

At What Price? The Fruits of Truth as Agreeable Leading

Thesis Submitted by
Mathew E. Klemp

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Philosophical Foundations

The Institute For Christian Studies
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
August, 1996

Acknowledgments

There are many people and communities without whom I could never have undertaken this project. I would like to thank my family for their continuous support, both emotionally and financially. I would also like to thank my Toronto family, the Leaches, including William and Laura, for their support, playfulness, caring, and friendship. My academic community has proved to be encouraging and challenging, making them true friends. Most importantly, my mentor Hendrik Hart has always been unrelenting in his concern and attention. His patience and care for my personal and academic growth and health have been a constant source of encouragement and an example of how to be a servant in the academy. Finally, I thank my best friend Sarah for everything else that made this possible.

Abbreviations

All abbreviations refer to the essays (where appropriate) and books from which the quotes were taken. Bibliographic information is available in the bibliography.

Foucault

AK	The Archeology of Knowledge.
ATT	"The Art of Telling the Truth," in <i>Politics, Philosophy, Culture</i> .
CT	"The Concern for Truth," in <i>Politics, Philosophy, Culture</i> .
CT/IH	"Critical Theory/Intellectual History," in <i>Politics, Philosophy, Culture</i> .
ECS	"The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," an interview translated by J.D. Gauthier, S.J. in <i>The Final Foucault</i> .
HST	"History of Systems of Thought," in <i>Language, Counter-memory, Practice</i> .
NGH	"Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in <i>Language, Counter-memory, Practice</i> .
OP	"On Power," in <i>Politics, Philosophy, Culture</i> .
OT	<i>The Order of Things</i> .
PC	"Practicing Criticism," in <i>Politics, Philosophy, Culture</i> .
QM	"Questions of Method: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in <i>After Philosophy: End or Transformation?</i>
RA	"Revolutionary Action: 'Until Now'," in <i>Language, Counter-memory, Practice</i> .
SP	"The Subject and Power," in <i>Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics</i> .
TL	"Two Lectures," in <i>Power\Knowledge</i> .
TP	"Truth and Power," in <i>Power\Knowledge</i> .
WE	"What is Enlightenment," in <i>The Foucault Reader</i> .

James

- PCT “Pragmatism’s Conception of Truth,” in *Pragmatism: The Classic Writings*.
- TM “The Pragmatist Account of Truth and Its Misunderstanders,” in *The American Pragmatists*.
- WPM “What Pragmatism Means,” in *Pragmatism: The Classic Writings*.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	2
Abbreviations.....	3
Introduction.....	6
Chapter 1: William James and the Functions of Truth.....	10
Chapter 2: Discourse and Genealogy: Taking James Farther	24
Chapter 3: Productive Power.....	37
Chapter 4: At What Price? Critique and Transformation.....	53
Conclusion.....	69
Bibliography.....	74

Introduction:

Understanding the Power of Old Truths

This is a thesis on how and why truth might be understood anew. Because truth is so important a category, especially for philosophers, and because we now have good reasons to believe we haven't yet fully grasped how it works, it is appropriate to start with an investigation of how it actually functions. If we can employ new concepts and categories to help jolt our understanding into a new framework, perhaps we can examine truth from another angle, other than the all-encompassing angle of rationality.?

Employing new categories from William James and Michel Foucault, I want to investigate why a new conception of truth is in order and to what extent it might address problems that have to this point remained unsolvable. With the rather traditional hope and faith that truth can be a thing of beauty when put to use justly, and can, in a certain relative sense, set us free, I would like to envision a truth worthy of its responsibility.

Truth really is the paradigmatic philosophical issue. Being in a position now, at the close of the twentieth century, to digest the likes of Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, and Kierkegaard, we are equipped to speak and act responsibly and justly *vis à vis* their criticisms and subversions. We are no longer so close to these thinkers that their painful incisions into our foundationalist bodies sting with the fear of death. We should be prepared to respond with more than violent retrenchment and closedmindedness.

But what has healed is a different body than the one those masters of suspicion dissected. In significant ways we inhabit a new world. At the same time, however, many of their criticisms are still quite relevant, and we should be able, by now, to attend with care and sensitivity to problems they foresaw and addressed. More importantly, we should be able to respond ethically and compassionately in areas where our imagination has failed before. The task of solving these problems is one that calls for a truth that is not constituted first and foremost in selfish preservation.

The desire for knowledge has been transformed among us into a passion which fears no sacrifice, which fears nothing but its own extinction.¹

The point I now urge you to observe particularly is the part played by older truths.... Their influence is absolutely controlling. Loyalty to them is the first principle—in most cases it is the only principle; for by far the most usual way of handling phenomena so novel that they would make for serious rearrangement of our preconceptions is to ignore them altogether, or to abuse those who bear witness for them.²

I will begin by taking the sentiments expressed in these quotes seriously, as I believe they point to a phenomenon in contemporary philosophy that is only recently being acknowledged. That truth and knowledge are in a powerful relationship with desire and emotion says much about the nature of that truth. If James is correct, and in large measure I believe he is, that loyalty to “older truths” is their first principle, then we should be encouraged to rethink our common understandings of how truth is constituted and how it functions. In this thesis I want to explore how we can understand truth as a process of what James labels *agreeable leading*. To this end, Michel Foucault and, to a lesser extent William James, will be conversation partners because of their unique and original contributions to our contemporary philosophical discourse.

I am interested in this recontextualization because, in many ways, we are in need of a more empirical and accurate description of how truth functions. But I am also interested in a reconceptualization for ethical reasons. Truth is a terribly loaded term in philosophy. In traditional understandings it signifies the most important things in life. It is very powerful. Those who have the “truth” have the “power” in more ways than one.³ Unfortunately, however, it is no longer clear that the nature of particular truths warrants the degree of power that they wield. In the past this has been unquestionable. Whether the truth came from god or from understanding the eternal, universal order that made things so, truth was absolute truth. And when truth is absolute, prescriptions for life take on a highly determined order.

¹ NGH, 163.

² WPM, 217.

³ Many examples come to mind. Women's struggle in the church, gay and lesbian's struggle for equal rights, racial minority's struggle for a voice, all point, in my opinion, to our collective struggle to overcome the ways in which contingent discourses of truth have constituted and determined our culture in unequal, harmful, and unjust power relations.

For many reasons, some of which I will discuss throughout this thesis, truth is being reconceptualized. The power it carries, however, has not. James was correct that those who bear witness to new truths are ignored or abused. The real tragedy of the abuse, in my opinion, is that it is directed mainly against the already marginalized who bear witness to something empowering. By referring to this “something empowering” as truth, the minority opinion then incurs a great wrath, proving James’ point that old truths seek preservation more than “absolute correctness.” Truth, I argue, does signify something empowering, and for this reason alone should not be dropped from or completely trivialized in our vocabulary.

To make my case I begin with a look at *agreeable leading* articulated in the writings of William James. James envisions truth as that which guides one’s life in efficacious directions, leading to beneficial practical consequences. With this focus on the practical consequences of events, James is empirically accurate, hence more responsible, in addressing the question of truth. Though “traditional” in many ways, James posits that our experience shows the relation between truth and reality as not yet determined. Rather, ideas *become true* to the extent that they lead us agreeably in our experience.

But James is only the “tip of the iceberg” so to speak. He serves as an *introduction* because of his useful rearticulation of truth, but also because of his drawbacks. With a fuller understanding of his weaknesses, we can see more clearly the subtle relationship between truth and *power*. His attitude is so optimistic that it seems he never takes his own suspicions about loyalty to older truths seriously enough. His description is accurate for a certain group, but it is a fortunate, privileged group whose freedom is enjoyed often at the expense of others. To advance a more sophisticated and nuanced (and even more empirically accurate) conception of *agreeable leading* I turn to Michel Foucault whose work on truth and power significantly resembles that of James, while addressing concerns that James never foresaw.

Specifically I focus on Foucault’s conception of discourse as a contingent network with its own rules of formation and procedure. If agreeable leading always takes place in a discourse which is never reducible to logic or linguistics, understanding its inner workings becomes a necessary precondition to understanding why agreeable leading means what it

does. Furthermore, this analysis opens up the broader question of the continuity of historical development by positing that there is no inherent meaning in truth itself.

In chapter three I turn to a discussion of Foucault's analysis of the effects that truth and power have on subjects. Foucault constantly encourages us to understand subjects as effects of historical development, specifically as effects of contingent, particular events. When we consider our subjectivity as constituted in our subjection to regimes of truth and power it seems as though we are *forced* to produce truth. While this severely relativizes "truth" as we know it, Foucault is adamant that truth's relationship with power is a productive aspect of life. It amounts to a form of governmentality where actions are governed by a subject's relation to truth in its contingent context. On my interpretation this is a more contemporary version of James' agreeable leading because it points to the way in which subjects relate their actions to the discourse they inhabit. Moreover, Foucault posits freedom as an important component in this governmentality. It is a freedom that subjects can locate, thereby situating themselves (finding a place to stand) to make judgments.

After locating a place to stand in Foucault's analysis, in chapter four I raise the question of Foucault's ethico-political commitments with the hope of finding an ethical ground. But this proves a difficult task, as he never "comes down" to any position, remaining aloof, and criticizing one and all. Because of his anti-essentialist and anti-humanist mode of analysis, Foucault takes the Kantian ethos of permanent critique to its limit. The strengths of Foucault's analysis offer an alternative for understanding truth as standing in a right relation. While it is not a replacement of older conceptions, it can serve as a model for those truth claims that do not meet traditional criteria.

In the conclusion, then, I reflect on what difference a new conception of truth might make. And whether the results are fruitful or not, we are continually called by Foucault to practice criticism in the hope of transformation.

Chapter 1

William James and the Functions of Truth

INTRODUCTION

This project stems from a desire to understand the power and functioning of “older truths” in contemporary philosophy more thoroughly. Recognizing, as is often done in our times, possible nonrational elements in philosophical discourse implies a significant change in philosophy of the twentieth century. I want to include some of these nonrational elements in my understanding of truth and examine their functions. William James proves to be an important conversation partner in this respect because, in the uniquely American tradition of pragmatism, he began to set the stage for a radical rethinking of how truth functions in the context of the power it carries in our experience. His unique rethinking allows us to see why a new conception of truth is in order.

James’ pragmatism offers a uniquely useful discourse which enables us to understand better how truth functions and how older truths hold power. It is useful because it seeks to understand truth concretely in terms of actions and events, without necessarily questioning truth as the highest value. In this particular context, from within a discourse where truth is the highest value, James wants to understand it more concretely.

Not for a moment does he (James) doubt that nature is the source of truth, or that truth has a rightful claim to the highest value. If he dissents from the European tradition, it is not because he would displace truth from the center of the moral universe, but in order to recenter it among goods by elucidating its value in practical, pragmatic terms.⁴

Without explicitly leaving the traditional philosophical project by not questioning truth’s

⁴Barry Allen, *Truth in Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 62.

ultimate value, James begins his own project and in the process gives us eyes to see truth in a new light. His project will continue to hold the imagination of later thinkers in a quest to understand how truth functions in philosophy and life.

William James: A Prelude to Change

The American philosophical movement pragmatism, particularly in the writings of William James, has gone a long way in reconceptualizing traditional notions of truth. Surrounded in the academy by positivists, transcendentalists, and rationalists, the pragmatists received heavy criticism, much of which accused them of denying truth altogether. Without explicitly saying so, James implied, in many significant passages, a move away from our tradition of philosophy as the realism of a metaphysics of presence.⁵ This recognition can help us today to make sense of how and why his writings were commonly misunderstood and ignored without further analysis.

When James posits that the pragmatic method is primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable, one might get the impression that what pragmatism offers is another solution in line with his contemporaries, namely, a metaphysical solution. When he goes on, however, to note that the pragmatic method tries to interpret each metaphysical dispute by tracing its respective *practical consequences*, the ground on which we stand begins to shift, however subtly. Slowly and imperceptibly the “reality” under investigation begins to transform from static, permanent order to particular, conditional, contingent events, open to causal, instrumental interpretation. “So far as reality means experienceable reality, both it and the truths men gain about it are everlastingly in a process of mutation—mutation toward a definite goal, it may be—but still mutation.”⁶

Practical consequences take on new significance for James’ pragmatism. They are noted not for the way they mirror reality or flow from eternal, static laws, but for their

⁵Though it seems appropriate, I am hesitant to use the term “anti-realist,” for fear of misinterpretation, though James’ heavy emphasis on empirical evidence makes clear that he in no sense denies a real world or the contribution that real world makes to our philosophy. “...[T]here can be no truth if there is nothing to be true about.... This is why as a pragmatist I have so carefully posited ‘reality’ ab initio, and why, throughout my whole discussion, I remain an epistemological realist.” TM, 68.

⁶ PCT, 239.

explanatory value in our task of subjectively interpreting meaning. “Whenever a dispute is serious, we ought to be able to show some practical differences that must follow from one side or the other’s being right.”⁷ When James argues that the analysis of practical consequences should help us resolve metaphysical disputes, perhaps he doesn’t appreciate how the very nature of the project undermines a “metaphysics” in the first place.

It is astonishing to see how many philosophical [read metaphysical] disputes collapse into insignificance the moment you subject them to this simple test of tracing a concrete consequence. There can be no difference anywhere that doesn’t make a difference elsewhere—no difference in abstract truth that doesn’t express itself in a difference in concrete fact and in conduct consequent upon that fact.⁸

It is perhaps just as astonishing how the metaphysical tradition begins to collapse once it is subjected to the empirical observations of the pragmatic method and once serious attention is paid to how a static, universal order actually relates to the world in which we live.

James, of course, is concerned with the muddy particulars of experience. The pragmatist is the one who turns away from abstraction, verbal solutions, bad a priori reasons, fixed principles, closed systems, pretended absolutes and origins. Rather, the pragmatist turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, action, and power.⁹ This could have been said without difficulty by many of today’s leading “postmodern” authors like Derrida, Foucault, or Rorty, and it points to a change in philosophy both in its ethical motivations and in its practical consequences.

James was an empiricist. His interest in the particulars was to see more concretely the “particular go of it.” On his view, rationalistic concepts such as “God”, “Reason”, “the Absolute”, are, in themselves, nothing more than solving names. Each in their own way placate the anxiety that a world without them is supposed to necessitate. They give the peace of mind to rest and take comfort once they are discovered. “You are at the end of your metaphysical quest.”¹⁰ For the pragmatist, however, these names only begin to be helpful when set within the stream of our experience. Under such investigation the solving

⁷ WPM, 212.

⁸ WPM, 212.

⁹ WPM, 213.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

names appear less as solutions than as programs for more work, and “more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be changed.”¹¹ That realities “may be changed” at all implies a significant departure from a metaphysics of presence. It assumes from the beginning that the relation between truth and reality is not predetermined.

What James has accomplished in envisioning a method cuts deeper than its articulation. It has, in a Rortian sense, begun to change the topic of conversation. But it certainly did not fully achieve this in James’ time. He was still sincerely attempting to answer questions and resolve traditional problems of the metaphysicians. This is evident in his refusal to question the ultimate value of ^{philosophical} truth. ?

It is left to a later generation’s vocabulary and interpretation to mark James a subverter of traditional philosophy. And the cash-value of that interpretation does bear the fruit of leading us to see how James was misunderstood and under-appreciated. Without articulating it as such, James began to paint a picture of the world similar to the one in which Rorty and Foucault live. It is a world that needs interpretation and imagination not only to create meaning and truth, but also to deal with life as we know it. And as we shall see, interpreting meaning and the creation of truth can indeed be subversive in a discourse that assumes them to be eternal and without change.

James points towards a new discourse in contemporary philosophy; one that is known most widely as postmodernism, though this is an interpretation wherein James is taken to mean more than he himself says. For he nowhere implies that the solving names of “God”, “Reason”, etc., don’t point to realities that exist.¹² Rather, he implies that they only become meaningful (which already inverts the rationalist’s conception) when plugged into experience. We must seek out practical consequences, for James, in order to come to truth judgments. And this is only possible in a world that is not predetermined by a priori laws and static truth values. The world in which James dwells is one in which truth is made and not found. It is a world in which the *process of becoming true* is privileged, in which truth takes on new meaning. Philosophy, for James, takes on a more concrete, down to earth

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Of course I do not suggest that no postmoderns believe or trust in God. Rather, the similarity with James is a recognition that typical totalizing concepts have lost some of their usefulness despite their presumed rational justification.

perspective.

The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world formula or that world formula be the true one.¹³

A Pragmatic Notion of Truth

As Foucault describes it, traditional philosophy is that discourse which *par excellence* is concerned with truth. When dealing with truth, then, Foucault's question becomes this: "what rules of right are implemented by the relations of power in the production of discourses of truth?" This is a reconceptualization of the older question: "how is the discourse of truth...able to fix limits to the rights of power?"¹⁴ In a similar way, James also problematizes traditional philosophical questions concerning truth. Instead of asking how we represent ~~true~~ reality in our thoughts, James examines how our ideas *function in their relationship* with our world.

James does not take issue with the common understanding of the word truth. Any dictionary will explain that it is a property of certain of our ideas, or that it is our idea's agreement with reality. With this much James has no quarrel. But when one goes on to ask exactly what is implied by the terms "agreement" and "reality" the questions begin. For, as I noted above, with James reality begins to be conceived anew, and agreement with that reality will follow suit.

Traditionally agreement has meant copying or representing, where a true idea is one that represents its reality/object in thought. James, however, raises the question of what we are capable of when our ideas cannot definitively copy their object. Specifically, for example, he asks how we can talk truthfully about a clock when our mind, assuming we are not all clock makers, cannot represent the time-keeping functions, a spring's elasticity, etc. What, asks James, does this tell us about what we know as true?¹⁵ We seem to have developed a habit of believing true to be copying, even when this does not accurately describe the ideas

¹³ WPM, 212.

¹⁴ TL, 93.

¹⁵ PCT, 228.

in our head. Of course this problem can be resolved by positing that truth must be verified by someone somewhere. While this is a part of James' understanding there is the more interesting and subtler dimension that stresses how ideas *work*.

The assumption that our thought copies reality, which is not backed up empirically, leaves us with the idea that reality and truth are static, inert, and without change. "Some idealists seem to say that they (our ideas) are true whenever they are what God means that we ought to think about that object."¹⁶ This assumption makes us the possessors of truth by virtue of the Truth that simply is the "correct" picture, the only "right" way to conceive of reality. Epistemologically we find ourselves in stable equilibrium, but for James this is not enough.

What is empirically more evident than our having copies of reality in our head, is that certain ideas are true because they work for us. This is what James alludes to when speaking of the "cash-value" of our ideas. It is not that realities are true and ideas are simply correct copies. Realities simply are, and it is our beliefs that can be true of them when they work. "Realities are not *true*, they *are*; and beliefs are true *of* them."¹⁷ For James truth is not stagnant. Rather, truth happens to an idea; ideas are made true by events and experience. ⁴ ³

Such mediating events *make* the idea "true." The idea itself, if it exists at all, is also a concrete event: so pragmatism insists that truth in the singular is only a collective name for truths in the plural, these consisting always of a series of definite events: and that what intellectualism calls *the* truth, the *inherent* truth, of any one such series is only the abstract name for its truthfulness in act, for the fact that the ideas there do lead to the supposed reality in a way that we consider satisfactory.¹⁸

To understand James more clearly we should recognize that even when he writes that, "...truth, concretely considered, is an attribute of our beliefs, and that these are attitudes that follow satisfaction,"¹⁹ he is not suggesting some heroic subjectivism that makes anything pleasurable true. Rather, James is making the empirical observation that what we

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ TM, 68, emphasis *his*.

¹⁸ TM, 71, emphasis *his*.

¹⁹ TM, 70.

call true has a certain function in our lives that pays off, and this manifests itself in our life as a practical duty. "Our obligation to seek the truth is part of our general obligation to do what pays. The payments that true ideas bring are the sole why of our duty to follow them."²⁰ It pays for our ideas to be validated, to become true, because the truth carries with it a certain amount of power in instrumental action, in advantageous connections, and in beneficial practical consequences. The analogy with money is nearly impossible to overstate. Truth is a linguistic currency that allows its possessors certain benefits, and the more you have, the more you can afford to buy.

Empirically we *experience* that possessing true thoughts means everywhere the possession of invaluable instruments of action. "When a moment in our experience, of any kind whatever, inspires us with a thought that is true, that means that sooner or later we dip by that thought's guidance into the particulars of experience again and make advantageous connection with them."²¹ Indeed, our duty to seek truth accounts for itself better with recourse to excellent practical reasons than it does by drawing on imperfect representation of perfect realities, and "to attribute a superior degree of glory to it (truth as representation) seems like little more than a piece of perverse abstraction-worship."²²

James is well aware that realities, neither true nor false in themselves, are pharmacological. They can be both poison and remedy, both deadly and fruitful. True is the name we give to ideas that help show us which realities are useful, and this is based on the extent to which they lead us satisfactorily through our experience. But this is still an ambiguous claim, because true ideas do not name why realities are useful, and neither do they name any inherent property within reality.²³ In short, "Possession of truth is no end in itself but a preliminary means towards other vital satisfactions."²⁴ Truth serves a purpose.

Though James consistently uses the word true as a *property of ideas*, just as consistently the conditions which make this possible rely on a certain *function* they play in our

²⁰ PCT, 241-242.

²¹ PCT, 230.

²² TM, 72.

²³ I mean to express that it does not give any *metaphysical* or *transcendental* reasons why truth works.

²⁴ PNT, 230.

experience. This function is, in a sense, the truth about truth. It is the condition for the possibility for true beliefs. Whether this is “God’s truth” or “Absolute truth” is not even an appropriate question at this point. What is important is that James has tapped a phenomenon of our experience that accurately describes one aspect of how truth functions.

The answer which pragmatism offers is intended to cover the most complete truth that can be conceived of, “absolute” truth if you like, as well as truth of the most relative and imperfect description. This question of what truth would be like if it did exist, belongs obviously to a purely speculative field of inquiry. It is not a theory about any sort of reality, or about what kind of knowledge is actually possible; it abstracts from particular terms altogether, and defines the nature of a possible relation between two of them.²⁵

Agreeable Leading

We have reached the meat of our present discussion, and I would like to draw out what is, for my purpose, James’ most significant contribution in the reconceptualization of truth. It is that process of “making true” that James labels “agreeable leading”. As he describes it

From this simple cue pragmatism gets its general notion of truth as something essentially bound up with the way in which one moment in our experience may lead us towards other moments which it will be worth while to have been led to. Primarily, and on the common sense level, the truth of a state of mind means this function of *a leading that is worth while*.²⁶

To understand what James means by “agreeable leading” we must look at how true ideas work for us. It is not simply because they are pleasurable or satisfy needs. Ideas work because they lead us through and tie together our experience in ways that make sense for us. Ideas are “made true” by and in events.

Truth is still indebted to verification where verification means agreement. And this has an element of our ideas “copying” realities. James, however, stresses that this verification process is not the most essential element of understanding how truth functions. In fact, “[t]he majority of our true ideas admit of no direct or face-to-face verification,” as traditionally understood.²⁷ More essentially, the verification of truth is found in being

²⁵ TM, 63.

²⁶ PCT, 230, emphasis his.

²⁷ PCT, 234.

guided.

The essential thing is the process of being guided. Any idea that helps us to deal, whether practically or intellectually, with either the reality or its belongings, that doesn't entangle our progress in frustrations, that fits, in fact, and adapts our life to the reality's whole setting, will agree sufficiently to meet the requirement. It will hold true of that reality.²⁸

It is here that ^{adequation}agreement replaces "copying" as the means by which ideas are true or false.²⁹ Agreement begins to take on new meaning. No longer is it limited to copying or representing. Instead it now takes on characteristics of a process of *leading*.

To "agree" in the widest sense with a reality can only mean to be guided straight up to it or into its surroundings, or to be put into such working touch with it as to handle it or something concerned with it better than if we disagreed. Better either intellectually or practically.³⁰

James agrees with his contemporaries that truth is still in need of verification. In this sense our ideas continue to be verified as true when they agree with reality. But no longer is agreement essentially a matter of copying. "Agreement thus turns out to be essentially an affair of *leading*—leading that is useful because it is into quarters that contain objects that are important."³¹ Ideas become true, on James' view, precisely insofar as they help us get into satisfactory relations with other parts of our experience. In this way James argues that satisfactions are related to truth. It has nothing to do with desire or our passions. For those who make that distinction primary between reason and emotion, James argues that we are satisfied *practically* when we can understand the hows and whys of having come to certain places in thought and life.

We cannot, however, be capricious or arbitrary with our humanly created formulas. "We must find a theory that will work; and that means something extremely difficult; for our theory must mediate between all previous truths and certain new experiences."³² For

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ Though for James truth values are not limited to ideas but extend to whatever fits his requirements. For example, "Thus, names are just as 'true' or 'false' as definite mental pictures are. They set up similar verification processes, and lead to fully equivalent practical results." PCT, 234.

³⁰ PCT, 234.

³¹ PCT, 235, emphasis mine.

³² PCT, 235.

James, the limit which sets the conditions of possibility is our experience, hence the significance of events. In experience we discover to what extent an idea can be true. Not, again, because our ideas can copy, but because they can fruitfully lead us to other events that are worth being discovered. There is a subtle blend of our own constructive subjectivity with reality. Reality keeps us within certain boundaries, outside of which it is not only futile to speak of truth, but perhaps even dangerous.

Truth is manifestly incompatible with waywardness on our part. Woe to him whose beliefs play fast and loose with the order which realities follow in his experience; they will lead him nowhere or else make false connections.³³

or later

...but all roads lead to Rome, and in the end and eventually, all true processes must lead to the face of directly verifying sensible experience somewhere, which somebody's ideas have copied.³⁴

In these sentences James seems to be attempting to ease the fears of some critics. He is laying down the unbreakable rule that we are held together in the same world. It is impossible to slide into complete relativism because of the orders which realities follow.

The interpretation one gives these sentences is very important. For the issues here of constraints and what to make of them are at the heart of contemporary problematics surrounding how we can claim to have any truth and meaning whatsoever. If it is assumed that the order of realities can be seen in one picture (perhaps by God, for example) and then described in one vocabulary, then this puts a strain on James' whole theory of truth. This "god's-eye-view" is central to traditional philosophy as the metaphysics of presence wherein we come to true knowledge by virtue of reality's ability to be present to us in thought through re-presentation. In this conception reality and truth must be static and eternal. In this world practical consequences do not make any practical difference (no difference that makes a difference) because truth's relationship with reality is predetermined.

³³ PCT, 231.

³⁴ PCT, 235.

If, however, James' sentiment is meant as a reassurance that our world will not fall apart regardless of our tinkering with it, then we must be careful not to give away too much for the sake of calming certain fears. In other words, it must be recognized that while the world won't fall apart, it is not transparent, nor can one vocabulary do it justice. Simply dwelling in a shared world does not address whether or not that world has an inherent meaning and even less can it guarantee that we can conceptually come to know that meaning.

This is a radical reconceptualization of the Western notion of truth ^{How the present is tinkered?} whose emphasis meets us in our entanglement with reality and points us toward adapting our life in certain directions that can, to put it in my own terms, bring compassion and healing in a world of suffering. Rather than something's being true-no-matter-what, truth actually matters. This new conception of truth, inherently and in its intent, has significant ethical ramifications for contemporary culture, provided we are prepared to embrace these ramifications in a discourse that has a healthy suspicion of our metaphysical tradition. James's notion of truth has the potential/power to bring down traditional hierarchies and to subvert contemporary power structures. Practically it has space for marginalized, voiceless people to draw on truths that work because they lead to empowerment even though these truths might not have any representational ability. Agreeable leading goes all the way down to the streets and alleys, so to speak. ()

CONCLUSION

In James we find a thinker attempting to make philosophy more concrete and down to earth. Philosophically he deals frankly and honestly with experience with the sincere hope of making philosophy more useful. [→] Of the utmost importance for this project is retaining the concept of truth, but in a way that is empirically more responsible to ourselves and our shared world. Empirically the most honest observation we can make, for James, is that ideas work for us, become true, because they lead us in our experience, in an attitude of

orientation, to profitable relationships and advantageous connections. They provide us with dependable direction.

The feeling of optimism is everywhere present for James. Partially, no doubt, this is because he was trying to convince critics that his theory was worthwhile. But the theory also generates optimism because it points to, develops a trace of, just to what extent truth is in a relationship with *power*. For there is undoubtedly some force present in our capacity of being led agreeably, to be guided in our experience towards beneficial consequences and advantageous connections. We might even say that truth serves the power which manifests itself in beneficial consequences, which serves as bene-factor, something that makes-good. Just as money serves by enabling us to make certain purchases, so does truth serve by enabling us to make certain good connections. The language James uses to describe this process is so optimistic as to make us wonder if there is anyone who couldn't find useful fruit in the pragmatic notion of truth.

They [true ideas] lead to consistency, stability, and flowing human intercourse. They lead away from eccentricity and isolation, from foiled and barren thinking. The untrammelled flowing of the leading process, its general freedom from clash and contradiction, passes for its indirect verification.³⁵

The question I want to raise in this context is an ethical and political one.

We must be willing to ask if the untrammelled flowing and *general* freedom of the leading process is the most adequate, empirical, and ethically responsible way to describe the experience of *everyone*, regardless of particularly who one is.³⁶ If it is not the most accurate de-scription, it should not become an ethical *pre*-scription.³⁷ Perhaps
 2. || untrammelled flowing is more responsibly understood as the most beneficial manifestation of the power of older truths. Allen correctly surmises:

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ This is undoubtedly an appropriate question to ask of any of our socially marginalized groups such as women, gays and lesbians, religious and racial minorities, etc. More generally, though, it applies to any one who cannot find a home in that group of older truths whose power determines what is eccentric or what should be isolated.

³⁷ Namely, orienting oneself to this truth isn't necessarily the right thing to do even though it is beneficial, advantageous, etc., even though it seems to be our duty to do what pays. To what extent it is possible to articulate this suspicion is the theme of later chapters.

James thinks of the production of knowledge as if it were happily situated in a community where what passes for true cannot fail to be empowering, or as if a more particular social identity (female, disabled, aboriginal, indigent, HIV-positive) is irrelevant to the good of the occasional truth. But there is no pragmatic difference between the truth and what passes for true, and there is no reason not to suspect that the good of the occasional truth depends on who more particularly you are.³⁸

Perhaps James' optimism is a hidden naiveté which has not yet appreciated to what extent consistency, stability, and freedom from contradiction serve—as we have learned—a power that has less to do, in the first instance, with justice than with self-preservation. James is pointing in the right direction when he tells us that loyalty to old truths seems to be the only principal in their being absolutely controlling. Furthermore he adds, "...the greatest enemy of any one of our truths may be the rest of our truths. Truths have once and for all this desperate instinct of self-preservation and of desire to extinguish whatever contradicts them."³⁹

These are strong words of warning that never get brought to the surface to be further explored. They would seem to put certain constraints on James' optimism, though they never get their necessary explication. But James was indeed on to something quite revolutionary in his investigation of the empirical function of "becoming true". Leading us into certain relations (which necessarily closes us to other relations) is a very important aspect of truth as we know it. It is precisely this rethinking of truth that opens up space. It opens the possibility of making an ethical difference for marginalized groups by loosening the grip of a static, immutable order that predetermines how relations must be situated to be true.

At the same time, however, once the door of suspicion and subversion has been opened, it should not leave agreeable leading at the doorstep, trusting our experience as a transparent screen through which we see where we should be led. What must be asked is whether or not it is naive to be led innocently into relations, no matter how beneficial, without giving thought to that desperate instinct of self-preservation that too often conditions our being led. If James is correct that realities may be changed and that we

³⁸ Allen, 69.

³⁹ WPM, 224.

should be willing tomorrow to call falsehood what we today call true, then our trust should not always stop at experience as we know it without questioning the inner constitution of that experience. The results of such questioning makes it possible to see why a new conception of truth may be helpful.

Chapter 2

Discourse and Genealogy: Taking James Farther

INTRODUCTION

Further discussion of the work begun by James is needed to see more clearly why truth might be given a new framework. To this end, my focus in this chapter is to better understand the particular practical consequences of his idea of truth as *agreeable leading*. The preceding chapter concluded on a suspicious note, questioning to what extent James is critical of experience, given his appreciation for the role of older truths and self-preservation. To get a better understanding of this it will be necessary to investigate the site where agreeable leading takes shape.

This site is always a discourse with a specific context that makes the process of leading—of any movement whatsoever—agreeable and meaningful. Michel Foucault is a contemporary thinker whose striking similarities with James make him an interesting and helpful conversation partner in further exploring how the make-up of discourse itself is often at the mercy of power relations that strive for their own preservation.

Foucault's general methodological concerns stem from a profound sensitivity to the subtle and sometimes insidious ways in which traditions, discourses, institutions, and practices evolve. There are many levels of experience that must be acknowledged in order to reach a clearer understanding of why things have taken the shape they have. Foucault has a penchant for recontextualizing traditional analysis in an attempt to be in a position to better see formative features of discourse and practice that otherwise often go unnoticed. In his analysis of the way truth functions in discourse, he makes a concerted attempt to move away from traditional historical analysis towards genealogy,⁴⁰ in an attempt to give a more responsible reading to history and to our experience. This reading helps envision a more

⁴⁰ "Let us give the term genealogy to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today." TL, 83.

efficacious way to bring about change.

...[I]n short, it [history of science] describes the processes and products of the scientific consciousness. But, on the other hand, it tries to restore what eluded that consciousness: the influences that affected it, the implicit philosophies that were subjacent to it, the unformulated thematics, the unseen obstacles; it describes the unconsciousness of science. This unconsciousness is always the negative side of science— that which resists it, deflects it, or disturbs it. What I would like to do, however, is to reveal a positive unconscious of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse, instead of disputing its validity and seeking to diminish its scientific nature.⁴¹

Though written in the foreword to one of his earliest works specifically about scientific discourse as it emerged out of the Classical Age, Foucault's description of what he hopes to accomplish appropriately articulates a major theme throughout his life's work. And this description articulates that theme in a way that fits a critique of experience and agreeable leading. The explication and analysis of the *positive unconscious* of discourse will bring us face to face with a host of old truths that seek their preservation, and the investigation shall make clearer the conditions of possibility that led to their induction into the archive of our historical consciousness.

CONTINUING A PRAGMATIC LEGACY: The Contemporary Constitution of Agreeable Leading

The first chapter highlighted themes in James which may be understood as a transformation in traditional philosophy that deals more empirically and ethically with our entanglement with reality? James focuses on practical consequences, on a reality that is everlastingly in a process of mutation wherein truth and reality do not have a predetermined relationship. James also privileges the "process of becoming true" over the traditional representational model of knowledge. Similarly, and even more explicitly, Foucault also develops themes that move significantly away from traditional philosophical investigation.

For my purposes the most significant similarity between James and Foucault that I want

⁴¹ OT, xi.

to highlight is the new context each gives for rethinking how truth functions. For James, ~~deep~~ attention is given to the actions and results that “true ideas” give. Foucault, without saying so, also takes this context as his starting point of analysis. It is the underlying assumption behind all of his work: namely, that practical consequences and agreeable leading (to use James’s language) are the result of contingent, arbitrary, though highly structured discourses and regimes of truth. Practical consequences, for James, do not depend on the subject’s ability to accurately represent to thought the logical, rational progress of historical consciousness. Rather, practical consequences are results of a complicated dynamic involving particular discourses’ contingent constitution of truth.

Foucault recontextualized the traditional philosophical question from “how the discourse of truth is able to fix limits to the rights of power” to “what rules of right are implemented by the relation of power in the production of discourses of truth”. Describing such a recontextualization Foucault articulates an important Jamesian (pragmatic) sentiment. “Compared to the traditional, noble, philosophical question...[Foucault’s reconceptualization] is much more down to earth and concrete.”⁴² Foucault’s goal is to address “an entire thematic to the effect that it is not theory but life that matters, not knowledge but reality, not books but money...”⁴³

To properly address this thematic will involve reprioritizing the tools of investigation. As we shall see, some traditional tools must be dropped and new ones developed. To this end Foucault comes at the analysis of discourse from a different angle, stressing (like James) the importance of the *event* in the context of a genealogical method.

Foucault’s general method and the singular importance he attaches to the event bring to the surface a theme that resonates deeply with an important pragmatic principle; namely, that of being more *empirically* responsible in our *dealings* with reality. Furthermore, I hope to show that this recurring theme in Foucault will meet James’s concern in the space of experience and agreeable leading. Though their ethical motivations will grow farther apart, both philosophers trace a new path in our understanding of truth because of their concern with concrete, down to earth philosophy.

⁴² TL, 93.

⁴³ TL, 81.

One of Foucault's goals is, indeed, to see and think differently than we have in the past. Developing new analytical and theoretical tools is one of the first priorities facing us if we are to be more responsible and honest with ourselves about the world in which we live and the story we tell of it. It is an honest dealing with our day to day reality without recourse to any metaphysical assurances.

We have employed a wide range of categories—truth, man, culture, writing, etc.—to dispel the shock of daily occurrences, to dissolve the event.... In the broadest sense, both the nature of events and the fact of power are invariably excluded from both knowledge as presently constituted in our culture.⁴⁴

Comparing this with James's analysis of the concepts "God", "Reason", "Nature", etc., helps us see in Foucault a similar distrust of any theoretical concept that removes us from the very tangible and concrete situations of event and power. On the surface, in the first instance, Foucault shares with James at least a desire to understand these abstracts only within the context of everyday experience.

James, I argued in chapter 1, points towards a new discourse in contemporary philosophy specifically by undermining any metaphysic that posits a stable, eternal continuity in historical development. James posits this by stressing the yet-to-be-determined relationship between truth and reality. Foucault, in a similar but unique fashion, articulates this very theme.

I would say, then, that what has emerged in the course of the last ten or fifteen years is a sense of the increasing vulnerability to criticism of things, institutions, practices, discourses. A certain fragility has been discovered in the very bedrock of existence—even, and perhaps above all, in those aspects of it that are most familiar, most solid and most intimately related to our bodies and to our everyday behavior.⁴⁵

As Foucault sees it, the circumstances that have brought this vulnerability to the surface are found in the "inhibiting effect of global, totalitarian theories," together with the "efficacy of discontinuous, particular and local criticism."⁴⁶ Global totalitarian theories

⁴⁴ RA. 221.

⁴⁵ TL.81.

⁴⁶ TL. 80.

have been useful to the extent that they have given us useful tools. Today, however, we must ask if the price we pay for such theories is too high. For Foucault, “[i]n each case. the attempt to think in terms of a totality has in fact proved a hindrance to research.”⁴⁷ In James’s language, we might ask if the cash-value of totalitarian theories, metanarratives, privileged continuity, continues to hold the same value in the market. For Foucault the answer is no. Totalitarian theories have become too debilitating for research precisely because they don’t come to terms with the will to knowledge that helps shape discourse.

For Foucault “discourse” does not simply designate whatever particular language game one happens to play. We have developed, historically, from an episteme in which language was transparent, mirroring things in themselves, into an episteme characterized by the sovereignty of the sign.⁴⁸ The result is that discursive formulations do not have the same historicity as the progress of consciousness or the linearity of language. “Discourse...is not a consciousness that embodies its project in the external form of language; it is not a language, plus a subject to speak it. It is a practice that has its own forms of sequence and succession.”⁴⁹

For this reason, understanding the workings of a discourse is never a matter of “liberating” discourse from the bonds of desire and power to let it speak for itself. It is the will to knowledge and not the rational foundation of our understanding that is responsible for our current context of thought.

In appearance, or rather, according to the mask it bears, historical consciousness is neutral, devoid of passions, and committed solely to truth. But if it examines itself and if, more generally, it interrogates the various forms of scientific consciousness in its history, it finds that all these forms and transformations are aspects of the will to knowledge...Even in the greatly expanded form it assumes today, the will to knowledge does not achieve a universal truth.... Knowledge does not slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason...it creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ TL, 81.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the development and transformation of epistemes see OT, especially 78ff.

⁴⁹ AK, 169.

⁵⁰ NGH, 162.

The category “will to knowledge” ultimately opens up to the investigator a field of analysis once limited to a study of signs. In traditional analysis discourse is “only an activity of writing...of reading...and exchange. This never involves anything but signs. Discourse thus nullifies itself, in reality, in placing itself at the disposal of the signifier.”⁵¹ But “we must question our will to truth—to restore to discourse its character as an event; to abolish the sovereignty of the signifier.”⁵²

To analyze discourses in the context of the will to knowledge amounts to understanding and making visible their strategic connections. It does not amount to understanding discourse as a fixed, unitary, whole in a totalitarian theory of historical development. In other words, understanding discourse is not a matter of locating its position in any metanarrative. Each discourse comes into being in its own context as a result of specific events and their practical consequences. For this reason we are able to see in discursive practices a systematic organization that cannot be reduced to the demands of logic or linguistics.⁵³

Consider again the fundamental similarity with James. What has risen to the surface is a suspicion of any explanation of our thought that posits a universe dependent on a priori principles that predetermine historical and intellectual development. Truth is not to be reduced to, or limited to a correspondence in our thoughts with the immutable structure of our world. Instead it is context-dependent, interpreted within specific discourses which are themselves configurations dependent on social and historical events.

Discursive practices are not purely and simply ways of producing discourses. They are embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behavior, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which, at once impose and maintain them.⁵⁴

What we find, most fundamentally, emerging in Foucault is an ability to question what has for so long been taken as self-evident; namely, the continuity of historical development, the predetermined state between truth and reality. Thought, which always takes place in a

⁵¹ AK, 228.

⁵² AK, 229.

⁵³ HST, 199.

⁵⁴ HST, 200.

discourse, is constituted and maintained in practices that develop very concretely and that owe their existence to specific rules of operation. The analysis of a discursive formation “designates a will to knowledge that is anonymous, polymorphous, susceptible to regular transformations, and determined by the play of identifiable dependencies.”⁵⁵

RESPONDING TO THE WILL TO KNOWLEDGE: Reprioritizing Our Tools in Eventalization and Genealogy

Specifically this means for Foucault that the analysis of discourse must avoid notions such as tradition, spirit, evolution, oeuvre, that rely on the self-evident theme of continuity.

We must question those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outset...by which we usually link the discourse of one man with another.... And instead of affording them unqualified spontaneous value, we must accept, in the name of methodological rigor, that, in the first instance, they concern only a population of dispersed events.⁵⁶

This suspicion and suspension of traditional ^{hybrid (?)} concepts is useful because these concepts make it necessary to think of the dispersion of history in the form of the Same. The Same reduces differences and change to permanence—to the abstract search for an unfindable origin. Once, however, we question this permanence it loses its self-evidence. In a tradition that searches for an origin that is never quite grasped (though all events are grasped by it) Foucault stresses the singularity of the event which is never merely the articulation of a secret already said.

The search for origins, the underlying conditions of possibility for all global, totalitarian theories is debilitating to research because it rests on the futile attempt to capture the essence of things, their exact identities. It assumes the existence of immutable forms that precede the external world of “accident and succession”.

From the vantage point of an absolute distance, free from the restraints of positive knowledge, the origin makes possible a field of knowledge whose function it is to recover it, but always in a false recognition due to the excess

⁵⁵ HST, 200-201.

⁵⁶ AK, 22.

of its own speech. The origin lies at a place of inevitable loss, the point where the truth of things corresponds to a truthful discourse, the site of a fleeting articulation that discourse has obscured and finally lost.⁵⁷

In contrast, what is found at the historical beginnings of things is not the “inviolable identity of their origin” but the dissension of other things. “[H]istorical beginnings are lowly: not in the sense of modest or discreet like the steps of a dove, but derisive and ironic, capable of undoing every infatuation.”⁵⁸

Foucault makes it possible to receive every moment of discourse as a “sudden interruption”, and not a necessary progression of reason. To treat discourse as and when it occurs opens up a previously unknown field of interpretation, bringing to the surface tools and knowledges once buried under the weight of unified theories. What the suspension of all given unities enables us, first of all, to accomplish, is restoring the event to the specificity of its occurrence because it is one that neither the language nor the meaning can quite exhaust.⁵⁹

[I]f the genealogist refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there is “something altogether different” behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms.⁶⁰

As we turn our attention to a study of the event and Foucault’s method for best understanding it (genealogy) the connections to James take on a double significance. In one respect, because Foucault wants to stress that things “aren’t as necessary as all that,” he confirms James’s suspicion of metaphysical assurances that take us out of our present reality.

We want historians to confirm our belief that the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities. But the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or point of reference.⁶¹

⁵⁷ NGH, 143.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ AK, 28.

⁶⁰ NGH, 142.

⁶¹ NGH, 155.

On this sentiment James and Foucault are in profound agreement.

But, in another sense, Foucault's analysis marks a radical divergence from James. Foucault puts the constituting elements of James's experience and agreeable leading under the same suspicious eye as the abhorred metaphysical assurances. Foucault's project takes on the task of criticizing what constitutes our experience and the results are countless lost events without points of reference. This would seem to dramatically undermine James' truth as a point of reference for experience. It is an important difference to which I shall return.

Foucault wants to deal with events in terms of their most unique characteristics and their most acute manifestations in order to bring to the surface the multiple processes that constitute ^{them} ~~it~~. For an event is not simply a "what happened", it is not a decision or a closed assemblage of entities. It is, rather, a complex relation of elements that can include the reversal of a relationship of forces, or the appropriation of a vocabulary, that need not be understood in its purest essence, but in their unique and contingent context.

Foucault introduces the process of eventalization to address this recontextualization. In traditional analysis eventalization implies a breach of self-evidence. Its goal is to dissociate analysis from the tyranny of globalizing theories. "It means making visible a singularity at a place where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant...or an obviousness that imposes itself uniformly on all."⁶²

But this does not, therefore, imply a transparent materialist interpretation that is somehow liberated from ideological constraints. Rather it makes possible the rediscovery of the "connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of force, strategies, and so on that at a given moment establish what subsequently count as being self-evident, universal, and necessary. In this sense one is indeed effecting a sort of multiplication or pluralization of causes."⁶³

It is important to develop a distinction among events that allows for the differentiation of networks and levels to which they belong and to reconstitute the lines along which they

⁶² QM, 104.

⁶³ *ibid.*

connect and engender one another. And this must be done without conflating events with the concept of structure.

It is not a matter of locating everything on one level, that of the event, but of realizing that there are actually a whole order of levels of different types of events differing in amplitude, chronological breadth, and capacity to produce effects.⁶⁴

Genealogy is the method Foucault describes as best situated to achieve this analysis precisely because it picks up on “the local character of criticism whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought.”⁶⁵ For genealogy opposes itself to the search for origins and has as its indispensable restraint the recording of the singularity of events outside any monotonous finality. Genealogy seeks to cultivate the details and accidents that accompany every beginning in order to show that truth has its existence in their exteriority.

Instead of assuming the self-evident necessity of our present situation Foucault encourages us to question why and how it became possible for things to take their current shape. In order to accomplish this we must be willing and able to rediscover the connections, strategies, and “plays of forces” that establish what comes to be thought of as self-evident, universal, and necessary.⁶⁶ As an example Foucault posits:

...it wasn't a matter of course that mad people came to be regarded as mentally ill; it wasn't self-evident that the only thing to be done with a criminal was to lock him up, it wasn't self-evident that the causes of illness were to be sought through the individual examination of bodies; and so on. A breach of self-evidence, of those self-evidences on which our knowledges, acquiescences, and practices rest. This is the first theoretico-political function of “eventalization.”⁶⁷

And this is precisely what genealogy enables.

This local character of analysis and criticism that characterizes genealogy has proceeded by means of what one might term a return of knowledges or an *insurrection of subjugated*

⁶⁴ TP. 114.

⁶⁵ TL. 81.

⁶⁶ QM. 104.

⁶⁷ QM. 104.

knowledges by which Foucault means two things. First subjugated knowledges imply historical contents that have been buried and disguised by the formal systematization and coherence of global theories. Genealogy should allow us to rediscover effects of events that the order of traditional thought has masked. "Subjugated knowledges are thus those blocks of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematizing theory."⁶⁸

Second, for Foucault, subjugation implies the process of becoming disqualified as inadequate or insufficiently elaborated. Subjugated knowledges include "naive knowledges located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity."⁶⁹ Genealogical analysis cannot function until the tyranny of globalizing discourses with their hierarchies and privileging continuity are eliminated.

What (genealogy) really does is to entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory that would filter, hierarchize and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects.⁷⁰

In this respect genealogy can be seen as an attempt to liberate historical knowledges, though not in the service of truth or freedom. It does not reveal the secret operations of power in the constitution of truth for the sake of emancipating subjects from its effects. Rather, historical knowledges should be liberated from the subjection that inscribes them in the hierarchization of power.

CONCLUSION

If the similarities with James seem only tangential after a Foucauldian analysis, perhaps this is because Foucault never relents in his suspicion. In a world with no ultimately necessary unities one necessity rises to the surface; namely, the everywhere present need for contingently constructed networks that constitute all human experience. James may still be correct to call truth that which guides us in our experience, but Foucault dramatically

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ TL, 82.

⁷⁰ TL, 83.

relativizes its value by highlighting its arbitrary constitution. James seems not to question the ultimate value of truth, stressing that true ideas lead to consistency, stability, and flowing human intercourse and away from barren thinking. Foucault may very well agree with this much, but only to point out that this very consistency and stability are practical consequences of the will to knowledge, developed within certain contexts that are the result of specific accidents and events, with no inherent meaning in themselves.

The world we know is not this ultimately simple configuration where events are reduced to accentuate their essential traits, their final meaning, or their initial and final value. On the contrary, it is a profusion of entangled events.⁷¹

The effect this has on James' analysis of practical consequences is significant if not debilitating. Foucault's project, which continues the pragmatic theme of moving farther away from our metaphysical tradition in favor of a more down to earth and concrete philosophy, forces us to ask what essential meaning can be found in practical consequences and agreeable leading. For James this is where truth is found—the only truth that actually makes a difference. For Foucault, however, the truths found in agreeable leading and practical consequences are only symptoms of a deeper functioning in the positive unconscious that constitutes our experience. These truths hold no essential meaning or essential liberatory power, but owe their existence to power relations that are developed in the context of specific events and accidents.

Perhaps the most powerful sentiment that James and Foucault share is one that James mentions and leaves unexamined and that Foucault makes the focus of most of his life's work. It is a similarity that makes my project in this essay meaningful because Foucault, in a sense, carries James' examination further by employing this very suspicion that James himself failed to carry through on his own work. This suspicion is the one with which I started the introduction, a suspicion of the power of older truths. It is my hope, in articulating Foucault's work towards understanding this power, to contribute to a fruitful conception of one of the ways in which truth functions.

It is quite difficult to give this suspicion appropriate analysis, because it is debilitating to

⁷¹ NGH.155.

CHAPTER 3

PRODUCTIVE POWER

Introduction

Some powerful “older truths” have come to the surface in our discussion of contemporary rethinkings of how truth functions. We have seen, for example, truth recontextualized from copying\mirroring nature to truth as *agreeable leading*, an orientation towards what is efficacious. Truth as sameness of nature and thought has dissolved, for some, because of the loss of ahistorical, rational principles that objectively guarantee one to one correspondence between the world, our thought, and our language. In this chapter I would like to discuss the role power plays in producing truths and in constituting them into a “regime of truth.” The results should help create a gauge to judge to what extent a new conception of truth can avoid particular problems of the past and address problems of the present and future.

In the preceding chapter I made the point that truth is relative to discourse. This idea proved helpful in better understanding James’s recontextualization of truth as a process of *agreeable leading*. Discourse-relative truth puts *agreeable leading* in its proper context, highlighting its constitution not in mirroring “nature” or “the world out there”, but in orienting our discourse-constituted ideas and actions in efficacious directions. But highlighting truth’s indebtedness to particular discourses is not Foucault’s new discovery for contemporary philosophy. Many “postmodern” thinkers have advanced this argument.

Foucault, for one, has more to say about truth than simply pointing out its relativity to given discourses. C.G. Prado focuses his analysis on the different notions of truth in Foucault’s work.⁷² Prado attempts to distinguish between these several faces because without them, he argues, critics are quick to see equivocation and extreme inconsistency in Foucault. With his distinctions Prado is able to appreciate and understand Foucault on many different levels, without having to criticize a *theoretical* account of the *nature* of truth.

⁷² Carlos G. Prado, *Starting With Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy*. (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1995).

Since Foucault does not offer a theory of truth...his various claims about and uses of truth are not components of a unified conception which might be articulated and serve as a standard against which to check problematic remarks.⁷³

Prado distinguishes five different notions of truth operating in Foucault's work, the relativist, constructivist, perspectivist, experientialist, and semi-objectivist. The first two are important to this chapter. The previous chapter was an explication of what Prado labels the relativist notion, insofar as the point was made that all truth is relative to a given discourse and, furthermore, that there is no extra-linguistic standard (no god's-eye-view) from which to adjudicate truth claims between different discourses.⁷⁴ This view in particular seems to be where many "postmodern" thinkers get lumped together as relativists.⁷⁵ But critics often overlook, Prado argues, that Foucault is not offering any unified theoretical account of the nature of truth according to which he is inconsistent.

The constructivist notion found in Foucault pertains to the manner in which power blindly produces truth.⁷⁶ One common misunderstanding to be taken into consideration regards the extent to which Foucault is unearthing how the "real" truth has been covered over, bastardized by discourse and ideology. This raises the issue of the difference between truth and what passes for true. To be fair to Foucault, I note that this is not a distinction he makes. For Foucault, there is no innocent truth that resides below the surface, constantly being covered over by the human will.

The important thing here, I believe, is that truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power: ...truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of

⁷³ Prado, 120.

⁷⁴ Prado's explication draws on examples of similarity with Rorty, who as a "postmodern pragmatist" is continuing a philosophical attitude begun by the classical pragmatists, most notably James and Dewey. I find this comparison both encouraging and helpful for better understanding Foucault as a thinker with deep pragmatic tendencies. Specifically, Prado highlights the similarity between Foucault's "discourse" and Rorty's "vocabulary," noting that neither are purely verbal (123). For more similarities with Rorty see, 148-150.

⁷⁵ Prado, 119.

⁷⁶ Prado, 121-126.

power.⁷⁷

There is one issue that should perhaps be noted before I turn to truth and power. This issue revolves around to what extent truth is wholly a linguistic phenomenon. If what passes for truth is the only truth, and if there is no extra-linguistic standard for judging, then to this extent truth is relativized to a quality of our sentences.⁷⁸ But this presents the subject with certain new questions regarding subjectivity, specifically how subjects appropriate power-produced truths as their own beliefs. Given this, I would like to keep the question of truth as wholly linguistic an open one. If truth is so closely tied to power and is a form of orientation in terms of efficacious ideas *and* actions, in terms of orientation of a life, perhaps it should be left ambiguous where truth stands in relation to language and life.⁷⁹

A Constructivist Notion: Truth and Power

Understanding to what extent and how power produces truth, not only relativizes truth's value but also gives us an eye for the "positive unconscious" that shapes our current discussion. In some places, Foucault has a dark, pessimistic mood about him when he describes the subject's position in a discourse.

In the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power.⁸⁰

But this sounds dark and pessimistic only until the productive aspects of power are more fully understood. Yet for those with a traditional understanding of truth, this characterization of being determined, destined, and condemned tells a story of the world

⁷⁷ TP, 131.

⁷⁸ "For Foucault, nature has no priority over language: discourse determines what nature *is*. Truth does not mirror anything; truth is wholly linguistic and a product of power. Signs are not derivative but primary; their uses constitute what they supposedly symbolize." Prado, 146.

⁷⁹ Perhaps the best strategy in the end will be to find a different articulation for this process of production that is so closely tied to a life's orientation. But with further work to be done I simply want to keep the option alive that "truth" may indeed be an appropriate characterization.

⁸⁰ TL, 94.

wherein subjects seem to be pawns in an insidious power game. When Foucault says that “we are *subjected* to the production of truth through the production of power”, and that “we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth”⁸¹, he intends both that we are at the mercy of a power that determines true discourse, and also that we become subjects, are subject-ed precisely in this context. “We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects.”⁸² By drastically debilitating the metaphysician’s, objectivist’s notion of autonomy, Foucault posits that our subjectivity is constituted in our subjection to “regimes of truth and power.”

There are two meanings of the word *subject*: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.⁸³

In the Foucauldian sense of control and dependence, we are also subjected to truth “in the sense in which it is truth that makes the laws, that produces the true discourse which, at least partially, decides, transmits, and itself extends upon the effects of power.”⁸⁴

In the same way that an Old Testament Jew might find subjectivity in relation to God’s laws, or a New Testament Christian might find subjectivity in response to the *imago dei* that is Christ⁸⁵, or even the way a Jamesian pragmatist might find subjectivity in relation to an orientation of agreeable leading—so Foucault argues that we are *subjected*, both controlled and dependent, as well as having our subjectivity constituted, in a discourse of power-produced truths⁸⁶.

Foucault was consistent throughout his life’s work in seeking to understand subjects as

⁸¹ TL, 93, my emphasis.

⁸² TL, 97.

⁸³ SP, 212.

⁸⁴ TL, 94.

⁸⁵ I use religious examples familiar to me to highlight the, perhaps, nonrational, spiritual dimension that is a foundational element in our life’s orientation and the truth we find therein.

⁸⁶ Whether or not this is a double movement or one and the same thing is a matter of debate. What should be clear, however, is that we are not absolutely controlled, and our subjectivity is, in a Rortian sense, open to redescription. For Foucault it is precisely genealogy which gives us the tools and framework to transform ourselves because of the ability to see where and how things have taken on their specific configurations.

effects of power relations and not as constituting autonomous epistemological agents. Archeological analysis accounts for a subject's constitution within a historical framework where genealogy can trace specific, contingent events which constitute that framework. Foucault wants to ask "how things work at the level of ongoing subjugation, at the level of these continuous, and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviors, etc.," through which "subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted."⁸⁷

This question and focus of analysis has taken on even more significance in studying modern and contemporary subjugation because of the change of disciplinary regimes that has taken place.

Indeed, what is distinctive of the modern disciplinary regime, in his view, is just the way in which coercion by violence has been largely replaced by the gentler force of administration by scientifically trained experts, public displays of power by the imperceptible deployment of techniques based on a detailed knowledge of their targets.⁸⁸

The decrease of physical violence with the introduction of, for example, the panopticon, on the surface seems to make things more humane. And indeed, in some respects it does. But the transparency of such an "improvement" betrays to what extent coercion and manipulation are carried out by other means, perhaps in our being constituted in a discourse of power-produced truths.⁸⁹ Hence the significance, for Foucault, of understanding subjects as *effects*.

But to most with a traditional understanding of truth, the constraints this places on subjects seem not only new but overburdening. That we are *forced* to produce the truth of power which our society demands leads one to think both that discourse is overly determined and that it is impossible to imagine or create any alternative power source. "...[W]e *must* speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover

⁸⁷ TL, 97.

⁸⁸ Thomas McCarthy, "The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School," in *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*. Michael Kelly ed. (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994). 251.

⁸⁹ For further discussion on disciplinary regimes see TL, 105-108. TP.

the truth.”⁹⁰ Is it possible to discover falsity (or even irrelevant “facts”) and use it advantageously? Not for normal(ized) people concerned with moving efficaciously through life.

Now the constraints that power places on the subject’s inquiry are often misunderstood as simply a suspicion of “what passes for true” over against what really *is* true. On this misreading power is only ever seen as a repressive force that closes down paths of possible alternative modes of thought. But for Foucault this misunderstanding rests on the inability to see that there is no distinction to make between truth and what passes. “It is not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power)...”⁹¹ Foucault is not deconstructing what passes for true in order to get at what might really be going on. Allen correctly surmises that “even though what passes for true is conditioned by nothing but the historically contingent normativity that prevails in practice, there is no impressive difference between what passes for true and the truth itself.”⁹²

For Foucault the notion of power understood as repression, as only closing down, is inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power. To identify power with a “law that says no”, argues Foucault, is a “wholly negative, narrow, skeletal conception of power.”⁹³ Rather, Foucault is alluding to a conception of power that is coextensive with every social relationship insofar as it conditions a way in which actions upon other actions is possible and ongoing.⁹⁴ “In human relations, whatever they are, power is always present and I mean the relationships in which one wishes to direct the behavior of others.”⁹⁵ Furthermore, Foucault argues that in the analysis of power relations the problem “is not of trying to dissolve them in...a perfectly transparent communication,” *pace* Habermas, but rather the task of giving “one’s self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the ethos, the paradox of self,” which

⁹⁰ TL, 93.

⁹¹ TP, 133.

⁹² Allen, 149.

⁹³ TP, 119.

⁹⁴ SP, 222-224.

⁹⁵ ECS, 11.

would foster a “minimum of domination.”⁹⁶

In this context Foucault appeals to the human desire not to be blind pawns at the mercy of insidious power relations, by positing that we would not be drawn to “obey” power if it were never anything but repressive.

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.⁹⁷

The important point here is that while it is understandable that Foucault sounds negative and pessimistic in places, focusing on this pessimism is not, on my reading, the most helpful interpretation. Foucault is most basically articulating a suspicion of the naivete wherein epistemological agents need to be in control, thereby formulating aspects of the positive unconscious that constitutes our present.

Power Relations

Looking to a concrete example of a given discourse may be instructive for better understanding the functioning of power relations. One such example is found in Foucault’s response to the first question he addresses in his famous interview “Truth and Power.”⁹⁸ He is asked to outline the route which led from work on madness in the Classical Age to a study of criminality and delinquency. His response exemplifies more than it explains.

Rather than explicating an historical delineation of causes, Foucault remarks of his curious failure to interest those to whom he had addressed the question of the relation between power and knowledge in psychiatry.⁹⁹ He offers telling reasons why his work

⁹⁶ ECS, 18. These statements put me a bit ahead of myself. My point is that for Foucault power is everywhere present, it sets the conditions of possibility for actions and discourse, and it is decidedly not, in its first instance, domination. In fact it can be set against domination in an attempt to keep it to a minimum. This theme will be picked up shortly in the section on governmentality.

⁹⁷ TP, 119.

⁹⁸ op. cit.

⁹⁹ TP, 110.

was met with such “great silence.” These reasons point to definite power relations that constitute discourse. First he suggests that because Marxism sought to win acceptance as a renewal of the liberal university tradition it was necessary to “pose the same theoretical questions as the academic establishment, to deal with the same problems and topics.”¹⁰⁰ In this sense, the very conditions of possibility for discussion had less to do with curious academic inquiry than with *who* was doing the discussing. “The price Marxists paid for their fidelity to the old positivism (a prerequisite to winning acceptance) was a radical deafness to a whole series of questions posed by science.”¹⁰¹

In other words, even if the reason for silence on the topic was as innocent and arbitrary as the specific intention of joining an already present conversation, still, in practice, this amounted to a hoop-jumping exercise. Marxists needed to prove their ability to play the same game. This resulted in “a frightening repetition of the already said”, in a discourse that “would not permit the broaching of uncharted domains.”¹⁰²

Furthermore, in a typically Foucauldian moment, Foucault goes on to hypothesize the extent to which the strategy was innocent or arbitrary. Specifically, he asks if there wasn't an intentional refusal to pose questions concerning the political use of psychiatry and internment and “in a more general sense, of the disciplinary grid of society” given the political situation in 1955-60 when little was known of the communist control of eastern Europe.¹⁰³

This is the context in which his work was received with great silence among the French intellectual left. And it is, I think, a helpful explanation of power relations, exemplifying that without power there is no dialogue.

This power that constitutes and thrives on a certain regime of truth is a complicated and complex phenomenon. It is not simply the right one has over another individual, but neither is it an overtly legitimated structure that enforces itself in a given discourse. It is, rather, something that only surfaces in concrete events and actions. Foucault admits that he

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ “I am convinced, therefore, for political reasons it was not possible to raise the problem of the real practice of confinement, of the real nature of the psychiatric practice.” *OP*, 98.

in no way constructs a “theory of Power.” In fact, power as an autonomous question does not interest him because “[p]ower exists only when it is put into action, even if, it is integrated into a disparate field of possibilities brought to bear upon permanent structures.”¹⁰⁴

Power as an ideological tool,¹⁰⁵ as a universal form, is too facile as an interpretation of the dynamics involved in a discourse. Delimiting power’s manifestations and understanding it as *action* opens up the possibility of analyzing different constitutive roots of oppressive, violent regimes.

In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action or on those which may arise in the present or the future.¹⁰⁶

This phenomenon of actions acting on actions of others adds a new dimension to the discourse on truth.¹⁰⁷ Though subtle and complex, the operation of the “political technologies throughout the social body”¹⁰⁸ is what Prado concludes is the constructivist notion which, divorced from any unified theoretical conception, enables Foucault to probe the deeper dynamic at work in discourse.

“Power produces truth blindly, nonsubjectively, and unsystematically,” states Prado,

¹⁰⁴ SP, 219.

¹⁰⁵ Foucault’s anti-ideological use of power, his examination of the subtle interrelations that set the conditions of possibility for power relations is precisely what gets him in trouble with those who criticize him for his ambiguity. Some argue that because power is everywhere it is ultimately nowhere insofar as it cannot articulate abusive, oppressive power. For a feminist example of such a critique see Nancy Hartsock’s “Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?” *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson, (New York:Routledge, 1990), 157-175. Foucault is not completely innocent of such charges. “[S]omething called Power, with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diverse form, does not exist.” (SP, 219.) Though, of course, this is only posited to be consistent with the rest of Foucault’s claims that nothing exists absolutely and universally, that is to say, outside an economy of truths on the basis of which all discourse is possible. See, for example, CT/II, 128-129. A more accurate critique, I think, would not be claiming that Foucault’s method can’t pinpoint abusive power, indeed, that is precisely its strength, but rather asking on what grounds states of power relations are to be embraced or rejected.

¹⁰⁶ SP, 220.

¹⁰⁷ “But the role of power is new...for him truth is also a product of nonsubjective, impersonal power, and that is a novel idea.” Prado, 146.

¹⁰⁸ Dreyfus and Rabinow’s term, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 185. For their interpretation of actions on actions see 184-207.

“and it does so not by causing beliefs or codifying perceptions but in and through actions.”¹⁰⁹ This notion of power blindly producing truths is, as I have mentioned, too easy to take negatively. It conjures up images of an inverted atheistic version of innocent subjects at the hand of a capricious deity, at the mercy of the great unknown. A frightening description of our illusory autonomy or an arbitrarily pessimistic characterization of life as we know it? Perhaps this question isn’t as important as it sounds. In fact, perhaps this negative characterization already betrays Foucault’s intentions of resurrecting power relations as an element worthy of analysis. Power, for Foucault, is still, in its first instance, *productive*. Moreover, it is only ever articulable in specific actions whose meaning can be genealogically traced. In this sense, putting the focus on events and practices demythologizes and disenchants analysis, allaying our pessimism insofar as power’s manifestations can be located and understood.

Dreyfus and Rabinow affirm Prado’s positing that this power is nonsubjective and impersonal, perhaps even blind. But to counter the seeming arbitrariness of this characterization they attempt to bring out the *intentionality* of specific manifestations of power-effects.¹¹⁰ While power obviously does not unfold itself as a manifestation of the progress of rationality, there are different “rationalities” that can be traced and articulated in specific discourses.

There is no *inherent* logic of stability. Rather, at the level of the practices there is a *directionality* produced from petty calculations, clashes of wills, meshing of minor interests. These are shaped and given a direction by the political technologies of power. This directionality has nothing inherent about it and hence cannot be deduced. It is not a suitable object for a theory. It can, however, be analyzed, and this is Foucault’s project.¹¹¹

This directionality of power relations in a given discourse is intelligible, argue Dreyfus and Rabinow, in the intentionality of specific actions. “At the local level there is often a high degree of conscious decision making, planning, plotting, and coordination of political activity.”¹¹² This intentionality found in specific conscious decisions gives us hope that

¹⁰⁹ Prado, 123, emphasis his.

¹¹⁰ Dreyfus and Rabinow, 187-188.

¹¹¹ Dreyfus and Rabinow, 188, my emphasis.

¹¹² Dreyfus and Rabinow, 187.

we “do not have to see political actors as essentially hypocrites or pawns of power.”¹¹³ But this raises new questions concerning how to understand this intentionality without positing a subject (positing instead a nonsubjective, impersonal power) and so pushes the great mystery of power dynamics back a step farther.¹¹⁴

Governmentality

How do we understand this intentionality? There seems to be a paradox of a push towards a strategic objective without a subject doing the pushing.¹¹⁵ This leaves no recourse but to look at *practices* themselves. The mystery of power relations remains, but not on the level of individuals being blind as to what they do. A genealogical tracing of what makes actions possible and meaningful will go a long way in answering why we do what we do. However, the question that remains unanswered is what these actions accomplish beyond their intention. “As Foucault phrased it, ‘People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what what they do does.’”¹¹⁶

A complicated explanation for a complicated formulation. This “what they do (actions) does (accomplish)” refers to what actions produce beyond their intentions. Foucault argues that what these actions produce is a form of *governmentality*; that is, a delimitation of possibilities for social interchange in the process of affirming certain relations and positions that subjects hold in a discourse, in other words, by *governing* subjects. “The relationship proper to power is neither violence nor consensus but ‘government’ in the very broad sense of guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcomes.”¹¹⁷ In

¹¹³ *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Lorraine Code offers an astute observation concerning the subtleties of power relations in actions and decisions. As a feminist she is honest concerning how to right the wrongs of a patriarchal culture. She admits that “there is no place for attribution of individual responsibility and blame,” while at the same time maintaining that “practitioners must be held accountable, that without accountability no revolution can be made.” Locating accountability without pointing a finger towards guilt is a subtle and complicated task made more difficult with the urgency facing decision makers in the process of discerning power relations. *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 240.

¹¹⁵ Dreyfus and Rabinow, 187.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ McCarthy, 263.

other words, in a discourse whose power is made manifest in a regime of truths, and whose truths are constituted in contingent, powerful networks, we are governed by a dynamic of power relations.

I say that governmentality implies the relationship of self to self, which means exactly that, in the idea of governmentality, I am aiming at the totality of practices, by which one can constitute, define, organize, instrumentalize, the strategies which individuals, in their liberty can have in regard to each other.¹¹⁸

What this amounts to, on my interpretation, in the first instance is a highly sophisticated and nuanced version of *agreeable leading* where orienting one's actions to truth is analogous to the realization that we are governed by a dynamic in which power produced truths shape what is acceptable, appropriate, and advantageous. Furthermore, this is a governing which is not reducible to any one aspect of our experience. It aims at the totality of practices in the totality of our experience.¹¹⁹

As I have alluded, it may only be an arbitrary gesture of preference whether or not we label this analysis of our experience pessimistic. It does indeed have frightening elements of mystery and powerlessness. A question to be asked is whether or not frightening is an appropriate adjective when understood outside a context of nostalgia, a hankering after some pure discourse that means just and only what it says. For it is precisely in this ambiguous context that genealogical analysis is capable of resurrecting certain subjugated knowledges by pointing out that the self-evidence of older truths is more empirically and responsibly understood as contingent networks of specific actions and events. This amounts to the radical admission that old truths are as contingent as everything else. This at least makes it possible to question the claims they make on us in the name of self-preservation.

In this positive context, focusing on the possible liberatory elements of Foucault's method (liberatory in the sense of making possible a new relation between subjects and old,

¹¹⁸ ECS, 19.

¹¹⁹ Remaining constant with his anti-ideological mode of analysis, I interpret this as the recognition that we are not participants in any metanarrative, based on absolute truths that make claims on us. Specifically, for example, we are not constituted first and foremost as members of class struggle, nor are we most accurately understood as autonomous agents in search of ultimate liberation.

self-evident truths), the focus of analysis would shift away from *solving the mystery* of power's dynamic in discourse, towards *developing an economy* of power relations that is more empirical and more directed to our present situation. "Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality," a new economy of power relations would "consist in analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies."¹²⁰

A rather violent metaphor perhaps, but only to highlight the extent to which we are dealing with specific *actions acting* on other specific actions. Foucault takes us out of the abstract realm of the progress of rationalization in general in his continued effort to make philosophy more down to earth and concrete. It is a necessary response to deal with what makes a difference in our present experience.

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects.¹²¹

I would suggest that while analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies sounds necessarily violent and divorced from any kind of mutual empowerment this need not be the only interpretation. When the exercise of power is interpreted as a way in which certain actions structure the field of other possible actions¹²² Foucault stresses a really important precondition, namely, freedom, where a free subject is one who is "faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized."¹²³ "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free."¹²⁴ Slavery, for example, according to Foucault is not first and foremost a power relationship but a state of domination because a human is in chains.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ SP, 211.

¹²¹ SP, 212.

¹²² SP, 221-222.

¹²³ SP, 221.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁵ Foucault also refers to power as "strategic games" where games implies 1) rules for the production of truth, and 2) procedures which lead to certain results. For Foucault, power relations are preconditioned in a subject's liberty to pursue certain things. Domination, in this respect, is a fixed, asymmetrical, irreversible relation of power. See ECS ,16-20.

An odd statement it seems. And one that calls out for misinterpretation because states of domination are what we ordinarily call power.¹²⁶

Perhaps Foucault's intention, however, is precisely to force us to make such an odd distinction.¹²⁷ It forces the issue that power is not necessarily a bad thing (an evil, *pace* Sartre) in the first instance, and also that a physically constrained relationship such as slavery is not in the first instance a power relationship, but a breakdown and violent misuse of power.¹²⁸ At the same time it keeps the door open for the powerless and marginalized to capitalize on a certain mode of power that is not limited to the acceptable regimes of truth.

The fact that for Foucault there can be "no face to face confrontation of power and freedom which is mutually exclusive, but a much more complicated interplay,"¹²⁹ often gets articulated negatively in reference to a subject's free refusal to submit.¹³⁰ For those who lack the imagination to give this a positive articulation it seems a rather pessimistic resignation for a marginalized, relatively powerless group with no recourse but the refusal to "buy" the dominant power structure. In most cases this amounts to an inability to gain a voice in current conversations.

A more positive characterization of the relationship between power relations and individual freedom contains the relatively small advantage of discovering the specific contents and manifestations of particular *freedoms* precisely in relation to the power exercised in actions. The result is a more tangible awareness of one's position in a discourse with the possibility for changing that position. And this is no small realization if

¹²⁶ ECS, 19.

¹²⁷ I find support for such an interpretation in Richard Bernstein's discussion of the rhetoric of disruption in "Foucault: Critique as a Philosophical Ethos," in *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*, 222-226.

¹²⁸ At the risk of belaboring this point, I want to stress again that Foucault's emphasis is on understanding these dynamics so that we can "play these games with a minimum of domination." If power relations are forever a part of our social make up (Foucault's starting assumption) then focusing attention on eliminating them is a fruitless task. For the same reason, however, it would be naive to assume that it is possible to avoid all states of domination. And this makes keeping states of domination to a minimum a fruitful political task. McCarthy makes this argument, 264.

¹²⁹ SP, 221.

¹³⁰ "The relationship between power and freedom's refusal to submit cannot therefore be separated." SP, 221.

the specific intellectual's task is to repeatedly question what our society mistakenly understands as self-evident.¹³¹

In order to understand the contingent network of truths that pass as self-evident, it would seem necessary to first understand the nature of the power exercised in actions that constitute one's degree of freedom. Truths are, at least in part, constituted by such powers, and power gives them their apparent self-evidence. Recognizing this power as constitutive, and understanding how it works, I would argue, gives the individual a place to stand, as contingent as it may be, to see and even judge the power-induced actions that set the conditions of possibility for change. Remember this earlier Foucauldian sentiment, and listen to its conclusion:

It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time.¹³²

Conclusion

For Foucault the analysis of the relationship between "power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is a permanent political task."¹³³ If he is correct it seems that discussions such as this one, concerning the way truth functions, will be forever in a process of mutation.

This chapter has come full circle, once again raising the question of truth. As Prado surmises, Foucault's dealing with truth is a Rortian "change of subject" more than a new theoretical analysis. "The difference is that in Foucault's case the change of subject is not from truth to something else, but a change from theorizing about the nature of truth to investigating how "true" and "truth" work in diverse contexts...."¹³⁴ It is Nietzsche's question concerning truth's ultimate value in a pragmatic attitude whose ethical motivation

¹³¹ Paraphrasing Foucault's remarks in *CT*, 265.

¹³² *TP*, 133.

¹³³ *SP*, 223.

¹³⁴ Prado, 148.

includes asking what can be done in this context to change things for the better.¹³⁵ For, as we have seen, power in the context of actions acting on actions is a constructive and productive characteristic of discourse. It gives subjects the chance to see their position in a discourse and the freedom they hold in it despite their being effects. This freedom and the understanding that accompanies it are indispensable tools in addressing problems that call for creativity and imagination as well as strategic decisions regarding what is possible and what is worthwhile.

¹³⁵ The “for the better” part of the sentence is my own ungrounded hope. It is one that is neither specifically thematized nor, I would argue, wholly absent in Foucault. Foucault’s ambiguity on this score will be thematized in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

At What Price? Critique and Transformation

Introduction

Two important themes in Foucault's work should be explored before I attempt any further comments on a chastened, "postmodern" *agreeable leading*. These themes are Foucault's *ethos* in analysis, which I will call anti-humanist, as well as his focus on care for self as an ethical activity. An analysis of these themes should provide an appropriate context for addressing what a different conception of truth might accomplish and what it cannot.

In the previous chapter the point was made that power relations inhabit every social relationship. Furthermore, it has been posited that this power is productive and constitutive of truth in a given discourse. One result of such a dynamic is that we govern ourselves, and indirectly others, by orienting our actions, our life, towards this productive power that shapes and sustains what is advantageous and efficacious. On this interpretation Foucault can be understood as one continuation of a pragmatic legacy which seeks to learn about truth by examining its practical consequences. Fortunately, Foucault has improved on James' project insofar as he has made evident a hidden naivete in James concerning the multivalence of specific discourses. James neglected to show the specific power relations that shape what society deems acceptable and appropriate.

Foucault's emphasis on the radical contingency in which networks and regimes operate, while allowing room for change, leaves interesting and necessary questions concerning reasons and specific strategies for change.¹³⁶ In the hope of addressing these issues I want to examine Foucault's anti-humanist approach to analysis, which moves him from theories of liberation to practices of freedom. If the point can be sustained that practices of

¹³⁶ Recall that in Foucault there is no distinction to be made between truth and what passes as true. Prado rightly surmises, "Foucault contends it is wrong to interpret his constructivism...as limited to what only passes for true in a given discourse or society and that contrasts with what is true. Foucault's constructivism allows no distinction between truth and apparent truth." Prado, 122.

freedom are more relevant and efficacious than grand theories of liberation, then truth telling will take on a more ethical nature understood in the context of governmentality and sophisticated *agreeable leading*. And, as we shall see, this is not the same as the desire for “liberation” as it has traditionally been understood.

Enlightenment

Foucault’s texts on Kant’s texts on the Enlightenment¹³⁷ are significant for several reasons. For one, they give a taste of the difference Foucault sees between humanism and the Enlightenment and why we should not conflate the two. More importantly, we see the setting of the table at which modern philosophy will dine for at least two-hundred years. Kant’s Enlightenment, on Foucault’s interpretation, is one that sets the context for a new mode of analysis that continues to capture the attention and imagination of contemporary thinkers. In the Enlightenment Foucault sees “the discreet entrance into the history of thought of a question that modern philosophy has not been capable of answering, but that it has never managed to get rid of either.” And the question is this:

What, then, is this event that is called *Aufklärung* and that has determined, at least in part, what we are, what we think, and what we do today?¹³⁸

Responding to this question is how Foucault characterizes the discourse of modernity on modernity.¹³⁹

Foucault is adamant that the Enlightenment is an “*event* or a set of events and complex historical processes, that is located at a certain point in the development of European societies.”¹⁴⁰ As such it includes social transformation, political institutions, forms of knowledge, technological mutations, etc. Kant defines Enlightenment a bit differently, not as an event whose signs can be perceived, nor as a world era to which one belongs, but

¹³⁷ WE, ATT.

¹³⁸ WE, 32.

¹³⁹ ATT, 141.

¹⁴⁰ WE, 43, my emphasis.

rather as an “exit” or a “way out.”¹⁴¹

He [Kant] is not seeking to understand the present on the basis of a totality or of a future achievement. He is looking for a difference: what difference does it introduce with respect to yesterday.¹⁴²

The difference that Kant sees the Enlightenment introducing with respect to yesterday is characterized as a way out of immaturity where immaturity is “a certain state of our will that makes us accept someone else’s authority to lead us in areas where the use of reason is called for.”¹⁴³ This “way out” is a process that takes courage on the subject’s part, a courage to think for oneself, hence Kant’s famous dictum “dare to know!”¹⁴⁴ For Kant this leads to positing a tribunal of reason which acts as its own judge and guarantor by means of the transcendental logical ego through which finite subjects gain access to this autonomy.

But the legacy of Kant that Foucault stresses is not “faithfulness to doctrinal elements (such as a tribunal or transcendental logical ego), but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude—that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era.”¹⁴⁵ Though not Kant’s phrasing, the continuity of Foucault’s sentiment ? is clearly enough connected to Kant’s meaning. Having to think for ourselves without another authority means the always possible critique of who we are. It is a process that also takes the mood of courage, maturity, and responsibility. And this mood, ethos, attitude, for Foucault, characterizes modernity:

And by “attitude,” I mean a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ WE, 34.

¹⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ It is important also to recognize the *positive* and *productive* element in the Enlightenment that was a response to a crisis of subjects blindly accepting the authority of, for example, the church, out of fear, manipulation, and coercion.

¹⁴⁵ WE, 42.

¹⁴⁶ WE, 39.

Modern thinking, acting, and feeling is done maturely and responsibly. Belonging to the present becomes a courageous act because of the task facing subjects in a call to autonomous creation and invention.

There is no small irony lost on Foucault regarding a Kantian maturity and autonomy which accepts no one's authority but one's own by accessing a *universal* reason through an imaginary transcendental logical ego. Such a reason and ego, of course, are authoritarian beyond one's individual autonomy. That Foucault realizes this awkward progress to maturity is evident in his refusal to confuse humanism and the Enlightenment. If modernity is an enlightened ethos of courage, responsibility, and permanent critique, then, Foucault states, humanism is entirely different insofar as it is a "theme or, rather, a set of themes that have reappeared on several occasions," that are "always tied to value judgments."¹⁴⁷ And these value judgments, on Foucault's reading, are not open to criticism. Furthermore, this "humanistic thematic is in itself too simple, too diverse, too inconsistent to serve as an axis for reflection."¹⁴⁸ Specifically, humanism is a detriment to analysis because it relies on a certain conception of the subject as having a permanent "nature" unto which it must be liberated.¹⁴⁹ As an analytical tool, this *constituting* subject, this anthropological constant, misses the fruitful level of subjects as *effects*, at which Foucault's analyses are directed.¹⁵⁰

Because of the radical contingency of our make-up, any element in analysis that blocks our ability to stand back and account for the objectification and/or subjectification of a discourse's constituent material, is too facile and too limited in its scope. A constituting subject is one such element.

¹⁴⁷ WE, 44.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ On liberation see ECS, 2.

¹⁵⁰ Foucault is not specifically railing against *humanists*. He is, rather, suggesting that humanistic themes, primarily a reliance on a human essentialism, is a poor axis of reflection. In this context I find Rorty's distinction between ironists and metaphysicians a helpful one. Foucault is attempting to rid analysis of metaphysicians, of those who "agree that we have the truth within us, that we have built-in criteria which enable us to recognize the right final vocabulary when we hear it.... The metaphysician thinks that although we may not have all the answers, we have already got criteria for the right answers. So he thinks 'right' does not merely mean "suitable for those who speak as we do" but has a stronger sense—the sense of 'grasping real essence'." *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 76.

One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that is to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework.¹⁵¹

McCarthy rightly points out that that which *does* appear to investigation as supra-individual is, on Foucault's analysis, no longer transcendental but sociocultural in origin.¹⁵² For this reason, treating subjects as effects of specific discourses allows us to account for how things can become objects of study, including subjects themselves.¹⁵³

Another manifestation of courageous and mature thinking is the curious "Man doublet" dilemma.¹⁵⁴ The philosophical interrogation that is part of our Enlightenment legacy is not only a problematization of our relation to the present but also a problematization of the constitution of a self as an autonomous subject.¹⁵⁵ The confusion surrounds the odd phenomenon that subjects are both elements and agents, both epistemic objects and subjects of power in this present.

In this context one of the major humanist projects, argues Nancy Fraser, is "that of solving the Man problem. It is the project of making the subject pole triumph over the object pole, of achieving autonomy by mastering the other in history, in society, in oneself."¹⁵⁶ And while she has her own criticisms,¹⁵⁷ she admits that Foucault's unique analysis of subjects as effects has provided an alternative to humanism for social criticism, that there is "life—and critique, after Cartesianism."¹⁵⁸

Just what are Foucault's precise motives for criticizing the humanistic thematic as an axis for reflection? He does *not* conclude that everything that has ever been linked with humanism is to be rejected. Rather, because "what is called humanism has always been

¹⁵¹ TP, 117.

¹⁵² McCarthy, 244.

¹⁵³ For more on the subject see ECS, 10.

¹⁵⁴ OT, ch 9, Nancy Fraser, "Michel Foucault: A 'Young Conservative'?" in *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*. (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994), 185-210.

¹⁵⁵ WE, 41.

¹⁵⁶ Fraser, 191.

¹⁵⁷ She argues that rejecting humanism on normative grounds requires an alternative "paradigm for human freedom" at which Foucault will not even hint. 204. See also Code, 297.

¹⁵⁸ Fraser, 193. Cornel West makes a similar argument in *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 79-82.

obliged to lean on certain conceptions of man borrowed from religion, science, or politics...[h]umanism serves to color and to justify the conceptions of man to which it is...obliged to take recourse.”¹⁵⁹ Because of this thematic of obligation to a certain conception of “man”, humanism can be opposed by the Enlightenment principle of permanent critique. Foucault is, I think rightly, sensitive to the obligation that humanism owes to some ideological conception of the subject, because that subject is never wholly sociocultural but also, in some sense, transcendental.¹⁶⁰ And while a transcendental subject is often above the fray of criticism and analysis, it is also strategically weakened with regard to pinpointing specific events and actions that have constituted it as an oppressed, marginalized, or powerful and valorized human being.

A conception of subjects that stands outside the flux, that is constituted outside the muddy particulars of experience, is one that does not enable us to be radically reformational, permanently critical. The drawback is a serious limitedness in imagining change. For this reason, Foucault is “inclined to see Enlightenment and humanism in a state of tension rather than identity.”¹⁶¹

The extent to which Foucault is on target in his critique of this humanistic thematic pushes us even farther towards asking why *this* critique, why *this* method? Highlighting his concerns and his method highlights Foucault’s own ethical/political position towards that which he criticizes. Is it fair, given Foucault’s obvious concern for human suffering and the implicit dignity he sees in humanity, to label him a humanist where humanism signifies humanity as the final court of appeal in all ethical matters? It can be argued that Foucault has an ethical/political “final vocabulary” that feeds his work, though he adamantly refuses to thematize it.¹⁶² Furthermore, while Foucault must recognize this, we can and should ask what it amounts to that he will not articulate the source of his ethico-

¹⁵⁹ WE, 44.

¹⁶⁰ See also TP, 118-119, on Foucault’s reservations towards ideological analysis.

¹⁶¹ WE, 44.

¹⁶² This is a point of contention for many readers of Foucault, and a point to which I shall return. For example Richard Rorty makes this argument by comparing Foucault and Habermas, 63-64.

political commitments.¹⁶³ While I am not sure what kind of answers would be appropriate to these questions, I will nevertheless, without avoiding these issues, put them off a little longer until I've reached the end of this discussion.

Neutral Critique/Ethical Transformation

Foucault situates his work within the modern ethos of a permanent critique of our historical era, though criticism is no longer to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal values, but

...rather as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying. In that sense, this criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making a new metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archeological in its method.¹⁶⁴

Critique takes on supreme importance for Foucault, but it is a critique that responds more responsibly, modestly, and ethically to a radically contingent world.

It is indeed ironic, in the Rortian sense, to call criticism ethical without some paradigm of normativity for human freedom. But on Foucault's reconceptualization, "critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are."¹⁶⁵ Instead criticism should focus on familiar and unchallenged assumptions that support our practices and thoughts.

Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self-evident as one believed, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such. Practicing criticism is a matter of making facile gestures difficult.¹⁶⁶

Because there are no transcendently normative grounds on which to criticize, critique

¹⁶³ Charles Taylor raises the same issue towards philosophers of radical contingency in *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 99.

¹⁶⁴ WE, 46. It is perhaps an interesting question whether or not the "events that have led us to constitute ourselves..." are substantially different from understanding ourselves as *effects*. For Foucault, this constitution is not a conscious activity, but a response to what is possible, given our contingent positioning in discourses. On my interpretation, constituting ourselves as subjects is closely related to understanding ourselves as effects.

¹⁶⁵ PC, 154.

¹⁶⁶ PC, 155.

takes on a more neutral characteristic, exploring the contingent constitution of our supposedly self-evident truths. In this sense, Foucault's critique makes use of a modest and ironic maturity instead of an heroic maturity that continues to haunt us today insofar as Enlightenment maturity weakens the "autonomous subject's" ability to accurately deal with the elements and dynamics to which it can be *subjected*.

To put it differently, Foucault's ethical "shoulds" are very different from traditional, humanist "shoulds." Scholars *should* critique self-evident truths because it turns out that they are contingent, discourse-relative formulations. Whatever they might be, they can be changed because they are not set in stone as eternal principles. For Foucault this is not merely high brow lip service hiding a humanistic desire to change for the better. It is the recognition that change is *possible*. It is something altogether different to appeal to transcendental standards of normativity and pursue change to meet these ends. Critique, for Foucault, is neutral, and particular changes are the business of particular communities which can serve to develop more equal, healthy power relations.¹⁶⁷

Though more "neutral" in the sense that it is not based in some transcendently normative criterion, critique, for Foucault, does remain an ethical activity because of its integral relationship with "transformation". Indeed, for Foucault, transformation is constant criticism.

It is not therefore a question of there being a time for criticism and a time for transformation, nor those who do the criticism and others who do the transformation, those who are enclosed in an inaccessible radicalism and those who are forced to make the necessary concessions to reality. In fact I think the work of deep transformation can only be carried out in a free atmosphere, one constantly agitated by a permanent critique.¹⁶⁸

Transformation and criticism are ethical activities, for Foucault, because they are practices

¹⁶⁷ While critique traditionally implies change the two are not necessary partners. Critique can be in the service of imagining how to change things for the better, but it can also serve to simply provide a fuller understanding of whatever is under investigation. To reiterate, Foucauldian critique implies first and foremost a recognition that self-evident truths are contingent, discourse-relative formulations.

¹⁶⁸ PC, 155.

of freedom.¹⁶⁹

Implicit in Foucauldian critique is the possibility of separating the contingency that has made us what we are from the potential of transforming ourselves from what we presently are, do, and think. The fact that we have no higher power on which to draw does not leave us impotent in matters of change. The most efficacious mode of analysis, then, and hence the task of the intellectual, for Foucault, in the process of accounting for subjects as effects, is making “conflicts more visible, of making them more essential than mere confrontations of interests or mere institutional mobility.”¹⁷⁰

This ability to critique is founded not in humanism’s appeal to an a priori “nature” or anthropological constant, but ironically in a modern ethos of maturity and responsibility to think for oneself, to accept no authority that will be forever safe from further suspicion. In this context critique is an always possible practice of freedom that does not lament the loss of some nature unto which subjects must be liberated, but rather, that creates tools to see precisely how our contingent make-ups may be transformed to promote more just and equal power relations. This potential is at the center of Foucault’s method, and it points towards an ethical commitment that sustains his efforts. In his own words:

My optimism would consist...in saying that so many things can be changed, fragile as they are, bound up more with circumstances than necessities, more arbitrary than self-evident, more a matter of complex, but temporary, historical circumstances than with inevitable anthropological constants.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Cornel West offers an interesting interpretation of Foucault, appropriate to this paper because of its context of “prophetic pragmatism.” West praises Foucault’s method for its anti-humanist mode of analysis and ability to discern power relations that constitute truth values. 82-83. The weakness he sees, however, is in Foucault’s naivete towards conflict, struggle, and insurgency, “a naivete primarily caused by the rejection of any form of utopianism and any positing of a telos” (84). Most interesting, however, is West’s discussion of “prophetic pragmatism,” or pragmatism at its best. It relies on a critical temper which does not become a fetish and a democratic faith that is not idolatrous (the lacking element in Foucault’s work). When criticism is all-encompassing or becomes a fetish West warns of an “ironic consciousness of parody and paralysis.” In such a context the major forces to be contested are despair, dogmatism, and oppression (139-140). A fair and healthy warning indeed, though it remains unclear to what extent Foucault’s “naivete” results in these forces of evil. I find it interesting and rather instructive that many neopragmatists find Foucault helpful in terms of what his method accomplishes, but seem disappointed in his refusal to posit a utopian telos. What Foucault seems to lack is an articulated commitment to some radically contingent and ironic hope—some basic faith and trust rather like religious commitments. What is missing, however, is any detailed analysis of where Foucault fails and Rorty and others succeed because of such a faith.

¹⁷⁰ PC, 156.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*

I have been attempting to make the case that for Foucault the rubber hits the road precisely when philosophy problematizes its own discursive contemporaneity: “a contemporaneity that it questions as an event, as an event whose meaning, value, philosophical particularity it is its task to bring out and in which it has to find both its own *raison d’être* and the grounds for what it says.”¹⁷² This particular thread of the Enlightenment that Foucault calls a “critical ontology of ourselves” puts to us at one and the same time the task of “a historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment of going beyond them.”¹⁷³ It is a call to understand ourselves as effects of our history.

Foucault is poorly interpreted when it is posited that he has no possibility for change simply because he lacks a utopian telos. Indeed change is the impetus for constantly exploring the contingent nature of our assumedly self-evident institutions and practices. The very nature of Foucault’s project implies the always possible critique and reformulation of who we are, first because it is *possible*, and second because it may be *worthwhile*. Foucault ironically takes Kant’s emphasis on responsibility to its limit where it folds back on itself, leaving us in our present without any absolute standards or authorities, but producing meaning nonetheless. The moment our discursive contemporaneity is problematized is the moment foundationalism, absolute faith in reason, begins to teeter, and it is precisely the moment that human responsibility takes on a new significance.¹⁷⁴ In this sense, asking of the present what in it produces meaning now for philosophical reflection is *the* question of the past two-hundred years of philosophy.

Implicit in the project of problematizing the present to sincerely ask what produces meaning now, is a solidarity no stronger than the contingent context in which we presently find ourselves. That is to say, allowing a permanent critique its full force and scope of suspicion involves disavowing ourselves of faith in an absolute reason behind which all things are held together. It means understanding society and its inhabitants as effects of all those events and dynamics that shape it.

¹⁷² ATT, 88.

¹⁷³ WE, 50.

¹⁷⁴ The language sounds humanistic perhaps, but only ironically so. Responsibility remains quite modest for Foucault.

Far from being fatalistic or deterministic, this permanent critique of our historical era is a project that thrives on the possibility of change, as well as the possibility of identifying in solidarity with others who inhabit the same contingent world. Problematizing the present is not first and foremost a pessimistic resignation that things are never what they seem but rather, a mature act of modest hope in which subjects can more responsibly draw on real, empirical events that *they* share, that shape *them* as a coherent body.

...[W]hen a philosopher asks how he belongs to this present it is a quite different question from that of how one belongs to a particular doctrine or tradition; it is no longer simply the question of how one belongs to a human community in general, but rather that of how one belongs to a certain "us," to an us that concerns a cultural totality characteristic of one's own time.¹⁷⁵

I am suggesting that Foucault's analysis and his unique connection to the Enlightenment are elements of something quite radical. On one level Foucault is rightly seen in relation to the "masters of suspicion," pointing out the evils of modernity, the hypocrisy of trust in reason, and the sham of epistemologically autonomous subjects. On another level, Foucault, again rightly, situates himself directly in this Kantian tradition, articulating how his project is the continuation of a permanent critique, in the sense of permanent critical awareness, of our historical era. Finally, however, Foucault is unique and intriguing because of his refusal to "come down" on any side. This, the sorest point of contention many scholars feel towards him, is an ambiguity Foucault recognizes and seems to relish.

Perhaps the reason why my work irritates people is precisely the fact that I'm not interested in constructing a new schema, nor in validating one that already exists. Perhaps it is because my objective isn't to propose a global principal for analyzing society.¹⁷⁶

But this refusal to commit is not merely a personal preference Foucault has for remaining mysterious or irritating others. For critique to assume its full amplitude, the most important thing Foucault stresses is keeping it from being buried under the weight of prescriptive,

¹⁷⁵ ATT, 88.

¹⁷⁶ QM, 115. And while this overstates the point, it should be noted that critique is not only for those who fight. It is neither possible nor desirable to refuse everything that is contingent and discourse-relative, i.e. everything. Where change is called for, however, critique can serve despite its inability to guarantee a perfect alternative.

prophetic discourse. "Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction that concludes: This then is what needs to be done. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is."¹⁷⁷

Ethically, Foucault's refusal to commit is linked to the philosophical ethos of maturity and permanent critique that refuses the "blackmail" of the Enlightenment.¹⁷⁸ "It even means precisely that one has to refuse everything that might present itself in the form of a simplistic and authoritarian alternative."¹⁷⁹ While someone like Rorty gets around this with irony and ungrounded hope, it is ambiguous what this adds to Rorty's position and takes away from Foucault's.

At What Price? Standing in Right Relation

Truth has been noticeably absent from this chapter so far. A curious development in a thesis on truth, a thesis on truth and Foucault, a writer whose project from the beginning has been the relation of self to self and of telling the truth.

The question I asked myself was this: how is it that the human subject took itself as the object of possible knowledge? Through what forms of rationality and historical conditions? And finally at what price? This is my question: at what price can subjects speak the truth about themselves?¹⁸⁰

At what price indeed! And perhaps truth's absence so far speaks more powerfully than anything else could, to the price we've paid in contemporary culture to speak the truth.

At what price?—an interesting phrase that perhaps hints at some continuity with James's original project of finding the *cash-value* of certain of our ideas. I would suggest that a part of the price we pay to tell the truth is evidenced in precisely not mentioning truth in the discussion of the Enlightenment legacy and its tensions with humanism.

Of course it is not necessary for the word truth to appear on every page of a paper on that

¹⁷⁷ QM, 115.

¹⁷⁸ One thought to keep in mind until the conclusion is to what extent Foucault's critique as a permanent framework can take on the authoritarian characteristics it was created to counter.

¹⁷⁹ WE, 43.

¹⁸⁰ CT/IH, 120.

subject. The table must be set, the context must be given. In part that has been my purpose. But there is also the sense in Foucault that a certain conception of truth has been abandoned altogether. For him there is no longer any appeal, nor should there be, to an absolute truth when discussing our Enlightenment legacy, nor in a discussion of humanistic themes as important as liberation and the subject. This, in itself, however, is neither all too radical nor revolutionary.

Investigating forms of rationality (none of which are Rationality itself) and historical conditions to arrive at an understanding of how human subjects took themselves as possible objects of knowledge implies a *multiplicity of truths*. In this sense the price we pay is giving up faith in any fixed ontological order that grounds reality, an order through which our thoughts would represent or correspond to objects of thought and hence be true.

More importantly, on my interpretation, is the extent to which Foucault, in weakening our confidence in homogeneous reason and univocal truth, has opened the door to new, alternative ways to understand how truth functions.¹⁸¹ Like James, Foucault has a pragmatic attitude that feeds his analysis. It is an attitude that modestly explores why subjects are agreeably led by tracing their constitution as effects of historical conditions. While truth is still to be understood as a “system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements,” it is so because it is “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.”¹⁸² In this context, the price we pay for telling the truth is the radical admission that truth means standing in a certain relation to one’s surroundings, specifically to the dynamic of power relations that produces and distributes what counts as truth. And this is decidedly more than a linguistic phenomenon.

Subjects are effects of their contingent, historical conditions, this much should be clear. But Foucault also addresses how a subject might constitute itself in an active fashion through “practices of the self.” And in this context we can understand how truth functions

¹⁸¹ Thomas Flynn makes this argument in “Foucault as Parrhesiast: His Last Course at the College de France (1984),” in *The Final Foucault* James Bernauer and David Rasmussen eds. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 111-118.

¹⁸² TP, 133.

as standing in right relation. Practices of the self, as an act of constituting oneself are, not surprisingly, not individual inventions, but historically determined. "They are patterns that he finds in his culture, his society, and his social group."¹⁸³

Foucault's concern with games of truth¹⁸⁴ focuses in on the practices of self-formation of the subject, and he labels this an ascetical practice not in the sense of abnegation but "as an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one's self and to attain a certain mode of being."¹⁸⁵ Specifically this is manifested in care for self as an ethical activity of self-constitution which involves relating to truth in a certain manner. In a sense this includes a double movement of sorts. One is encouraged to understand subjectivity in terms of effects and at the same time to fit oneself in that particular context to "attain a certain mode of being." This includes both one's relation to bodies of knowledge and the means by which one appropriates knowledge and truths in efficacious directions.

One cannot care for self without knowledge. The care for self is of course knowledge of self...but it is also the knowledge of a certain number of rules of conduct or of principles which are at the same time truths and regulations. To care for self is to fit one's self out with these truths. That is where ethics is linked to the game of truth.¹⁸⁶

The ambiguity and complexity of such a process speaks meaningfully to the complicated tapestry of power relations that makes up our particular communities and discourses.

Fitting oneself out with these truths that are produced and sustained in particular power relations is, among other things, on my interpretation, a more sophisticated articulation of the phenomenon of agreeable leading. And once again we are met with Foucault's notion of governmentality. Governmentality, in part, implies playing this particular game, understanding one's position as being governed (and learning to govern oneself) by power relations and situating oneself advantageously therein. Truth is not only those elements to which we appeal (systems of ordered procedures of statements) but also the *process* of having to stand in some relation to this particular dynamic. While I find it extremely

¹⁸³ ECS, 11.

¹⁸⁴ Recall that by "games" Foucault means an ensemble of rules for the production of truth. ECS, 16.

¹⁸⁵ ECS, 2.

¹⁸⁶ ECS, 5.

helpful to situate truth in this dynamic, on the traditional conception of normativity it presents a particular danger.

In this Foucauldian context relativism is feared because no transcendental, ahistorical criteria are posited. This seems frightening because nothing appears capable of speaking to us when this truth dynamic has transgressed, when it has led to violence and destruction. The danger feared, in my opinion, stems from the human responsibility needed to face everyday experience without a transcendental guarantor to make our transgression crystal clear. Indeed, what is transgression without such a transcendentally normative context?

The real danger, as I see it, involves how to create a healthy normativity within a process that demands a certain positioning (perhaps even a commitment?) of one's life towards the powers that be. James, for example, wanted truth to be that normativity. He was content to call truth that which led to flourishing and fruitful human intercourse. Foucault, however, in being more concerned with why things are constituted as fruitful, is more suspicious about any simple appeal to a normative criterion.¹⁸⁷

In the end the practices of self and practices of freedom are carried out with an *ethos* of permanent critique of our historical era. And so the question again arises concerning to what extent Foucault commits himself subtly and covertly to the modern attitude of mature and responsible thinking for oneself that may or may not be humanistic. Does an *ethos* of permanent critique necessarily imply a hidden autonomy? Most certainly it can be said that if Foucault is a humanist he is a peculiar one, lacking any traditional liberation themes. Perhaps if humanism implies a brute honesty to admit that the supreme truth to which we have for so long ascribed is more accurately understood as the specific historical constitution of discourses of truth and power, and furthermore, that humans can and do continue to find and create meaning for themselves in such a context—perhaps if this is humanism then Foucault fits the label. But when humanism implies a nature of the subject beyond its constitution as effects of specific events and historical developments Foucault is no humanist. Humanity does not need any transcendental element to be worthy of our care

¹⁸⁷ For example, when asked about what might be understood as liberation or a mode of liberation he had this to say: "I've always been a little distrustful of the general theme of liberation...there is the danger that it will refer back to the idea that there does exist a nature or a human foundation which... found itself concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by some repressive mechanism." ECS,2.

and attention. Care and concern are called for not because one position is necessary for things to be “right”, but because many positions are possible given our contingent constitution. For Foucault, attention to our position needs nothing more than the ability to see why things have taken the shape they have.

Conclusion

It remains an interesting question, however, what to make of Foucault’s analysis that emphasizes orientation and positioning while remaining purposefully silent on commitment. It is clearer now that orientation, on Foucault’s conception, is something directed towards things of this world, specific practices and actions shaped by regimes of truth. Commitment, however, that feeds an ethical/political sensitivity has, in the past, tended to draw on a supposedly necessary ahistoric or transcendental source. The logic seems clear enough. Commitment to anything radically contingent implies a loss of normativity insofar as there are no grounds to ensure that the source will remain constant, and so, trustworthy. Hence, I think, Foucault’s refusal to commit. In such a context there is a choice between Rorty’s ungrounded hope and Foucault’s refusal.¹⁸⁸

The more important pragmatic question involves whether or not, despite the absence of an articulated commitment, Foucault provides tools and space for change. On my view, it is clear that Foucault does. His analysis of truth and power in practices of the self and permanent critique of our historical era provide a new context in which to understand how truth functions. This is important for several reasons, most significantly because it brings to our attention the orientational characteristic which highlights a nonlogical, nonrational, though terribly important, element in understanding *why* things have taken the shape they have. And this is the first step in understanding *how* things can be changed. With an orientational understanding of truth, decisions and actions take on more specific, strategic, and, it is my hope, more healthy possibilities.

¹⁸⁸ I remain unconvinced by Rorty’s argument that his ungrounded hope adds something to the debate that Foucault cannot. See Rorty 63-64 for a discussion of Foucault and Habermas. This theme is further developed in a discussion of Foucault and Dewey in “Method, Social Science, and Social Hope,” in *Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays: 1972-1980)*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. 191-210.

Conclusion

This project can be broken down into two main sections. The first two chapters deal relatively empirically with why our traditional understanding of truth is problematic and could be rethought. The last two chapters are a bit more exploratory, dealing with how we might fruitfully respond to such rethinking. Such exploration seems satisfactory, at least to the extent that it need not be necessary to replace one well-defined old conception with an equally well-defined new conception. Optimistic and tentative exploring of possible alternative conceptions need not be understood as a “cop out” from finding the right conception. It can also be a sensitive effort to avoid new problems and address problems from the past.

The two main sections can be further broken down into two sections each. Chapter one investigates why our traditional conception of truth is problematic in a look at what constitutes truth. Chapter two does this by looking at what constitutes our experience. Our shared, traditional conception of truth is problematic because experience shows that copying or mirroring reality is not the most helpful way to understand what truth actually accomplishes. Rather, as we have seen from James, truth works for us because it has certain practical consequences that lead us in efficacious and beneficial directions. Truth, it turns out, is contingent and relative to its manifestations in daily life. In this sense truth is constituted in actions and events.

If we are as critical of our experience, however, as we are of our conception of truth, the case can be made that our experience is also contingent and relative to the particular communities and discourses we inhabit. For this reason, as we have learned from Foucault, it is important to be keenly attuned to why certain discourses have taken the shape they have. Genealogical analysis helps reveal the many layers of historical developments as well as the will to knowledge and positive unconscious that help shape our contemporary discourse within which truth functions. The first half of this paper, then, deals with these issues and concludes that a conception of truth that focuses on the way in which ideas mirror reality, or the way the mind or reason can attain *the correct*

picture of the world is an unhelpful one.

The last half of the paper follows some thoughts of a contemporary thinker in an attempt to develop a conception of truth that is closer to our experience and more helpful in addressing certain problems or anomalies that the old conception could not. One element in the task of rethinking our old conception of truth that has proved helpful has been developing a sensitivity to what Foucault calls the relationship between truth and power. Understanding how truth and power feed off, strengthen, and mutually reinforce one another opens up a new area of analysis; namely, the dynamic that helps explain in part where truth accumulates its significance and why the power it carries seems so difficult to overcome or even alter.

Finally, at the point where the stage has been set, the problem discussed, and a new framework initially explored, chapter four inquires into ethical motivations and commitments. Before charting new domains I conclude by raising the question (though not obviously answering it) of potential ethical commitment. Developing the tools for potential change in chapter three is followed by ambiguous questions concerning motivations for change and implied normativity. Is an ethic of permanent criticism helpful, appropriate, fruit bearing? Or is it simply a modern ethic of autonomy carried to extremes? Suggested answers are sketched without rigorous analysis. I assume that a change in our view of truth *is* in order, and not merely because we *can* change, but because we *should* do so. Foucault organizes tools for change because change is *possible* despite our traditional understanding. He does not address the question of whether we should change or on what grounds. This has drawn heavy criticism. In this paper Foucault is explored only to make the case that change is possible and why. As I see it, that is noteworthy enough. Ethical questions, in my opinion, are raised by voices that make a case for these questions, lay bare the interests of the questioners, and freely discuss the potentialities of the questions in relation to the interests.

My interests stem from the empirical and ethical desire to accurately understand, in part, why our global communities have taken the shapes they have. Empirically this is accomplished, again in part, by locating and understanding formative events that give rise to crystalizations of culture. Ethically my commitments lead me to hope for more just

crystalizations than our current ones. In this context these empirical and ethical interests inform one another.

But not just events and actions shape our culture. They are possible only within certain worldviews and frameworks that delimit the boundaries of experience. And these frameworks are in part constituted by powerful truth regimes that govern subjects and objects within their scope. One of the distinct differences this makes for our view of truth, as I see it, is that truth is not an absolute good in itself, but rather that it is implicated with us in our cultural problems.

My strategy towards truth, in this context, has not been to develop a conception that can replace the old one and fix all the problems. I have not pursued a utopian image in which truth makes all things right. Rather, I have been interested in a conception of truth that *addresses* problems and injustices with alternatives that are fruitful, tentative, contingent, and empowering.

Addressing may, in some cases, be quite different from solving as we traditionally understand it. It may be nothing more than the ability to discern breakdown and suffering and create a space open enough for healing to begin.¹⁸⁹ The price paid in such a context should be clear enough. No longer is there any conception of an “Absolute Truth” to which things must conform to be “truthful”, or “right”, or “healthy”, or “normal”. This is indeed a high price for those interested in straightforward solutions.

An important element of discernment is that the conception of truth has been stretched from its relatively superficial role as a characteristic of language. Truth must now involve standing in a certain relation to one’s surroundings in a way that leads to beneficial practical consequences that *do justice* to all in its scope. Truth may not “cure” or “set free” in any traditional sense any longer. But the benefits of the changed perception release us from rigid systems lacking the creativity to imagine change. While only time will tell if this is a helpful approach, people should be able to know truth-tellers by their lives and not merely by their words.

Standing in a certain relation to one’s surroundings significantly recontextualizes our

¹⁸⁹ And by “nothing more”, I mean to imply that while it may lack traditional authority and certainty it is nonetheless helpful and fruitful.

Western conception of truth. Most importantly it implies that truth is not first a matter of representing the correct picture of the world, thought, ideas, etc. This implies that truth is not only something that one “believes”. As James has pointed out, not only beliefs or mental pictures can be true.¹⁹⁰ In the context of this paper we can argue that truth can extend beyond words to actions, decisions, and lives.

In James’ focus on agreeable leading, truth as a process, and in Foucault’s focus on understanding truth in its constitution of power relations we have a context where truth can be appropriately implicated in our cultural problems. If truth is not an absolute good but rather a functioning element in contingent discourses it can serve as a signpost that gauges what sorts of beliefs are meaningful, what sorts of values are cherished for a given community. And this can prove immeasurably helpful in plotting new courses of action for change.

One of the most telling signs, in my opinion, that the old conception of truth as representation is no longer helpful is the fact that truth does not necessarily inform our practice. Indeed it appears that it is not even capable of such a task.¹⁹¹

One alternative, then, is a conception of truth that not only addresses our actions, but is constituted in the very position one holds in a discourse or community. Such a truth carries no inherent or necessary normativity except the possibility of understanding our commitments and values within the context of what works in our particular position and why.

¹⁹⁰ PCT, 234.

¹⁹¹ I find support for such a claim in Hart’s discussion of how “being right” and “doing justice” are not, by their nature, necessarily connected. “But even in purely intellectual terms, truth as abstract formal intellectual warrant differs from truth as doing justice to what we grasp intellectually in and through concepts. We can be right and yet do wrong, be wrong yet do right.” Kai Nielsen and Hendrik Hart. *Search for Community in a Withering Tradition: Conversations Between a Marxian Atheist and a Calvinian Christian*. (New York: University Press of America, 1990), 158.

It is significant that this phenomenon of *being* and *doing* is not merely a philosophical concern. Culturally this theme is expressed in political and social frustrations, in art, music, etc. One of my favorite gritty yet poetic articulations is found in U2’s “God Part II” where the singer bemoans the inconsistency of a truth that hypocritically confesses right belief without practically modifying actions and practices to fit those beliefs. The singer’s alternative is a love which knows pain, suffering, and inconsistency but is not defeated by them. In such a context, the conception of truth in this paper is not all too different from such a love. “God Part II,” *Achtung Baby*. U2 Admin. by Chappell & Co. 1991.

What such a conception does not provide, what it lacks, may possibly be understood as an empty space in which we might fashion a normativity that can encourage and support healthy power relations and a normativity that can adequately reflect those commitments and values towards which beliefs and actions are directed. Without any *a priori* prescriptions or imperatives truth may be a process of discerning constitution and effects first and responding justly second. Such a truth is more likely to lead to consistency and presents philosophers with a better chance of addressing problems of the past, present, and future.

Bibliography

Allen, Barry. *Truth in Philosophy*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Bernauer, James and Rasmussen, David, eds. *The Final Foucault*. Massachuttes: MIT Press, 1988.

Bernstein, Richard J. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988.

Code, Lorraine. *What Can She Know?: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge*. Ithaca: Cornall, 1991.

Coon, Deborah J. "'One Moment in the World's Salvation': Anarchism and the Radicalization of William James," *The Journal of American History*, 83:1, June, 1996, 70-99.

Dewey, John. *Reconstruction in Philosophy*. Boston: Beacon, 1957.

Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Rabinow, Paul, eds. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Second edition with an afterward and interview with Michel Foucault. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archeology of Knowledge and Discourse on Language*. New York: Pantheon, 1972.

_____. *The Foucault Reader*. Paul Rabinow ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

_____. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. D.F. Bouchard, ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

- _____. *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*. Lawrence D. Kritzman ed. New York: Routledge, 1988.
- _____. *The Order of Things*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.
- _____. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. Colin Gordon, ed. New York: Pantheon, 1980.
- _____. "Questions of Method: An Interview with Michel Foucault." *After Philosophy: End or Transformation?* Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy, eds. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1987.
- Hart, Hendrik. *Understanding Our World: An Integral Ontology*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.
- Hart, Hendrik. and Nielsen. *Search For Community in a Whithering Tradition: Conversations Between a Marxian Atheist and a Calvinian Christian*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990.
- James, William. *The Writings of William James: A Comprehensive Edition*. John J. McDermott, ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977.
- _____. "Truth and Its Misunderstandings," *The American Pragmatists*. Gail Kennedy and Milton R. Konovitz, eds. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1960.
- Johnson, Mark. *Moral Imagination: Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Kelly, Michael, ed. *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1994.

Kloppenber, James T. "Pragmatism: An Old Name for Some New Ways of Thinking?" *The Journal of American History*. 83:1, June, 1996, 100-138.

Lakoff, George. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things.: What Categories Reveal About the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984.

Middleton, Richard and Walsh, Brian. *Truth is Stranger Than it Used to Be: Biblical Faith in Postmodern Times*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Nicholson, Linda J. ed. *Feminism/Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Prado, Carlos G. *Starting With Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy*. San Francisco: Westview Press, 1995.

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

_____. "Method, Social Science, and Social Hope," *Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays: 1972-1980)*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982. Pp. 191-210.

_____. *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers Volume 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Sheridan, Alan. *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*. London and New York: Tavistock, 1980.

Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Thayer, H.S., ed. *Pragmatism: The Classic Writings*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company,

West, Cornel. *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

