of disciplinary power. (2009a, 167)

These practices of discipline created bodies of docility, open to training and improvement within the very disciplinary institutions which constituted them in their individuality (i.e. cellular, organic, genetic, and combinatory).

After the subject of discipline is built into a docile body, disciplinary institutions worked towards improvement through three important practices which undoubtedly overlapped with the process of creating these bodies as docile. First, bodies were subject to hierarchical observation, “in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power, and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible.” (2009a, 170-1) It becomes important to conceive of an architecture that is constructed in such a way that all subjects within the structure would be made visible and their actions would be documented. Second, subjects of discipline are subjected to a normalizing judgement exemplified in the system of punishment employed by discipline which is built around micro-penalty of time concerned with non-observance of the rule, or that which departs from it, and takes as its aim the correction of individual who diverges from the rule. This “perpetual penalty that traverses all points

and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compared, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalizes.” (2009a, 183) Third, discipline employs the examination, which combines the techniques of hierarchical observation and normalization. This process of examination reversed the sovereign model of visibility by making the subject visible within the field of power and obscuring the authority and introduced individuality into documentation by making every subject within disciplinary relations into a case that could be measured against other cases and the norm. “Finally, the examination is at the centre of the procedures that constituted the individual as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge.” (2009a, 192) With the unearthing of this unique mechanism of power, the juridico-political model of power was exposed as an insufficient grid for the description of power relations in society.

The historical question of why the reformist’s model of punishment was not adopted and the disciplinary anatomy of punishment became the mechanism enforced in the prison is unimportant, but the fact that the mechanism of power shifted so radically away from the sovereign mechanism paired with the tendency of criticism of the institutions of law, directed both at institutions of punishment and the monarch himself, to adopt the sovereign mechanism as the model of power means that the analysis of the prison requires a rethinking of power. In other words, Foucault reverses the actions of the critics in that he demotes sovereign power to a mechanism of power, opening up the space and creating the need for a new model of power. Indeed, Foucault was already utilizing this new model of power in his writings: the war model of power. As early as *The Punitive Society*, Foucault remarked “Civil war is the matrix of all struggles of

power, of all strategies of power, and, consequently, it is also the matrix of all the struggles regarding and against power.” (2013, 13) His substantive remarks on this model are few and far between, but the moment he fully explicated the implications of this model, he was already in the process of abandoning it:

It is obvious that everything I have said to you in previous years is inscribed within the struggle-repression schema. That is indeed the schema I was trying to apply. Now, as I tried to apply it, I was eventually forced to reconsider it; both because, in many respects, it is still insufficiently elaborated...and also because I think that the twin notions of “repression” and “war” have to be considerably modified and ultimately, perhaps, abandoned. (2003, 17)

The assumption that social relations are essentially relations of conflict leads one to invert Clausewitz’s formula to read, “politics is the continuation of war by other means.”⁷ (2003, 15) Such an inversion leads to three things. First, power relations are “anchored in a certain relationship of forces that was established in and through war at a given historical moment that can be historically specified.” (2003, 15) In other words, power relations are the consequences of some historical moment of war or conflict. Second, within society, political struggles are the continuation of war with the aim of modifying the power relations that exist. Lastly, the final instance in these political struggles over power is always decided by physical war “in which weapons are the final judges.” (2003, 16) SMD can then be read as a test of the war model, its explicit formulation having been given only after Foucault’s use of the model in DP.

This model fails for two important reasons. First, the war model, with its overreliance on notions of tactics and strategic maneuvers, is incapable of explaining the phenomenon of bio-politics, a “seizure of power that is not individualizing but, if you

⁷ In *The Punitive* Foucault makes the similar claim that:

For an analysis of penalty it is important to see that power is not what suppresses civil war, but what conducts and continues it. *And, if it is true that external war is the continuation of politics, we must say, reciprocally, that politics is the continuation of civil war.* (2013, 32; my emphasis)

like, massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but at man-as-species.” (2003, 243)

The clearest example of this shift away from the war model to a model of power more capable of explaining the bio-political is Foucault’s shifting approach to the concept of population. Richard Lynch explains: “For Foucault in 1974, populations are essentially “a great number of individuals,” an epiphenomenon or byproduct, as it were, of disciplinary power’s effects upon discrete individuals, that emerges simultaneously with them.” (2016, 101)

The war model is restricted in its understanding of macro-phenomenon such as “a population” and, as he moved into an analysis of bio-politics, or apparatuses of security, the distinctions between bio-politics and disciplinary power, or what he comes to call anatomo-politics. The issue of population was at the heart of his lectures *Security, Territory, Population* (STP). Foucault isolated four major differences between apparatuses of security and apparatuses of discipline. First was the approach to space. Discipline “structures a space and addresses the essential problem of a hierarchical and functional distribution of elements” within in an empty, closed space (2004, 20) whereas security attempts to plan a milieu, or the “space in which a series of uncertain elements unfold” (2004, 20). The milieu is not the empty space of discipline, but a space already filled and in need of organization for the sake of maximizing the positive elements of the space. Second was the approach to the event. Discipline approaches the event centripetally, by circumscribing “a space in which its power and the mechanisms of its power will function fully and without limit”, regulating everything exhaustively according to a system of obligation and illegality, the permitted and forbidden (2004, 44). Security, on the other hand, operates centrifugally, by “allowing the development of ever-wider circuits”, letting natural processes happen and regulating their processes by

responding “to a reality in such a way that this response cancels out the reality to which it responds—nullifies it, or limits, checks, or regulates it.” (2004, 45-7) Third was the approach to the norm. In discipline, “one started from a norm, and I was in relation to the training carried out with reference to the norm that the normal could be distinguished from the abnormal.” (2004, 63) In other words, discipline is concerned with ‘normation,’ or the process of moving “from the norm to the final division between the normal and the abnormal” (2004, 57). Security, on the other hand, is concerned with normalization, or the “plotting of the normal and the abnormal, of different curves of normality...establishing an interplay between these different distributions of normality and [in] acting to bring the most unfavorable in live with the more favorable.” (2004, 63) In other words, “The normal comes first and the norm is deduced from it, or the norm is fixed and plays its operational role on the basis of this study of normalities.” (2004, 63)

Lastly, and again, is the relation to the concept of the population. As has already been stated, discipline approaches the population as an epiphenomenon of micro-practices, if it has any notion of the population at all. Security, on the other hand, approached the population as “a set of elements in which we can note constants and regularities, even in accidents, in which we can identify the universal of desire regularly producing the benefit of all, and with regard to which we can identify a number of modifiable variables on which it depends.” (2004, 74) The population is an entity that can be modified through pointed regulation, whose actions can be predicted and changed, whose growth and decay can be measured and accounted for. Unlike discipline, which focuses on the creation of an individual that conforms to a norm, security is concerned with measuring the variables that effect the trends throughout a population and not the

behavior of each individual within the population per se. DP “mistakenly hypothesized that all power relations are reducible to microrelations,” however, the operations of security clearly exceed those micro-relations and constitute their own logic at the macro-level (2016, 114). The war model focuses entirely too much on the micro-level of power, leaving the relations and rationalities of macro-relations unthinkable.

Second, the model is incapable of understanding self-enrollment in systems of power. Take, for instance, Foucault’s analysis of the phenomenon of hysteria in *Psychiatric Power*, which is not “in terms of the history of hysterics any more than in terms of psychiatric knowledge of hysterics, but rather in terms of battle, confrontation, reciprocal encirclement, of the laying of mirror traps, of investment and counter-investment, of struggles for control between doctors and hysterics.” (2008, 308) This analysis of hysteria – which Foucault describes as a “great *battle* between the neurologist and the hysteric” – outlines three maneuvers (2008, 323; my emphasis). First is the incitation of legible, consistent symptoms from the hysteric, which guarantees that the neurologist is viewed as a valid psychiatrist and rids them of the stigmata that they were previously working under. However, the hysteric obliged too readily and gave too many symptoms, leading to the second maneuver, the creation of tools by which the neurologist could control the over-abundance of symptoms afforded to him by the hysteric, namely hypnosis and suggestion. Both of these maneuvers ended with the neurologist being dependent on the hysteric, or as Foucault described it, “the hysteric has the upper hand over the doctor...since by obeying the instructions he gives her under hypnosis, she gets to be the authority of verification, as it were, the authority adjudicating between illness and lie.” (2008, 316) So, the third maneuver is the creation of a pathological framework

“which simultaneously envelops hypnosis, the hysterical symptoms produced under hypnosis, and the event which brings about the functional disorders of patients who are not hypnotized.” (2008, 316) Hence, Charcot devised the notions of trauma and neurosis. The importance of this recreation by Foucault is precisely that each episode is described as a battle within which the neurologist and the hysteric struggle for power over one another, and the neurologist wins the battle by creating a framework by which the actions taken by the hysteric in the midst of this battle for control over the neurologist can be read as signs of a greater pathological disorder within the woman.

However, this scheme of battle is unfit to describe something like self-help groups or subscribing to a service for weight management or even submitting themselves to a teacher in a classroom. Take as an example Foucault’s conclusion to *The Use of Pleasures* (UP):

Thus, in the field of practices that they singled out for special attention (regimen, household management, the “courting” of young men) and in the context of the discourses that tended to elaborate these practices, the Greeks questioned *themselves* about sexual behavior as an ethical problem, and they sought to define the form of moderation that it required...Around them, the Greeks developed *arts of living*, of *conducting themselves*, and of “using pleasures” according of austere and demanding principles. (1990b, 249; my emphasis)

Clearly, the model of war is insufficient as an explanatory grid for understanding the Greek approach to dietetics, pleasure, and house management. In the first place, there is no “neurologist” that the Greeks are struggling against when they are in the process of developing the principle of their self-conduct. Instead, it is a matter of the subject dealing with their own behavior, although this is not to say that the particular subject is absolutely excluded from other relations of power. There are other relations of power which inform the decisions of the subject but the decision is taken by one subject concerning their own

behavior. Second, it is a matter of self-enrollment in the face of multiple power relations with the aim of improving the self, not with the aim of arriving at a strategically advantageous position above another person. As Herman Nilson describes it, “In antiquity, the subject *constituted himself* within the given unity of reason (logos) and body, beyond institutional power and state legal systems.” (1998, 6; my emphasis) In other words, the hysteric is motivated by positioning herself above the neurologist in terms of their relationship whereas the Greek is concerned with the way their behavior expresses their ethical position. So, the relationship between the subjects and their motivations within those relations are different to the point that the war model, while being able to effectively reconstruct the episode of hysteria, is conceptually impoverished when it comes to the question of the Greek arts of living.

The model of power which displaces from war model is that of power as governmentality. “In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on the others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future.” (1980, 220) Within this model, power relations do not always take place between two adversaries who are struggling for control over one another nor do they always take the form of law or prohibition. It is of course possible that power can take those forms since it is undeniable that those forms (namely the juridico-political form and the war form) are cases in which the someone’s actions are being targeted to bring about a desired response. Furthermore, these relationships are always articulated on the basis that the other or the “acting subject” be recognized as such and that they have a

field of possible responses to that instance of power, responses which will be influenced by the relationship of power which the acting subject finds itself in. As Foucault puts it:

It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it insights, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions. (1980, 220)

This model of power has six characteristics, although not all are exclusive to the model of governmentality. First, power is exercised from innumerable points which are co-extensive with the social body. There is no ‘escape’ from power into some primal liberty or some space completely free from the exercise of it. Second, relations of power are immanent and interwoven with other relations in the social field, playing both a conditioning and conditioned role to those relations. Relations of power are also not superstructural in the sense that they prohibit or accompany those other relations but are productive, actively influencing them within the social field. Third, power comes from below and even if there is a general strategy delineated by a general condition of domination, it is made up of “dispersed, heteromorphous, localized procedures of power adapted, reinforced and transformed by these global strategies” (1980, 142). In other words, “there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix” (1990a, 94). To understand the general strategy of power, one has to study the multiple local tactics and practices which make up the strategy.

Fourth, power is both intentional and non-subjective. If relations of power are intelligible, it is not because those relations are in the service of some final instance like the economic or the familial or the sovereign. They can indeed serve the economic, but

are not in service of the economic. Thus, power can have an intention behind it, but it is not willed by one subject to whom we can trace the relation of power back. “[T]he logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few who can be said to have formulated them” (1990a, 95). Fifth, relations of power do not only take the form of repression or prohibition. Lastly, relations of power entail the possibility of resistance, although that possibility does not, and cannot stand outside of the relationship to power – indeed since, according to the first point above, there is nothing that stands outside relations of power. The possibility of resistance relies on “a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network.” (1990a, 95) However, resistance also does not derive from a set of heterogeneous principles. They are simply “the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite.” (1990a, 96)

IV. Foucault and Knowledge

Taking Foucault’s statements on the relation between power and knowledge, one can reconstruct a number of basic insights he has about knowledge. In his early texts Foucault takes the question of knowledge independent of its relation to power, but for the reasons previously mentioned, the reconstruction of those texts would do little to advance a greater understanding of the triad or the progress his work marks out as his writings matured. So, instead of taking the subject of knowledge on its own, this work will reconstruct the relations that Foucault lays out between power and knowledge. This methodological decision falls out of a certain understanding of Foucault’s work that has

already been explained. The question of the *subject* is what defines the history of the present, and the means of studying this question of subjectivity available to Foucault was the question of power. So, knowledge is approached by means of its relationship to power for the sake of understanding the modes of subjectivization that define the present. This complex relation further troubles our previously simple triad. In the beginning of this thesis, all three terms were on equal footing, each engaged in a relationship with the other, none having predominance over the other. After Section II we revised this relationship to privilege the position of the third term above the other two, to indicate the object of the work of Foucault, in his own words, was always about subjectivity, the modes by which individuals are made subjects, in the our present. Now, we must again revise the triad to indicate an order to the terms. Rather than knowledge-power-subjectivity, it would be more fitting to say power-knowledge-subjectivity, indicating the methodological predominance of power within the triad.

To begin, Foucault sets his reflections on the relationship between power and knowledge against the concept of dominant ideology. This concept posits a fundamental truth, an untarnished truth, Truth itself, that is distorted by the operations of power. An illustration of this notion of ideology is the concept of false consciousness, in which the dominant class exerts power over the proletariat to instill in them a consciousness which is contrary to their own interests, which reinforces the power of the upper-class, making it appropriate to say that the power exercised by the upper-class alienates the lower-class or proletariat from the Truth, a truth which serves their interest and exposes the fact of power relations. In other words, access to Truth takes place outside of the purview of power, freed from the influences of power on the knowing subject. Knowledge is Truth

only when it is purged of power. There are three consistent criticisms Foucault makes throughout his work of this notion of ideology. First, it is always opposed to Truth, or to something like a truth completely independent if not always opposed to the exercise of ideology. In lieu of this practice of differentiating between ‘true’ or scientific discourses and ‘false’ or non-scientific discourses, he is interested in how neutral discourses that exist independent of their relation to truth are subjected to mechanisms that produce a truth or falsity in them or about them. In other words, the process of truth is the sum of a number of mechanisms working together and not something that appears in the absence of any mechanism. Secondly, ideology always requires the use of a subject that pre-exists power as ideology and has the possibility of once again existing outside of ideology. Third, ideology always stands in secondary position to something that produces it, something that is in super-structural relation to it. For these reasons, both power and knowledge are left under-theorized.

Against this notion of dominant ideology, Foucault developed the concept power-knowledge. This concept does not collapse the two notions into a single one. It is not as though power is knowledge or knowledge is the exercise of power, but that there is not ever an exercise of power that does not entail the invocation of knowledge. This concept is still implicated, if not coextensive, with a question that motivated much of the writing *Archaeology of Knowledge*, namely the question of the threshold of scientificity, or the point at which a discourse that produces knowledge can claim to produce truth.⁸ So, his reflections on the position of knowledge in society are concerned with truth as opposed to falsity, “centred on the form of *scientific discourse* and the institutions which produce it”

⁸ “On the other hand, it seems to me, and I tried unsuccessfully to point this out in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, that precisely from within a type of discursive practice one can identify perfectly well the moment at which one reaches some-thing that one could call a threshold of scientificity.”

(1980, 131, my emphasis). Truth is not something that exists outside of power, nor is it lacking in power. “Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power.” (1980, 131) To clarify this ‘hypothesis’ about knowledge, Foucault puts forward a number of propositions, which are not meant to be taken as assertions, but to be tested and amended, to be evaluated and changed. Truth is: (a) “a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements”, (b) “linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it”, (c) “is not merely ideological or superstructural; it was a condition of the formation and development of capitalism”, and (d) the political question of modernity itself (1990, 133). Truth is denatured. As opposed to the ideological approach to knowledge as something natural, something that is revealed in the world only when power is absent from it, Foucault postulates that truth is in the world as a product of the operations of power of the world. There is no Truth, only truths which shift and change, subject to accidents and abrupt reversals, conditioned by and conditioning power operations. At the very least, as opposed to ideology which sketches the circular definitions of knowledge as the absence of power and power as the distortion of Truth, power-knowledge relies on Foucault’s writings of power, from which a relatively clear definition of power emerges. However, knowledge remains ambiguous, under-defined, or at least defined only by its relationship to power. Knowledge can be defined best as the truths that are produced, sometimes continuously and sometimes discontinuously, by the relations of power which make up the social field.

The displacement of the concept of power-knowledge with that of government by the truth is under-developed in his late work, in spite of the fact that it is the most explicit displacement that has been discussed. It “essentially involves giving a positive and differentiated content to these two terms of knowledge and power.” (2014, 12) This redefinition of power had taken place at the moment of this course (*On the Government of the Living*) in the previous three lecture course (*Society Must Be Defended, Security, Territory, and Population, and Birth of Biopolitics*). This displacement from the war model of power to the governmentality model of power has already been summarized above. So, this lecture course is concerned with the displacement of knowledge. However, as has already been noted, there is very little positive content to knowledge in the previous concept of power-knowledge. It is produced by and produces relations of power, here taken to mean the war model. It is not Truth, but a regime of truths, a multiplicity of truths related very closely to the question of scientificity. Displacing this is the notion of alethurgy, “the manifestation of truth as the set of possible verbal or non-verbal procedures by which one brings to light what is laid down as true as opposed to false, hidden, inexpressible, unforeseeable, or forgotten...there is no exercise of power without something like an alethurgy.” (2014, 7) In other words, alethurgy is the question of the manifestation of truth, the rituals that correspond to it, the process such manifestations require, the truths which can be revealed. Despite the intent to give positive content to knowledge, however, the lecture course only succeeds in outlining a different relation between knowledge and governmentality, “between the exercise of power and the manifestation of truth.” (2014, 13) There is, then, a lingering connection between alethurgy and government, one which comes to define the former by the latter.

Foucault concludes the first lecture of the course with the following: “The manifestation of truth is *required* by, or *entailed* by, or *linked* to the exercise of government and the exercise of power in a way that always goes beyond the aim of government and the effective means of achieving it.” (2014, 17; my emphasis) What, then, is the nature of the displacement? It is a question of the *type* of knowledge with which the concept is concerned. This displacement is accompanied by a shift to knowledge *about the subject* as opposed to knowledge as scientificity, the latter which power-knowledge was primarily concerned. This displacement is emblematic of the shift of focus both in the positive content of power towards conduct of conduct, permitting power to be conceived of reflexively, and the shift of the focus of Foucault’s work to that of the subject.

Thus, the will to know, which Foucault often referred to in his earlier work as the will to truth, became the will to know oneself. In other words, Foucault’s concern for knowledge was displaced by a knowledge of the self. This knowledge of the self does not exclude the type of scientific knowledge that defined power-knowledge. Referring to alethurgy, Foucault said “Science, objective knowledge, is only one of the possible cases of all these forms by which truth may be manifested.” (2014, 7) So, much like the displacements that occurred to the definition of power in the form of *expanding* the scope of the definition as opposed to *replacing* or *shifting* the scope, this displacement is one of adding to the positive content of knowledge, of expanding the scope of the definition to include more without necessarily cutting out anything that had previously been included. It is the shift in the object of his investigations that fuels the displacement which occurs at the level of knowledge. The question becomes one of self-reflexive knowledge, of a definition not just of power, but of knowledge and the relation between the two that is

attentive to the manifestation of the truth of oneself, of the truth that defines one's subjectivity.

V. Foucault and Subjectivity

Having given a brief outline of the first two terms and their relationship, the problem of subjectivity looms large. As has been previously stated, Foucault saw the question of subjectivity or modern modes of subjection as the guiding one of his work. However, there is little to no positive content given to the definition of subjectivity, nor is there much content given to the relationship between either subjectivity and knowledge or subjectivity and power. Instead, it seems as though the notion of subjectivity is always approached through a double abstraction. In the first place, the starting point is always power, and, in the second place, power is always traced through its relation to knowledge before the question of subjectivity is ever broached. What little is said about the subject suspended in relations of power that could be said to be essential to his view is in his discussions on power as opposed to domination. In "The Subject and Power" (SP), Foucault characterizes power relations as being articulated on two fundamental elements:

a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: (1) that "the other" (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly *recognized* and *maintained* to the very end as *a person who acts*; and (2) that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of *responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions* may open up. (1984, 220; my numbering and emphasis)

It is, then, these two elements, namely the subject of power be someone who is recognized and maintained as being capable of acting and that the subject have possible routes of resistance, possible reactions to the relationship that can subvert it, reverse it, reject the organization it establishes. Put simply, the subject of a power relation is

recognized as and really is free. Implicit within the conceptualization of power as government is the element of freedom. “When one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others, when one characterizes these actions by the government of men by other men...one includes an important element: freedom.” (1984, 221) Freedom is an irreducible element in Foucault’s analysis by virtue of its agonistic relation to power, “a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation.” (1984, 222) Foucault’s subject is free insofar as they are a subject suspended in power relations. However, power relations permeate the social field, occur and exist everywhere, between all subjects. So, all subjects are free insofar as they are a subject and this freedom is irreducible.

What, then, is this freedom? Firstly, a negative definition is in order. Freedom is not liberation, meaning the simple loosening of the subject from all repressive relationships. Taking the example of colonial peoples liberating themselves from colonizers, Foucault commented, “in this extremely precise example, this act of liberation is not sufficient to establish the *practices of liberty* that later on will be necessary for this people, this society and these individuals to decide upon receivable and acceptable forms of their existence or political society.” (1988a, 3; my emphasis) When next asked whether this means that the practices of liberty that constitute freedom require an act of liberation, Foucault responds by introducing another idea, that of domination or states of domination. “When an individual or a social group manages to block a field of relation so power, to render them impassive and invariable and to prevent all reversibility of movement...we are facing what can be called a *state of domination*...in such a state the

practice of liberty does not exist or exists only unilaterally or is extremely confined and limited.” (1988a, 3; my emphasis) In SP, Foucault will characterize this slightly differently as relations of violence as opposed to domination, but their content is the same. “A relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks on the wheel, it destroys, or it *closes the door on all possibilities.*” (1984, 220; my emphasis) These relations of domination produce passive, non-free subjects, although this production is at heart a contradiction. A subject might be passive, but a subject cannot be unfree, since subjects are constituted in the midst of power relations and power relations entail freedom. These are the first two levels of Foucault’s analysis of power: relations of domination and strategic relations of liberties. The final level of analysis is the techniques of government that constitute the subject. This is the first condition of a power relationship as Foucault defines it. In other words, the condition of the *recognition* of an actor as a subject who acts and the *maintenance* of that actor is the subjection of that actor to techniques of governmentality. This means that there is always a double relation at the heart of power: the relation of a subject to another, here not meaning another subject since power is non-subjective, meaning that the process of recognizing and maintaining the person as an acting subject requires that the subject be in relation to themselves in such a way that they perceive themselves as capable of action and any actor in relation with the (self)-subjectified subject recognize and maintain that subject as free. In other words, the non-subjective nature of power entails that the maintenance of a subjected individual come not from the source of conduction, or not only from this source, but first from the subject themselves, precisely because there might not be another actor that can express recognition and maintain the subject as free. What does

this freedom, then, look like? There are two classes of thought, plebeian and vitalist, that offer simple, but flawed solutions to this question.

i. Plebeian Readings of Freedom:

Ransom rehearses two possible readings of freedom within the work of Foucault in *Foucault's Discipline: The Politics of Subjectivity* (1997). We can call them the 'plebeian readings'. Both rely on two assumptions about power. First "Individuals are made but never determined "all the way down" such that only a massive shock of the kind provided by revolutions will offer the opportunity for change. As Foucault puts it, "something like the subject" exists but in "forms which are far from being completed." (1997, 120) In other words, the subject is a form, not a substance, and it is not exhaustively determined by means of power relations although power relations play a large role in the constitution of the form of the subject. Second, these power relations are always reversible. However, this second assumption seems to be the assumption of freedom itself within power relations. So, there are two possible implicit axioms about the subject and power that can yield freedom when paired with this first assumption. The first is that the subject always exists as a plurality of subjectivities:

If in one arena I am (at least putatively) regarded as an important and equal participant in a cooperative enterprise (as a citizen or in a religious organization), a contrary constitution in another sphere (as employee in a corporation, as a married woman) will perhaps lead to a critical comparison. Thus, Foucault gives us two (related) reasons that allow us to imagine the possibility of effective, meaningful resistance to dominant social patterns even while affirming that subjective states are constituted: first, it is impossible to shape the full range of possible human capacities according to a single use or even set of uses, and second, the subject is actually a plurality of subjective forms, each adapted to specific spheres, while interacting with one another as well. (1997, 222-23)

Thus, the possibility of resistance within this picture is that the subjectivities produced by a particular power relation are always incomplete, because the full scope of human actions is impossible to mold for one purpose or one use, and is in competition with other subjectivities constituted by means of other power relationships. Take as an example an individual who attends a college class and is told by their professor that they ought to question authority, particularly when the things which a figure of authority asks of them are considered morally questionable. Now, imagine that the former student enlists in the army, and is taught to follow the orders given to them by their commanding officer at all times. Now, this student-soldier is commanded during one evening to assist in the torture of a recently captured enemy soldier. The possibility of turning in their refusing or possibly taking more drastic action, like reporting the commanding officer or freeing the prisoner, is that they were taught to question and that capacity was developed within the classroom.

This reading suffers from serious deficiencies. In the first place, this definition of power seems to rest on something entirely *outside* of any particular power relation. In other words, as opposed to the agonistic relationship between a particular relation of power and freedom which Foucault describes, this definition of freedom places the capacity to conduct oneself in accordance with or against a particular power relation outside of the relation itself within other relations. This is not how Foucault describes the relation between freedom and power and, unless one is willing to commit themselves to the view that dispositifs of power are always in competition with other dispositifs, or, in other words, the view that the subject is in fact plural, such a view seems entirely contingent. To put this more clearly, take again the example of the student-soldier, but

imagine that instead of first having gone to university, the subject enlists in the army first and, this particular army teaches their soldiers that the actions of the state are unquestionable, and that the state itself is unimpeachable. Now the student goes to university and is taught to question authority, but, because they have made the decision to enlist first and enroll second, they never think to question the state. Now, the relations this subject has with the state are suddenly not so reversible. This is what is meant by the claim that freedom becomes contingent. Second, this relies on the assumption that subjectivity must always be plural. In other words, what can be called a ‘perfectly governmentalized’ society, or one in which “the behaviour of others is so well determined in advance, that there is nothing left to do.” (Foucault 1998, 20) This assumption, whether it is true or false, is unnecessary for Foucault’s understanding of power. Foucault himself said that such a society can be imagined, but he wasn’t troubled by the possibility of such perfectly governmentalized societies (1988a, 20). Third, even if the two assumptions of this argument were granted, it would mean freedom is a practice of become *more like* a soldier or a student. In other words, freedom is removing oneself from one relationship of power by means of burrowing oneself deeper into another, particular relationship of power.

So, the first means of proving the argument is insufficient. The second possible approach is what can be called *plebian functionalism* is that power relations must allow for the freedom of the individual in order to arrive at the desired end of those relations. In other words, “Power relations that are productive and efficient cannot be based on permanent physical coercion. The individuals involved must truly decide to enter into the game described by a particular power relation.” (Ransom 1997, 126) So, because of the

complexity of action and the multiplicity of power relations, relations must always allow for the possibility of resistance, they must work into their calculus the aim that the subject wills themselves to conduct themselves in alignment with those particular power relations. "Systems of power that rely on coercion for their operation make poor use of the human material at their disposal." (1997, 127) However, this axiom begs the question. In the first place, the first and second flaws with the first axiom, namely that it places freedom outside of power relations and that it relies on an assumption Foucault viewed as unnecessary, can both be applied to this argument. Second, there is never sufficient proof of this point, and any arguments to the opposite effect, namely that power relations can exist in such a way that the subject of them is perfectly conducted, can merely be refuted by the claim that such relations are nothing more than domination. However, that is a game of semantics that is abstracted from the question of concrete freedom. Third, such universal proclamations of power seem outside of the scope of Foucault's work. Indeed, he never makes such a statement about power in his life nor does his work imply such a belief necessary. As has been previously quoted, the issue of a perfectly governmentalized set of power relations seems to be what is at issue in the question of a specific relation of power's effectiveness at bringing about the desired end. Fourth, the argument rests on the hidden assumption that relations of domination contain within them elements of liberty or freedom. Indeed, the only reason to include an element of freedom within relations of power is if relations of domination are ineffective, the very point made by the axiom, but the only thing which might cause inefficiency at the levels of coercion or domination is the belief that such relations can be resisted. So, freedom is a hidden assumption within this axiom which is neither explicated nor proven.

Both plebeian readings fail to capture what Foucault intended by freedom. Both locate freedom outside of the particularity of the power relation in some other fact either about subjectivity (i.e. its multiplicity) or about power relations as a whole (i.e. their superior efficiency with regards to domination). In this sense, both readings are quite explicitly anti-textual, in that what little Foucault does say about power revolves around its intractability from *specific* relations of power. In other words, both plebeian readings locate freedom in what could be called a ‘deficiency’ in power relations as a whole, namely that they either are incapable of exhaustively defining the subject and are always in competition with other relations or that they cannot function without the allowance of freedom, a conscious allowance. In either case, this is clearly not what was intended by Foucault when he spoke about the issue of freedom and power. Ransom’s solution to these readings is an appeal to imagination and thought, or, in other words, to what has already been referred to as the irreducibility of thought, but this solution will be evaluated later.

ii. Vitalist Reading of Freedom:

Another class of interpretations concerning freedom in the work of Foucault is those that interpret freedom as stemming from some vital substance of the subject. Brian Lightbody, in his works on the Foucault’s genealogical method (2010, 2011), reconstructs Foucault’s views on the body such that the body is first and foremost a bundle of forces that are organized within certain relations of power and, on account of these relations, take certain forms. As Lightbody explains, “Foucault, on the other hand, takes what we may call a constellationist position regarding how individual bundles [of

forces] become bundles...the bundles are formed only in virtue of an interpretive stance taken on the quanta of power from some external perspective.” (2011, 33) The body is a collection of forces that is given shape and meaning by the constellation of power that surrounds it. To illustrate, Lightbody gives the example of the Big Dipper:

For example, the constellation known as the Big Dipper is not something which would exist, in and of itself, that is, as a unified bundle of stars if human beings (or some other intelligent creature) did not also exist. It is only because human beings trace the dots of the stars within this “constellation” that it becomes a constellation or a bundle in the first place. (2011, 33)

So, vitalists interpret Foucault’s remarks in DP and WTK about the body as indicative of the conviction that there is something fundamental about the forces that constitute the body and use that fundamental assumption to ground Foucault’s claims about freedom. Indeed, if the subject is pre-figuratively a collection of forces (biological or psychic) that are then organized into the subject-form of the particular epoch, then there is the possibility that those forces might trouble the organization or the forces which might have been repressed for the sake of the subject-form as it exists could rise up and undermine the hold power has over the subject. This conviction about some vital substance is not, on its own, sufficient to ground a definition of freedom or at least a sufficiently robust definition of freedom, although it is a start. There are two sub-classes within this class of definitions that each build on this conviction about vitalistic forces in different ways to justify the possibility of freedom in the Foucauldian subject.

The first of these vitalist reading can be called *agonistic vitalism*. In short, it is the view that the body is constituted by forces that are in competition with one another such that, if the subject form is the selection of specific forces, other forces will be neglected but will continue to undermine the particular subject-form that has been constituted by

power due to the inherent agonism at the heart of the play between the forces. Referring back to Lightbody's example of the subject-form as a bundle of forces, the agonistic vitalist would claim that some forces are competitively positioned, such that those forces are unable to be bundled together in a constellation. Suppose two agonistic forces, A and B, which are contrary to one another such that they cannot be bundled together. If force A is 'bundled' into a subject-form, that subject-form will always be unstable since B will always be pushing at it, undermining it for the sake of expressing itself at the expense of A. This can be seen as a more foundational argument for the multiplicity of subjectivities that constituted the first plebeian reading of Foucault's definition of freedom.

There are many reasons to reject such a reading. First, such a reading rests on a fundamental anthropological truth about man, one that has far reaching implications and seems like a type of first philosophy. Indeed, these vitalist readings often reinterpret all of Foucault's work within the scope of agonistic forces, aiming to recast his insights as driven by the basic fact that the subject is a collection of competing forces. So, we ought to be skeptical of such a reading for its universalist overtones. Second, nothing in the work of Foucault would seem to imply that he was any form of vitalist, although he never explicitly rejected the label. The texts most often used to support the label of vitalist, namely "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History" and SMD, are those which help to develop the war model of power, which should most certainly be seen now as having been abandoned by Foucault in SMD. Indeed, it seems difficult to understand how this vitalist reading of the material which would come to constitute the subject could possibly be reconciled with the governmentality model of power. Third, even if such a subject were to exist in such a way, there is always the hidden assumption that the prefigured subject

that is subjected to the subject-form would be capable of expressing those forces that were repressed for the sake of the creation of the specific subject-form. This is not a given nor is it entirely apparent what such a claim would practically mean. Fourth, in the work of Foucault there is no possibility for a pre-figurative subject or a subject that precedes power. This is something which Foucault was quite explicit about. So, to postulate freedom as a consequence of a subject which precedes power and contains within it certain forces that cannot be repressed by power and which naturally express themselves in the face of the repression of power, seems erroneous at best. Power is always already everywhere. It saturates the social field and, as such, to appeal to a form of the subject which precedes power and, even more radically, restricts the possible functioning of power relations seems antithetical to much of the work Foucault did.

There is a second appeal to a form of vitalism that is, perhaps, the most common view of freedom in the work of Foucault in the secondary literature. This is what can be called here *elemental vitalism*. In short, this is the view that there is something elemental about the subject, something to which the subject returns when exercising their freedom. The most common appeal to some elemental aspect of the subject in the work of Foucault is the body as the site of pleasures around which the modern system of sexuality has been constructed. They draw from Foucault's account of *ars erotica*, the erotic art. "In the erotic art, truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience..." (1990a, 57) From these sparse remarks on pleasure and the erotic art, they posit that power is a matter of rethinking pleasure, of reconstructing the machinery of pleasure such that pleasure might once again be taken on its own terms. In other words, rather than taking *ars erotica* to be an illustration of the possibility of a different

economy of pleasure, they take it as a normative recommendation. Furthermore, some argue that the body is the elemental substance that grounds freedom precisely because the body is always the site of the operation of power. Power works directly on the body, inscribes it with its directions, and dictates its possibilities. However, by virtue of the fact that the body is always already something with capacities, power can never totally determine its actions. In other words, because power always works on the body, freedom is the process of the body reacting to the forces of power working on the subject.

However, this reading is insufficient and anti-textual. In the first place, this reading of *ars erotica* is taken out of its context. In WTK, the erotic art is used to show a different economy of pleasures, not necessarily the better economy of pleasures, nor is it meant to show that a society requires an economy of pleasure surrounding sex. If anything, *Use of Pleasure* and *Care of the Self* both show that a society is possible without a sexual arrangement of pleasures. Second, Foucault seems quite clear throughout his life that he advocated no great return to the body, no refuge from power in the freedom that rested in any elemental notion tied to the body. "...this resistance I am speaking of is not a substance. It is not anterior to the power which it opposes...I am simply saying: as soon as there is a power relation, there is the possibility of resistance. We are never trapped by power: we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy." (1996, 224) In other words, Foucault postulated no original body or foundational pleasure upon which a façade of freedom could be constructed and from which sprang the possibility of resisting power relationships. This would undermine his consistent claim that freedom is always found in the midst of power relations, in the middle of conduction, and not after or before such relations come upon

the subject. In other words, it is not anything outside of the power relations as the power relation is described that can ground the possibility of freedom.

Third, even if an elemental substance exists at the bottom of power as its target, this does not imply that resistance springs from that body, since the subject-form always mediates our approach to the body. Butler's (1989, 2002) criticism of Foucault's supposedly incoherent approach to the body can be understood to be a false dilemma when the issue of freedom is removed from this vitalist supposition that freedom must be located within a fundamental substance of the subject independent of the subject-form. Butler argues that Foucault's writings on the body position it as both socially constructed and the object of the inscriptions of power, positioning it as both the product of power in its creation of the subject-form and an object which precedes and limits the possibilities of power. However, if the methodological presupposition that any experience is an experience of thinking, then it becomes apparent that, even if the subject-form is grounded by a subject-body, access to the subject-body is always mediated by the subject-form that is present within our society, or accessible by thought on other societies. In other words, we cannot exhaustively define the subject-body or subject-substance since that body or substance is experienced through thought, and thought is always permeated by the relations of power and the discourses which constitute those relations in our society.⁹ So, this *elemental vitalism* also fails to fully capture Foucault's picture of power.

⁹ This fact also sheds more light on Foucault's comments that the Greek's solutions to their political and social problems are not only inapplicable but impossible to apply to our current age. It is precisely because our thought of the Grecian subject-form is always mediated by the discourses which define the modern day that it is impossible to apply the Ancient Greek solutions to the modern day. In other words, we interpret the Greek forms through our lens of discourse.

iii. Hybrid Readings:

Most definitions of freedom in the secondary literature are some combination of the four approaches outlined above, often combined with some unique assumption that significantly alters the justification of any of the four elementary approaches. Deleuze offers one of the more comprehensive readings in his book *Foucault* (2009), which is, ultimately, a combination of *plebian pluralism* and *basic vitalism*, along with an added assumption about the inability to return to the elemental aspects of the subject. The vitalism appealed to is referred to as the basic vitalism precisely because it does not appear on face to be either agonistic or elemental. The elemental savage forces which Deleuze spoke of are doubly conditioned by the fact that (1) the subject never actually succeeds in returning to that place of savage forces by breaking free from the diagram, significantly diverging from *agonistic vitalism*, which presupposes that the forces which ground freedom are accessible to the subject, and (2) the *particular* savage forces are not something specific about the subject, but something contingent upon the diagram that has been formed by power since they are always the outside of the diagram, which breaks from the *elemental vitalist* conviction that it is a specific substance to which the subject returns that grounds freedom. As Deleuze explained, “Foucault’s general principle is that every form is a compound of relations between forces.” (2009, 124) There are forces from the outside and forces from the inside. Forces within man concern “the force to imagine, remember, conceive, wish, and so on” but they do not presuppose man, “only places, points of industry, a region of the existent. In the same way forces within an animal (mobility, irritability, and so on) do not presuppose any determined form.” The form of the subject is a play of the outside on these forces to fold them over, to create an

interiority which can reflect back on itself, employ these interior forces on both the inside and the outside. As Deleuze described, “The inside as an operation of the outside: in all his work Foucault seemed haunted by this theme of an inside which is merely the fold of the outside, as if the ship were a folding of the sea.” (2009, 97) This is the problem of the double. This double is not the projection of the interior but the “interiorization of the outside. It is not a doubling of the One, but a redoubling of the Other. It is not a reproduction of the Same, but a repetition of the Different.” (2009, 98) So the form of the subject is not the ‘interior forces’ to imagine, remember, conceive, wish, etc. but the folding over of these forces from the outside. What Deleuze calls the diagram of power, what Foucault would call the *dispositif*, bends forces from the outside over creating the form of the subject, opening up the space in which the subject can turn those very forces onto itself. This is subjectivity, a fold in force, life within the folds. The outside is constituted by these vital forces from which emanates the diagram of power which creates the fold and they operate as the condition for the possibility of freedom in Deleuze’s reconstruction:

Thus, there is nothing to be said about the outside other than that ‘there is’ one, but this concept is nonetheless crucial for Foucault’s ontology, functioning as a quasi-transcendental condition of possibility of practices of freedom. Given that every diagram comes into existence and expands its reach by enfolding the spaces exterior to it, the outside must ontologically precede any diagram, even as it can only be conceived as ‘outside’ against the background of an already established diagram. The significance of the outside for the affirmation of freedom lies precisely in its function of demonstrating that *the diagram is not all there is*, that it can never attain the self-immanence that it attests to. (Prozorov 2007, 39)

So, these savage forces which constitute the material from which diagrams of power spring up and on which the same diagrams of power work to produce the fold of subjectivity are also the source of resistance. As Deleuze described it:

The Diagram, as the fixed form of a set of relations between forces, never exhausts force, which can enter into other relations and compositions. The diagram stems from the outside but the outside does not merge with any diagram, and continues instead to 'draw' new ones. In this way, the outside is always an opening on to a future: nothing ends, since nothing has begun, but everything is transformed. In this sense force displays potentiality with respect to the diagram containing it, or possesses a third power which presents itself as the possibility of 'resistance'. (2009, 89)

Thus, resistance is always an escape to the outside, a move to the edges of the diagram, where it meets the savage forces from which it came, but never the complete abandonment of the diagram, since it is the source of the subject-form through which resistance is made possible. Resistance, and freedom, then is always on the edge of the outside, the edge of the fold, playing on the points at which the two meet to expand it, rethink its contours, think through new modes of subjectivity, new shapes of the fold, without ever completely abandoning the fold as it is: a line of flight from the diagram. As Deleuze concluded the book, "the superman is much less than the disappearance of living me, and much more than a change of concept: it is *the advent of a new form* that is neither God nor man and which, it is hoped, will not prove worse than its two previous forms." (2009, 132; my emphasis)

All of the criticisms which applied to both the *plebian pluralism* and the general vitalist reading apply here to Deleuze's definition, but, there are some deficiencies in this reading independent of those criticisms. Let's take the criticisms that should be directed at Deleuze's specific reading first and then the class of vitalist readings which Deleuze's falls within. First, Deleuze's reading of power as embodied within a diagram is too simplistic a reading of Foucault. In "Postscript on the Societies of Control", Deleuze characterizes Foucault's descriptions of modernity as "disciplinary societies" as distinct from sovereign societies and what he will come to describe as control societies.

According to this short analysis, disciplinary societies have succeeded sovereign societies, replacing the institutions and fields of force that characterized the latter with “environments of enclosure...to concentrate, to distribute in space; to order in time; to compose a productive force within the dimension of space-time whose effect will be greater than the sum of its component forces.” (1992, 3) However, Mark Kelly is correct to point out that, “Deleuze takes these notions as essences of societies, whereas for Foucault there is no limit in principle to how many technologies might coexist in a social formation.” (2018, 79) So, it is not as though the only components in Foucault’s analysis is a singular diagram and the outside constituted by those vital, savage forces that are folded over, constituting the subject-form. Instead, there are a multiplicity of diagrams, although this should not lead us to the position that there is a multiplicity of subject-forms, and, even if it did, it would still not be sufficient to ground a notion of freedom, for the reasons previously stated in this paper. Second, nowhere does Foucault make the claim that there is always something left outside the diagrams of power which make up the present. Indeed, if the diagram is nothing more than the organization of power relations, then Foucault, as has been said before, has admitted that a perfectly governmentalized society is possible, in which there would be nothing “outside” of the diagram, but resistance would still be possible. So, Deleuze offers up another thinking of freedom that grounds freedom outside of particular power relationships within generalized descriptions of the diagram of power. The agonistic relationship that Deleuze is claiming to describe is not agonistic at all, but is grounded outside of the power relationship in the claim that the subject is constituted by forces that can never be subsumed by any singular diagram.

iv. Thought and Freedom:

Having reviewed the four elementary definitions of freedom and one hybrid definition and having pointed out their insufficiencies as an analytic of freedom in the work of Foucault, we will here return to Veyne's notion of the irreducibility of thought in the work of Foucault to consider three distinct solutions to the problem of freedom: thought as discovery of freedom, thought as practice of freedom, and thought as presumption of freedom. It is important to emphasize that, although each solution is unique in the way it approaches thought and freedom, they bleed into one another. Before outlining these solutions, we should revisit this issue of the irreducibility of thought in the work of Foucault, the hermeneutic aspect of Foucault's hermeneutic positivism:

'There is no experience that is not, in some way, a kind of thinking.' Historical facts 'may well not be independent of the concrete influences of social history'; nevertheless, human beings can only experience those influences 'through thought'. Class interests or relations of economic production may be 'universal structures'; forces of production and the steam engine may constitute 'determining concrete influences on social existence': all the same, in order to affect life and constitute events, they do have to be processed by thought. (Veyne 2010, 16)

In other words, even though the subject finds themselves suspended among the concrete structures of modernity and history which determine the subject-form, those structures are only accessible through the practice of *thought*. "The word "thought," here, does not refer to philosophical reflection. Rather, Foucault argued that the way we conceive of the world and our relation to it is central to our makeup." (Ransom 1997, 129) So, thought should be taken here to mean the relation between action and the structures that influence the actions of the subject. Thought is not the process of constructing the social field, but

the construction of the social field does not spell out the end of thought because man still interacts with the social field through the creation of concepts, which is thought:

Foucault admits that individuals and the types of practices, habits, and so on in which they engage are not "independent from the concrete determinations of social existence." That is, individuals and groups are without a doubt born into and molded to interact with a historically singular mode of social existence. The interesting thing for Foucault, however, is that these universal structures (as he calls them) in which the individual is located do not directly determine the actions of individuals in society: "Singular forms of experience may perfectly well harbor universal structures; they may well not be independent from the concrete determinations of social existence. However, *neither those determinations nor those structures can allow for experience . . . except through thought.*" (1997, 130)

So, actions are mediated by thought, by conscious or subconscious reflection on those concrete structures which give form to the subject as they exist. The conditions of experience are both these structures which give form to the subject and thought which is the reflection of the subject on the structures which give it form, the work of thought on itself.

Thought for Ransom's Foucault is not simply the process by which arguments are carefully constructed, but is something more, something material which can give rise to effects that work in the world and which can be worked on. "In fact, we sense this deeper layer of thought in others all the time..." "Thought," for Foucault, is "something...essential in human life and in human relations...It is something that is often hidden, but which always animates everyday behavior." (1997, 154) So, thought is foundational to the subject's experience of the world and at its root is the possibility of error. If thought is the process of the creation of concepts by which the subject interacts with the social field and the world around them, then it is always accompanied by the possibility of error or mistake. At its most fundamental, life is the process of making mistakes, of introducing

into the social field the possibility of error, which opens up the space for different ways of thinking and acting. This is the source of human variation:

Different conceptions of what it means to be human as well as different ideas of what power relations are legitimate can result from this "possibility of error, which is intrinsic to life." It is this potential for mistakes that is not fully accounted for in a description of freedom restricted to the historically specific dynamics of interlocked strategies associated with power relations. (1997, 128)

Thought by means of error is the impetus of the shifting landscape of the concepts that make up modernity and give rise to the subject-form, but they are also the source of freedom insofar as thought exposes the possibility of error and gives rise to the recognition that our subject form is contingent. "From one side, error is at the root of human thought in the sense that it is what produces new concepts to replace old ones. From the other, thought - in the sense Foucault wishes to use the term - is a means of freeing ourselves from ossified concepts and moving onto new territory." (1997, 129) It is important to recognize that Ransom's view does not necessarily abandon the two plebeian approaches to power, but reinterprets them through the lens of this approach to thought as error:

The criticism of old ways of thinking -- as embodied in practices -- often ends up pointing to those elements of ourselves that have been left behind or suppressed in the familiar structures of experience (the first plebeian aspect). At the same time, one of the most important "exit points" of any active power relationship (the second plebeian aspect) is going to be the possibility that individuals or groups will perceive their role from a perspective incompatible with the continued functioning of the power relationship. (1997, 133)

In other words, thought uncovers contingency by exposing that things were once different and that the subject form was not always what it was in the present, opening up the space for an "exit" from a power realization with the realization that a different organization is not only possible, but inevitable. Thought discovers the possibility of the practice of

freedom by uncovering the present configuration of power relations in the social field that give rise to the subject form and exposing the possibility of those configurations as the error which is at the foundation of all human thinking, giving rise to the fact that thinking otherwise is possible. “Never approaching a "final" constitution, always caught up in a number of competing forces, finally protected by the "irreducible" medium of thought, the subject always contains within it the possibility of self-constitution.” (1997, 153)

Sergei Prozorov approaches the issue of thought differently in his book *Foucault, Freedom, and Sovereignty* (2007)¹⁰, although thought is never explicitly mentioned in the work. Instead, drawing from Giorgio Agamben’s works *Coming Community* (1993) and *Potentialities* (2000), Prozorov considers thought as the irreducibility of potentiality or the potential to be otherwise:

The subject of freedom may thus be formalised as S (S), a being beside its own diagrammatic identity that it brackets off precisely by its minimal exteriority to it. At the same time, this formula reminds us that one may never dwell in the pure outside, dispensing with the diagram in its entirety. Instead, diagrammatic identity is not eliminated but, strictly speaking, bracketed off, ‘retained’ only in the sense of being set aside. This formula demonstrates that the subject of concrete freedom fashions itself through a homonymous difference from its own diagrammatic identity and a metonymic displacement from it, thereby emerging as one’s own meto-homonymous double at the exterior limit of the diagram. (2007, 60)

So, the subject, here symbolized by the formula S (S), is always tied to the diagram which constitutes its form, since living outside of any diagram is impossible, but the subject still sets aside the identity of the diagram, or the subject form constituted by that specific diagrammatic organization because, even though it is impossible to reside in no diagram, it is entirely possible to reside outside of a particular diagram. This possibility of bracketing off the diagrammatic identity is dependent upon this notion of potentiality.

¹⁰ Prozorov uses Deleuze’s vocabulary from *Foucault* throughout this book.

Potentiality is always defined by the capacity to not be, because if something does not retain the possibility of non-being, it is no longer potential but actual. “The passage of the potential into the actual must therefore remain entirely contingent for the distinction to have any force, otherwise the potential would simply merge with the actual as its future form. To be worthy of the name, potentiality must retain its potential for being impotential, for not passing into actuality.” (2007, 61) What does this mean in terms of the diagrammatic identity? It means the possibility of affirming one’s (im)potentiality with reference to that particular identity. In other words, it means affirming the radical contingency of the diagram and the possibility of being otherwise that one is, although the form of that particular otherwise remains both outside of the scope of the diagram and the subject, to affirm the irreducibility of the self to the diagram. This irreducibility does not imply excess in the sense of transgression, but merely the potential for the impotence of the subject form. In other words, it is the quest for anonymity. “To remain anonymous in the face of the diagram is to enact one’s potentiality for being otherwise that is entirely heterogeneous to actually becoming someone else.” (2007, 63)

So, freedom is the practice of affirming not a particular identity in the face of the diagrammatic identity. Such a definition of freedom would yield the formula $S_N(S_D)$, S_D being the diagrammatic identity that is bracketed off by means of genealogical inquiry and S_N being the preferred subject form, N standing for some normative criterion of preference. The practice of potentiality is not the practice of adopting another subject form or affirming a different identity in opposition to the diagrammatic identity that one finds oneself implicated within. “Against the diagrammatic injunction to a positively specified identity that one must enact to be endowed with subjectivity, we may then

assert the singularity of the subject in its ‘whatever being’” (2007, 62). Whatever being here means “being such that it always matters.” (1993, 1) “The subject of whatever being is a clean slate that desires to remain a clean slate, that resists the inscriptions that it suffers. The clean slate is non-identitarian, i.e. it ‘is itself not an actual intelligible’, but it is ‘nevertheless capable of being any intelligible whatsoever’” (2007, 64) So, the subject practices freedom by means of whatever being, by negating the diagrammatic identity which it exists within without necessarily affirming a competing identity. As Prozorov notes, the uniqueness of Foucault’s account of the diagram is that it affirms the loss of something without the characterization of a positive characteristic that is lost. “Something is certainly lost in the diagrammatic abduction of existence, but this ‘something’ is nothing positive, but rather the infinite potentiality of human being, its capacity of ‘being any intelligible whatsoever’, its plenitude that every diagram contains in the deficit of existence.” (2007, 64-5)

How is this account one that relies on the irreducibility of thought? Precisely that thought is what grounds whatever being. Thought is the exercise of the (im)potentiality of the whatever being insofar as the recognition of that (im)potentiality and the affirmation of the non-identitarian, predicate-less subject takes place through the medium of thought and the practice of thinking. First, the recognition of contingency is emblematic of thought insofar as, up until now, thought has been recognized as the mode by which the subject approaches their own form and the form of the world. Indeed, thought is here recognized as destructive of the very thing it produces. For Ransom, power springs from thought. For Prozorov, diagrams spring from the exterior. They are one and the same. Thought is the outside of the diagram, the possibility of escaping the diagram, not in the

sense of escaping power, but in the sense of escaping the particular arrangement of power in which one finds oneself. That possibility is always conditioned by thought and the outside. In both cases, thought/exteriority is the source of power arrangements and the escape from any particular arrangement of power. Second, Prozorov recognizes that anonymity and infamy recognize and affirm, “the presence in human existence of a certain radically undetermined element, a ‘being beside itself’ that is both actual and potential at the same time and thus resists any identification” (2007, 65). Ransom would call this radically undetermined element error. However, Prozorov’s recreation takes Ransom’s thought to its breaking point. Indeed, for Prozorov this practice of flight towards the exterior, or thought, is not the discovery of freedom but its very practice. There is no distinction between concrete freedom as it is practiced and as it is thought, and such a distinction might, in itself, be meaningless since thought is the source of freedom and thinking would itself be freedom’s exercise. So, Prozorov radically closes the gap between thinking freedom and practicing freedom since the very act of thinking freedom implies the recognition of contingency and the practice of bracketing diagrammatic identity and the affirmation of whatever being, insofar as whatever being could ever be said to be affirmed. This is thought as the practice of freedom.

However, both Ransom and Prozorov’s outline of freedom residing in the irreducibility of thought can just as easily be read as the presumption of freedom. Revisiting Veyne’s characterization of Foucault’s method of hermeneutic positivism, he claimed it was the passing of universals through the grid of concrete passages with the aim of uncovering the contingency of those things we assume universal about the world and, most importantly, ourselves. In other words, it is the dispelling of the universals, the

commitment to the absolutely historical, the rejection of an anthropological ‘Truth’ about the world or the subject that would make history into a narrative that built into the present. Instead, Foucault took only what was indispensable. But, now comes the difficult question of what it was that was indispensable in the work of Foucault? Was freedom something discovered through genealogical inquiry or was it something that was presumed at the outset, something taken to be self-evident like previous thinkers had taken their assumptions to be self-evident? In other words, is Foucault’s work the discovery of freedom or its assumption? There are at least two compelling reasons to think it is the latter. In the first place, Foucault admits that his study of power begins with relations of resistance:

I would like to suggest another way to go further towards a new economy of power relations, a way which is more empirical, more directly related to our present situation, and which implies more relations between theory and practice. It consists of *taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point*. (1984, 210-1; my emphasis)

So, it is not the case that we can say Foucault discovers resistance along the way. His histories are remarkable in that they are always written at the sites of active resistance: *Psychiatric Power*¹¹ and the anti-psychiatry movement, DP and the prison reform movements, WK and the various movements for sexual or relational rights. So, his works concerning power always visited issues that were marked by serious resistance movements. Furthermore, by the time he could be seen as leaving this trend behind with the second and third volumes of the *History of Sexuality*, which could almost certainly be said to have no modern resistance movement since they are histories of the ancients,

¹¹ I take this book in lieu of *History of Madness* because it is more explicitly concerned with the political and power. Indeed, Foucault refers to it as a revision of his thesis in *History of Madness*, making the period of its creation more pertinent to Foucault’s study of power. Foucault himself even admits that *History of Madness* was a book written about power that avoided the question of power because it could not be posed at that time.

Foucault has moved from the issue of power and into the issue of the care of the self and conduct. His insights of power, in other words, are marked by his focus on issues in which featured massive movements of resistance.

Second, freedom is under-theorized throughout the totality of Foucault's works. There is no explicit 'analytics of freedom' like there is an analytics of power. Indeed, in the knowledge-power-subjectivity triad, freedom seems to be the hidden element within it, residing in each hyphen, animating the distinction and giving life to his theory. The triad could be read 'power-(freedom)-knowledge-(freedom)-subjectivity'. Such a rendering would be more true to Foucault's work and exposes the difficulty in coming to terms it when the central, rarely spoken term of his work remains so underdetermined. Furthermore, as this thesis has aimed to show, thought plays an important role in attempting to understand freedom as Foucault defined it, yet it also plays a dual role. In the first part, it is an essential methodological assumption. Foucault's hermeneutic positivism assumes that it is only through thought that anyone can access the small facts which Foucault leaves in peace. If all experience is a type of thinking, then thought permeates everything. Indeed, thought is irreducible, a universal that cannot be done away with. On the other hand, this thought also grounds the possibility of the free subject. It is precisely because all experience is thought that the subject's thought opens up the possibility of the experience of freedom. But there seems to be a missing argument, a missing reason why either of these roles played by this unspoken element in Foucault's work is as it is. In other words, the method assumes the possibility of the free subject. It is the invariable, the universal that can't be thrown away, the foundation of the genealogical histories written by Foucault. The process of denaturing those things which

we, at one point in time, took to be natural in Foucault's work assumes that the subject who is denaturing the anthropological universals is ultimately free. In other words, the undermining of these anthropological universals might be grounded in an anthropological universal, namely that thought is irreducible and that thought either is the practice of freedom or implies the possibility of freedom.

VI. Conclusion

This work has not attempted to put forth the definition of freedom which would make Foucault's reflections on power more consistent, functional or compelling. Instead, it has taken the work of Foucault at face value, attempted to reconstruct the subject with what little was said about it, the only recourse being to the ill-defined notion of freedom that animated Foucault's reflections on power, knowledge, and the relationship between the two. In fact, if the structure of Foucault's thought took the form of displacement, of reflection on a concept for the sake of replacing it, although not always discontinuously so, then such displacements would require that some things be left unquestioned, not indeterminably so, but for the length of the questioning. To mount a serious investigation, the investigator cannot, at every turn, be unsteady, teetering on the foundationless vantage from which they observe. Even Foucault's genealogies could not doubt everything at once. Instead, they took as their starting point the serious doubt of the universal claims of historians and philosophers who proclaimed a teleological movement to human society, who claimed natural, unquestionable traits that resided and defined every individual in that society. However, they never rejected the freedom of the subject. If there was one universal which Foucault maintained throughout his works, the only

universal, it is that the subject is free. What that freedom is, is less clear, but the fact that they are free is as clear as anything.

Why freedom? Why would Foucault assume the thing about the subject that seems least apparent in his work? Indeed, in DP, when Foucault describes the subject as free, it does seem to contradict the penal society which he had been describing. In the face of the panopticon, it certainly seems as though the subject is not free, that power is like a cage in which we are trapped. But Foucault's commitment to freedom is unflinching. It is possible that Foucault assumes freedom purely because the subjects of his writing are always political. His work would be self-defeating if it did not assume some possibility of resistance against the power being described. As he described it himself, "Writing interests me only in the measure that it incorporates the reality of combat, as an instrument, a tactic, a spotlight. I would like my books to be like surgeon's knives, Molotov cocktails, or galleries in a mine, and, like fireworks, to be carbonized after use." (1985, 14) He wrote only insofar as his writing could be used in the political struggle against power, and that struggle wouldn't exist if not for the possibility of resistance. He wrote only because he wrote to, for, and about free subjects.

This biographical reason for the assumption of freedom does not preclude the possibility that subject might very well be free and that Foucault's work might accord with reality, it merely explains why Foucault assumed what he did. Even so, if freedom is somehow implicated with this vague notion of thought present throughout his work, it isn't robustly clear what the relationship between thought and freedom is, as this thesis has aimed to show. Through thought, the subject might discover their freedom in the fact that subjectivity was once very different and might at some point be very different again,

or thought might be the very process of undergoing the change to become different. By discovering the fact that subjectivity is not a pre-given, by denaturing it through the process of thought, the subject might already have undertaken the task of freeing themselves from the present. However, it is most certain that Foucault assumes the subject is free when he writes, assumes his writings can be used by subjects to rewrite the power relations in which they find themselves. Perhaps his assumption that subjects can practice thoughtfulness is an indirect assumption of the freedom of the subject.

So, while his writings on power were and remain important for defining the questions of our modern age, they are indelibly marked by this question of freedom and the subject. His writings on power and knowledge follow the logic of displacement, the criticism of existing definitions and concepts with the aim of replacing them with more expansive definitions and concepts that will be subject to the same process of displacing criticism, the process of shifting the theoretical structure from which the criticisms themselves commence. As Foucault described it, the work of a *negative theorist*, who seeks not to change the theoretical structure of their thought, but to displace the foundation from which the work commences. The famous question he puts to himself in the introduction to *AK* and his answer might, then, be interpreted slightly differently:

Are you already preparing the way out that will enable you in your next book to spring up somewhere else and declare as you're now doing: no, no, I'm not where you are lying in wait for me, but over here, laughing at you?' 'What, do you imagine that I would take so much trouble and so much pleasure in writing, do you think that I would keep so persistently to my task, if I were not preparing - with a rather shaky hand - a labyrinth into which I can venture, in which I can move my discourse, opening up underground passages, forcing it to go far from itself, finding overhangs that reduce and deform its itinerary, in which I can lose myself and appear at last to eyes that I will never have to meet again. (1972, 17)

This, then, is the statement of the negative theorist, who launches out to rewrite their own work, to erase themselves in their analysis, to extirpate their assumptions and drown them in ink, to the point that they no longer were where they started. As he would state elsewhere, “The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning...The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end.” (1988b, 9) Life and work is a matter of discovery and change. However, it remains true that one of the things such a view assumes is the freedom to change and discover, an assumption which is hardly spoken of in Foucault's work but referenced to at almost every turn.

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