

FOUCAULT'S LAST DECADE: AN INTERVIEW WITH STUART ELDEN, EDUARDO MENDIETA, AND DIANA TAYLOR

Peter Gratton (Memorial University of Newfoundland)

*At the time of his death in 1984, Foucault's late career forays into Stoicism and other sets of ancient texts were often little understood, except as part of a larger project on the history of sexuality. Indeed, outside of France and outside of an incipient queer theory, Foucault was often taken up in terms of debates over post-structuralism and postmodernism—themes all but absent from his writings. More than thirty years later, after the publication of all of his lecture courses at the Collège de France from 1970–1984 as well as his collected writings, we have gained a better understanding of the deep continuities in his set of concerns from *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1961) to the third volume of his history of sexuality series, *Le Souci de soi* (1984). Yet many Foucault scholars continue to see momentous shifts in his writings, e.g., from knowledge (1960s) to power (1970s) to ethics (1980s), and the almost bewildering range of texts he covered in the years after finishing the first volume of his history of sexuality series, *La Volonté de savoir* (1976), lead to very different interpretations concerning what Foucault was attempting to do and how much his rendering of ancient texts differed from his own claims. Stuart Elden's *Foucault's Last Decade* (Polity, 2016) steps into this breach, using archival work to fill in many of the details of this period, from when and on what Foucault was lecturing to listing those with him in that amusing late photo of a beaming Foucault in an ill-fitting cowboy hat. The publication of Elden's book marks a good time to assess this often misunderstood period in Foucault's work, and we have gathered Stuart Elden (University of Warwick) and two more of Foucault's best interpreters, Eduardo Mendieta (Pennsylvania State University) and Dianna Taylor (John Carroll University), to do so.*

Peter Gratton: Let's begin very generally. The major change in Foucault scholarship in recent years, in addition to the changing academic contexts in which Foucault's work is received, has been the availability of his lecture courses. However, Foucault himself did not think enough of the courses—he refers to much

of them as “rubbish” at one point—to see many of the ideas they contain published. How do you make use of the courses, both in how you teach and write about Foucault? Any hesitations given Foucault’s own reticence?

Stuart Elden: Thanks for putting this together Peter. The lecture courses are interesting and important resources, certainly, but I would always want to respect the difference in genre between a lecture, a book, and the range of other writings and texts we have. Foucault spoke and wrote in a wide range of different contexts. In the first place are the books he published, which he clearly saw as his most important writings. Then there are the myriad of shorter texts, which are largely collected in the French *Dits et écrits*¹—for which we still lack a complete English translation. These texts include formal academic publications like journal articles and book chapters, but also a whole range of different styles of writing and speaking. There are prefaces, roundtable discussions, lectures, press conferences, political manifestos, journalism, and, of course, a large number of interviews. There are other unpublished works in the archive, but also collaborative and sometimes anonymous texts, which were published and are somewhat under the radar. And the lecture courses add to this. All the *Collège de France (CdF)* ones are published, and some others from the 1970s and 1980s in Rio, Louvain, Berkeley, and so on, but there are more to come. These will include courses from Tunisia and Vincennes in the 1960s, and later lectures in Toronto in 1982.

In my book, and the forthcoming companion volume *Foucault: The Birth of Power*², I try to address these diverse resources comprehensively while still acknowledging the distinction between their registers of inquiry. It’s clear that Foucault used his lecture courses for different purposes. Some were directly linked to forthcoming book publications—*The Punitive Society*³ from 1972–73 shares much with *Discipline and Punish*⁴, though there are crucial differences in

¹ Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, 1980–1988, vol I–IV (ed.) D. Defert et F. Ewald. (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

² Stuart Elden, *Foucault: The Birth of Power* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).

³ Michel Foucault, *La société punitive. Cours au Collège de France 1972–1973* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2013), tr. by Graham Burchell as *The Punitive Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁴ Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), tr. by Alan Sheridan as *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

approach and content. The as-yet-untranslated *Subjectivité et vérité*⁵ from 1980–81 develops a number of themes that are put into definitive form in *The Care of the Self*.⁶ Some of the other courses appear to give us insights into books that Foucault planned but chose not to write, or did not live to complete. But if we compare the lecture courses to the books, or see the large amounts of material in the books that is not dependent on lecture courses, then we should be careful about drawing too direct a line. Additionally there is also a large amount in the courses which he never returned to, and seems never to have intended to do so. This is what creates some of the greatest surprises in the courses—and perhaps one of the biggest is still to come for English-readers: the untranslated *Théories et institutions pénales*⁷ has some fascinating discussion of the Middle Ages and popular unrest in seventeenth-century France.

In addition, it's clear that Foucault spoke in quite a different way to how he wrote, especially in the 1970s. The courses can therefore be a more accessible way into his work for newcomers. I still try to encourage my students and others to start with his authored books, and I cringe a little when I hear people talking about “Foucault's book *Security, Territory, Population*,”⁸ or the like. But for people coming to Foucault today, in the 2010s, rather than for me in the 1990s, there is a different Foucault being encountered. As long as the distinctions are recognized, I don't think that's a bad thing. I suppose the last thing I'd say here is that we are extremely fortunate in the academic labour that has gone into the publication of these courses. The work of transcription, footnotes, introduction, and other critical apparatus is invaluable and often unrecognized work. The French editors have edited these courses to an exemplary standard. And for all-but-one of the Paris ones so far published, the translator, Graham Burchell, has also done a great job. Foucault's voice has been recreated in English, and all Foucault scholars and students owe him a great deal.

⁵ Michel Foucault, *Subjectivité et vérité* (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil, 2014).

⁶ Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité, vol. III: Le Souci de soi* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), tr. by R. Hurley as *The History of Sexuality, Volume III: The Care of the Self* (New York, Pantheon, 1986).

⁷ Michel Foucault, *Théories et institutions pénales. Cours au Collège de France 1971–1972*, (ed.) F. Ewald and A. Fontana (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2015).

⁸ Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, (ed.) Michel Senellart (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2004), tr. by Graham Burchell as *Security, Territory and Population* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Eduardo Mendieta: I also want to add my note of gratitude to you Peter for taking the initiative and facilitating this interesting exchange. I would like to begin with a general reflection about what I would call “the philosopher’s workshop,” the place, ways, genres, forms in which the work of philosophers is carried out. The academization of philosophy, which for Rorty was an unfortunate event in the biography of philosophy, is only the most recent version of a certain formalization and scientization of how philosophy is performed. But it was because of this academization, for instance, that nowadays most editions of the complete works of certain philosophers include not only the published works, but also the lectures, as well as marginalia, notes, and even letters. Hegel’s collected works include more lectures than actually published texts. The same is now the case with the works of Kant, and let us not forget that some of those works were based on lectures. Then, we have an extreme example and that is Heidegger, whose *Gesamtausgabe* is dedicated to more things that no one saw in print until very recently. All of these works, of course, carry different weights, and give us different insights into the “thought” or live “thinking” of a thinker. In the case of Foucault, as with Habermas, we have a philosopher, an academician, who was also a public intellectual. This means that their work covered a range of territories that are related, but not reducible to one another. As Stuart notes, Foucault gave many interviews—and he seemed to really revel in this genre—he contributed to a lot of round tables, research groups, and these contributions are all testimonies, exemplars, traces of a certain intellectual trajectory, a path of intellectual development. Looking at the corpus of Foucault’s philosophical production, one should be without doubt simply perplexed by its richness, but also by how experimental many of his undertakings were. What comes through in the lecture courses is a truly risk taking, daring, challenging, experimental Foucault.

Like Stuart, I think a younger generation, a more recent generation, of scholars are being exposed to a different Foucault, or rather they are entering the edifice of Foucault’s work through different doors. For instance, I was introduced to Foucault by way of the *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*⁹ and *Discipline and Punish*, and then I worked my way through those texts. I came late to the whole structuralism/post-structuralism debate that seemed stalled by the time the late Foucault was appearing for me in the early eighties. I think

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité vol. 1: La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), tr. by R. Hurley as *History of Sexuality: Vol. 1, An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1978).

coming to Foucault today is both more exciting and filled with more hazards. One has to learn to play off the published texts against the lecture courses. For instance, *Society Must Be Defended*¹⁰, is a pivotal course, some of it made it into volume one of the *History of Sexuality* series. Other lectures courses were pillaged for lectures abroad, which then got to be published in foreign languages, while the original French was lost. Here I would want to introduce a notion of caution and even of demystification. Even if Foucault may have been derisive of his courses, it is very clear that they were very important to him. The chair at the *Collège de France* and the courses that are to be delivered by its occupant are a major institution within French cultural life. Foucault had hundreds, thousands, of listeners, but they were there to listen to a major French intellectual. He was neither naïve nor cynical to fail to recognize that his dicta had a powerful influence. From the tremendous amount of work that went into each course, it is evident that he took each course very seriously. I would thus not want to endorse Foucault's own assessment of their value.

Now, let me make a reference to Stuart's book on Foucault last decade, so to say. Stuart's recent book, *Foucault's Last Decade*, is without question one of the most important books on Foucault's work to appear in a decade or so. Stuart has reconstructed Foucault's last decade almost on a weekly basis. He has excavated the archives and essentially reconstructed the shifting versions of the projected volumes of the *History of Sexuality*, how each volume mutated and how some disappeared and were superseded by other research items. Stuart, in fact, pieces together what Foucault himself destroyed, perhaps to cover his own tracks, perhaps because he did change his mind, perhaps because he felt that a certain problematic had become obsolete in light of what he had come to think about something else. I think Stuart's book on *Foucault's Last Decade*¹¹ reminds me of Ted Kiesel's book on the *Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*¹², in which Kiesel demonstrates how the now classic text is a composite of different lines of investigation that were evident in his different courses from the early twenties at Marburg. Kiesel shows the fissures and incongruities in certain lines of argumenta-

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, (ed.) Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 1997), tr. by David Macey as *Society Must Be Defended*, (ed.) Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2003).

¹¹ Stuart Elden, *Foucault's Last Decade* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016).

¹² Theodore Kiesel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Irvine, CA: University of California Press, 1995).

tion in *Being and Time*. Stuart does something analogous for Foucault. Kant's, Hegel's, Marx's contemporaries approached them differently from how we are able to approach them today because of the richer and colossal archives that are now available to us. Foucault was a quasi-contemporary for us. He died when I was still in school. Now he has been lifted to a pedestal and we must approach him as a classic and a canonical figure for which we are beginning to have something like a *Œuvres complètes*, that is a thinker who is dead, but whose thinking was always alive and in motion.

Diana Taylor: I'm very pleased to have been invited to contribute to this interesting and important dialogue. Like Eduardo, I was introduced to Foucault through *Discipline and Punish* and Volume I of *The History of Sexuality*. Reading the latter text in conjunction with Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* as a graduate student had a particularly profound, formative, and enduring effect on my development as a philosopher. What brought me to Foucault's work, and what has kept me reading and working with it for all these years, are his conceptualization of normalizing relations of power and, in turn, the tools his work provides for identifying and countering normalization within a contemporary context. Over time I've become increasingly concerned with Foucault's analysis of ways in which our own relationship to ourselves functions as a site of both normalization and its countering. This set of concerns thus frames my reading of *Discipline and Punish* and first volume of *History of Sexuality*, as well as the rest of Foucault's work. Someone who reads those texts through a different set of concerns or who is introduced to Foucault through *The Archaeology of Knowledge*¹³ or *The Order of Things*¹⁴ could well frame his work quite differently. Similarly, I think some of us read Foucault more through a Nietzschean lens, while for others of us that lens is more Heideggerian.

For me, then, the *CdF* courses initially provided insight into how Foucault had developed the themes and problems that most concern me—they functioned to contextualize those themes and problems.

¹³ Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), tr. by A. Sheridan as *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1972).

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), tr. by A. Sheridan as *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

Abnormal (1974-5)¹⁵ and *Society Must Be Defended* (1975-6), for example, help to elucidate Foucault's thinking about the nature and function of disciplinary power and biopower and, indeed, about the distinction between the two. As both Stuart and Eduardo mention, not everything from the courses is contained in the published work, but that fact in and of itself is instructive with respect to Foucault's own thought process. Certainly, he made a conscious decision not to include some of the material from the courses, but it's also the case that thinking through the issues contained in the omitted material helped him form the perspectives that are reflected in his books. It's really interesting for me to think about how that happened, how those different pieces of the puzzle fit together for him and how they can fit together for his readers.

I have increasingly made liberal use of the material from the courses in my own work, particularly the 1980-84 courses which I see as the most fascinating and important piece of Foucault's genealogy of modern Western subjectivity, insofar as they illuminate the implication of this mode of self-relation in normalizing relations of power. At the same time, I draw upon the courses as someone who has read Foucault's books and many of his other more prepared works, such as round table discussions and interviews. I think it's an interesting question, and I am not sure where I stand with respect to it, whether someone would necessarily need to be introduced to Foucault through his books; (how) might reading the courses first change one's reading of the books? As to the status of the books relative to the courses, again, this is a question I am still pondering. On the one hand, Stuart is absolutely right that the books were published while the courses were not—that the courses are not in fact books. And I would never support overlooking the books and simply relying upon the courses. On the other hand, I think my approach has been more in line with what Eduardo articulates, in that I see Foucault as a thinker who chose to express his ideas in a variety of different forms, and that this variety contributes to the richness of his work. In teaching Foucault (exclusively to undergraduates), I utilize all of these forms. Doing so, I tend to follow the approach to which I adhere in my own work, using the courses to provide a fuller and more complex picture of the arguments Foucault presents in his books; at the same time, I don't treat the books as definitive. I have students read interviews after they work through

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Les Anormaux. Cours au Collège de France 1973-4* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 1999), tr. by Graham Burchell as *Abnormal* (London: Picador, 2003).

the books and courses because the former tend to provide accessible and succinct encapsulations that reinforce key ideas from the latter.

My approach to the ongoing process of navigating Foucault's work in my writing and teaching is perhaps best reflected in remarks he makes in the Introduction to *The Use of Pleasure*¹⁶, where he says that thought exercises ought not to be treated as merely "preliminary" and "left backstage," but are rather characteristic of "philosophical activity" itself.¹⁷ He of course makes this remark in one of his books, but as I see it this perspective is reflected throughout his corpus.

PG: Eduardo's idea of a "tool box" is very Foucauldian, since of course that is how he wanted his work to be seen, and this goes well with Dianna's claim to see his very process of working as a philosophical activity itself. Yet, continuing to be a bit general, it's not clear from the last ten years of his work what "Foucauldian" would even mean. I may jump to specific courses soon, in the short space we have, but first, is there something in these lectures we could call a Foucauldian "style"—even if the content itself should be taken with the hesitations Stuart suggests?

EM: Yes, there is a distinct "Foucault" style. If, to use Danto's great thought experiment, we were to mix pages from Habermas, Heidegger, Derrida, Lyotard, Butler, Haraway, Sartre, de Beauvoir, in a lottery bin, and then we would pull out pages randomly, I bet you that we would immediately recognize Foucault's writing, voice, the rustle of his language, the texture of his thinking. I want to quickly say that what distinguishes his writing from all the others is its lack of moralism; it almost polar coldness; "this is how it is," he seems to be saying. Second, I think there is the sense that we do not know who is behind the writing; his writing is not quite a mask, but rather the practice of self-effacement. I think that true to his own genealogical commitments, he did not want to have his own self be on stage; then, third, there is the breathtaking performance of a conceptual ballet in which Foucault holds together, as if juggling configurations of the world spirit up in the air, elements of police regulations, market mechanisms, medical discourses, prescriptions about deviance, and then, the unsuspecting and prescient insights into what forms of

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité, vol. II: L'Usage des plaisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), tr. By R. Hurley as *The History of Sexuality, Vol. II: The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Vintage, 1985).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

agency are simultaneously invoked and proscribed. I never ceased to be surprised by the way in which Foucault moved, almost as if effortlessly among levels: institutions, epistemologies, games of veridiction, practices of the self, and the materiality of everyday existence. Like an ancient seer, he could touch anything and see the whole historical *Geist* sedimented and alive in the line of design, the materials, the purposes, the place in the choreography of knowledge.

In any event, Foucault's "styles" are distinct and inimitable. I would hazard to say, finally, that the physiognomy of his last decade is perhaps best captured in the term he himself used in the eighties: "historical ontology." By this term I understand the ways in which truth is a historical product, how we developed specific procedures, strategies, procedures of governmentality, and, therefore, their corresponding technologies or practices of the self. Heidegger's big question was: what is the meaning of being, which he sometimes translated as what is the truth of being, or what is the sense of being; for Foucault, the big question towards the end of his life was: what is the meaning of our historical being, or how did we make ourselves into the agents that both subordinate to and rebel against the regimes of knowledge and governments we ourselves invented. Implicit in this question is the one that nourishes and pushes all other queries forward: how can we become different? how can we invent a new ethos, a new historical ontology?

DT: I have probably subsumed the question of style under considerations about method. Style and method are of course not the same but it seems to me that in Foucault's work they are connected. In any case, I think the style reflected in the courses is evident throughout the last ten years of Foucault's work, and that it is an expression of the "attitude of Modernity" he elucidates in his essay, "What is Enlightenment?,"¹⁸ In "What is Critique?"¹⁹ Foucault describes an attitude generally as a mode of relating; the attitude of Modernity, he shows through his analysis of Baudelaire's work, is more specifically a mode of relating to both the present and to oneself, and these modes of relating are interconnected. Cultivating an attitude of Modernity entails confronting the present as it exists precisely in order to transform it; likewise, it entails confronting ourselves for the same purpose. "Baudelarian Modernity," Foucault writes, "is an

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," in *The Foucault Reader*, (ed.) P. Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 32–50.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?," in *The Politics of Truth: Michel Foucault*, (ed.) Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroch (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997).

exercise in which extreme attention to what is real is confronted with the practice of a liberty that simultaneously respects this reality and violates it.”²⁰ And yet, “Modernity for Baudelaire is not simply a form of relationship to the present; it is also a mode of relationship that has to be established with oneself.”²¹ Foucault proceeds to describe this modern mode of relating to oneself in terms of transformative self-production; he also indicates that for Baudelaire this self-work is undertaken within the realm of art.

As Eduardo notes, Foucault did genealogies, histories of the present. He turned to the archive not in order to avoid the present, but to critically engage it—to diagnose it in such a way as to reveal prevailing (normalizing) conditions as contingent, to show that counter-normalization is therefore possible, and to explore possible forms such counter-normalization might take. He was like Constantin Guys, “modern painter *par excellence*,” as described by Baudelaire: “just as the whole world is falling asleep, he begins to work, and he transfigures that world.”²² At the same time, Foucault also transformed himself; he made clear that he did the work he did in order to become different than he currently was, that he finished each of his books thinking differently than he had at the outset. Like Nietzsche, Foucault used his work to unsettle—to wake up his readers, so to speak—but he also used it to unsettle himself, to prevent himself from becoming complacent.

SE: There’s a lot in both of these answers, and I’ve certainly seen historical ontology as a useful term in the past—it was a theme in my first book on Heidegger and Foucault²³, and I wrote a book chapter entitled “Reading Genealogy as Historical Ontology”²⁴ around that time. In general terms, I think that Foucault continues to be a historian of sorts throughout his work, and that genealogy is part of that overall purpose. One of the things I most admire about Foucault is that he followed questions where they led him, rather than had a predestined route. Dianna indicates his wish to unsettle himself as much as us and I think that is absolutely the case. It’s part of the reason why he abandoned the original, thematic plan of the *History*

²⁰ Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?,” 41.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Stuart Elden, *Mapping the Present: Heidegger, Foucault and the Project of a Spatial History* (London: Continuum, 2001).

²⁴ Stuart Elden, “Reading Genealogy as Historical Ontology,” in *Foucault and Heidegger: Critical Encounters*, (ed.) A. Milchman and A. Rosenberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

of *Sexuality* and turned further and further back historically as he tried to trace the contours of a new, emerging inquiry. I think this historical sensibility is perhaps the most enduring legacy of Foucault's work.

But I'd add some cautions to this—what Eduardo calls his “coldness” is perhaps this superficially neutral way of interrogating texts and practices in the service of a wider inquiry. This approach is one of the many reasons why attempts to suggest that Foucault is a proponent of (or, in reverse, a critic of) neoliberalism is misjudged—he's not so much interested in these as concrete proposals as in interrogating their internal logic in the service of a wider question. Equally, there are sometimes problems when discrete concepts that Foucault discussed to make sense of particular historical or geographical settings are torn from that context and applied uncritically to other times and places. It's striking to me that as Foucault's questions developed, so too did the concepts he used to analyze and answer them. But his historical interrogation continued, supplementing and developing previous approaches, rather than abandoning them.

This type of inquiry is perhaps most obvious in some of his last written texts, such as volumes two and three of the *History of Sexuality*, where his presentation is less stylized than earlier books, and in some respects closer to his lecture style. This is one of the reasons that I think the very late Foucault is harder to instrumentalize. In my own work, I've either written about Foucault, trying to reconstruct what he was doing in these recent books, or to think about his relation to Heidegger in an earlier work; or to put insights from his work into action, as in my book *The Birth of Territory* (2013).²⁵ Although I use Foucault's term “political technology” to make sense of territory, the main influence was in his historical approach. That's really what I think is his “style,” or as close as he comes to a “method.” It's certainly what I've taken from him, and where I expect his work will most influence mine in the future.

PG: All of these answers get me to a crucial topic in the late Foucault, namely the possibility of an “ethics” that is left there for his readers to uncover. No doubt, Foucault's excavations of forms of exclusion going back to *History of Madness* (1961)²⁶ are

²⁵ Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961), tr. by J. Murphy and J. Khalfa as *History of Madness* (London: Routledge, 2006).

not done for merely “academic” reasons—just to fill one hole in the archive as an answer to the will to know. Yet it does not take a Habermas to see the difficulties of inventing an ethos or ethics that would come out of Foucault’s work—even that of his last decade. What do you make of those projects that try to do such?

DT: My response to the last question of course opens directly onto the question of ethics. For Foucault, ethics centres on the relation of self to self; politics centres on the relation of self to others. I have argued elsewhere that one will not find a traditional, normative ethics or politics in Foucault’s work; he makes clear the extent to which normative ethics and politics and, indeed, the notion of normativity itself, are bound up with normalizing relations of power. In order to counter normalization, we therefore need to reconceptualize ethics and politics. That is, we need to constitute, understand, and relate to ourselves differently; insofar as our self-relation reverberates when we act in the world, cultivating innovative, counter-normalizing modes of relating to ourselves in turn has the potential to mitigate normalizing relations of power more broadly. So although Foucault’s conceptualization of the relation of self to self generally as well as his notion of self-transformation more specifically have been criticized by some as individualistic or socio-politically disengaged, this simply isn’t the case. At times Foucault, like Baudelaire, may refer to making oneself into a work of art. But for him, this making, this cultivation of a transformational mode of self-relation takes place precisely within the very normalizing reality it in turn endeavours to navigate and “transfigure.”

I therefore don’t see Foucault simply leaving an ethics for his readers to find, as Peter’s question suggests. As I indicate at the end of my response to the previous question, I see Foucault quite purposefully articulating an ethics in his 1980–1984 *CdF* courses; significantly, the 1984 course, *The Courage of Truth*²⁷, forges an interconnection between self- and world-transformation, difference or “otherness,” and truth. Moreover, I detect an urgency in the 1983 and especially the 1984 courses that this ethics be taken up. At the same time, this urging isn’t prescriptive in a traditional sense. Foucault is not capitulating to people’s normalizing desire to be directed, he’s not telling us how we ought to live. He’s urging people to critically engage their present in order to transform themselves and that

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *Le courage de la vérité*, (ed.) Frédéric Gros (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2009), tr. by Graham Burchell as *The Courage of the Truth: The Government of Self and Others 2* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

present in ways that counter normalization. Because he doesn't know our present he clearly can't provide any details about what our transformative processes will entail. I therefore see this urging on the part of Foucault functioning not as an "ethical project," but more like what Hannah Arendt refers to as a "banister" or "guidepost." In the wake of the revelation that prevailing concepts, categories, and principles were implicated in the rise and perpetuation of totalitarianism, Arendt argues that we cannot uncritically invoke such meaning-making tools in order to either make sense of the world or endeavour to mediate against conditions under which something like totalitarianism might emerge. We do have at our disposal, however, tools through which we can support and orient ourselves within a post-totalitarian landscape: having access to a banister doesn't guarantee that we make it up a flight of stairs any more than road signs ensure that we make it to our destination. Tools don't build a structure; we have to put them to use, and there is no guarantee we will do so or that we will do so in ways that build a sound structure. It's significant in this regard that Arendt refers to "guideposts" rather than "guidelines": Foucauldian ethics might provide the means for us to orient ourselves, but it doesn't delineate even in a general way how we ought to proceed with respect to this orienting. That's up to us to figure out, and part of that figuring entails asking ourselves where the impulse to be told what to do comes from and critically interrogating the effects of this impulse. For Foucault, "the good is defined by us, it is practiced, it is invented."²⁸ Foucault also characterizes this definition, practicing, and invention as "collaborative work."

In the 1982 course, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*²⁹, Foucault expresses that, on the one hand, constituting, understanding, and relating to ourselves differently is crucial for countering normalizing relations of power; on the other hand, he relates, this indispensable task may also be an impossible one. My current research has confirmed for me that Foucault is right about the self-relation being a site of both normalization and its countering; most profoundly, my work has impressed upon me the ambivalence Foucault expresses. I have always focused on Foucault's assertion that the prevalence of normalization creates countless possibilities for counter practices.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, "Power, Moral Values, and the Intellectual," *History of the Present*, vol. 4 (Spring 1988), 1-2, 13-14, here 14.

²⁹ Michel Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2001), tr. by Graham Burchell as *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Yet I've become increasingly aware of the realities of normalization and therefore of what constituting, understanding, and relating to oneself differently exacts; of the intensity of constraints that inhibit such critical and creative activity; of the price people often pay to be a position of being able to engage in it; and of the ongoing cost of performing the transformative "work of freedom" given the deep, multilayered, nontransparent, and compelling character of normalization, and its subsequent capacity to complicate counter efforts and practices. This is all by way of saying that I am both inspired by Foucauldian ethics and profoundly cognizant of its complexities.

SE: I'm sceptical of this possibility of an ethics in Foucault, and I think Foucault is explicit that this is not his point. There is a contemporary political purpose, but I don't think it is to establish a new ethics or a preferred historical version we could emulate. It's not the aim of his late books, and I don't see that as the purpose of the lectures. I think that we should instead be reading those lectures, as Foucault himself indicates, as part of the project of interrogating the genealogy of the modern subject. Sex and ethics more generally are means of access to this, for Foucault, more fundamental question. The history of sexuality is reconfigured as a history of subjectivity—a point Foucault insists upon many times. Now, that historical investigation might have ethical implications, but I don't think it's trying to establish an ethics, and I don't think it's there for us to uncover.

Perhaps more useful resources for such work might come if we might look at some of the interviews. It's notable that with few exceptions, Foucault almost always worked in his books and lectures on historical issues. Yet he often connected them most explicitly to contemporary concerns in his interviews and other less formal pieces. His work with the *Groupe d'information sur les prisons (GIP)* and in some interviews of the early to mid 1970s, or the limited work he did on medicine with the *Groupe Information Santé (GIS)* as a political issue around the same time, or his discussions about sexuality and gay life are more powerful places to look. The lectures and books are connected to the present by the interviews and political activities—a point that Deleuze insisted upon in his book on Foucault.

EM: I agree with what Dianna says about Foucault's late work and how it is meant to operate, to catalyze, to instigate a type of disquiet, malaise, uprooting, a kind of Nietzschean discomfort, a kind of Brechtian estrangement, not only with what we take to be the verities and ineluctabilities of our times, but with our own complacence.

cies and moral insouciance. I also share some of Stuart's reservations about imputing an explicit intent to Foucault's work to produce an ethics. Yet, I would want to say that we cannot dissociate the project of weaving a genealogy of the modern subject from the project of a genealogy of morality. For Nietzsche, the genealogy of morality is precisely the genealogy of moral subjects; that is, we can't dissociate what we take morality to be from how it is that we made ourselves into the type of animals that can make promises and deliver on them. But like Dianna, I agree that there is "no" ethics, but rather an ethical attitude, an ethical stance. Just as in Nietzsche one does not find an ethics, but an ethical attitude, so one does not find in Foucault a set of norms, principles, values, but rather both an invitation and a challenge to enter into a certain kind of investigation that demands individual and collective transformation. Like Nietzsche, I take Foucault to be one of the great moral philosophers of our time.

To justify that claim, let me step back and try to make sense of what it is that Foucault is after in what has been called his "ethical period." When we look at the history of moral philosophy we find a series of ethical attitudes based on a series of assumptions. Let me characterize them in the following way: We are metaphysically free, therefore we are moral; this would be moral universalism of the kind we find in Christian and post-Enlightenment ethics. We are rational, therefore we are moral; this is the basis of all forms of deontology, including forms of moral constructivism. We share a set of common ends, which have degrees of utility for a certain maximizing number of individuals; this is the basis of consequentialism. Yet, and this is where we may find Foucault, what happens when we challenge the universality of reason, its transparency and its transhistoricality; what happens when we discover that reason has a history? What happens when we recognize that we invented the "will," an invention that is very recent and always under contestation; and what happens when we recognize that the common ends that we attempt to maximize for a collective unity turn out to be the most immoral ends ever, which in some cases have left us with a kind of negative ethical threshold, *i.e.*, genocide?

This is where Foucault stands, namely at the end of the answers to these questions; yet Foucault shows that we can be ethical, not because we have a free will, or are rational, and can be persuaded of the utility of common ends, but because our practice of freedom makes us ethical. He asks in an interview, towards the end of his life,

“for what is ethics, if not the practice of freedom?”³⁰ I always took that to mean something like: “We are ethical not because we are free, but our ethics makes us free.” But what is ethics, if not a set of practices, the pragmatics that germinates, flourishes, blossoms into ways of relating to ourselves, others, and our times. Now, the late *CdF* courses turn towards what he calls the “pragmatics of the self,” or “technologies of the self.” Of course, we know that Foucault distinguished in this pragmatics between subjectification (or *assujettissement*) and subjectivization (or *subjectivation*); we also know that where there is some form of governmentality that is conducting conducts, there also, there are counter-conducts. I think all these reflections place Foucault in a unique *topos* of the ethical, what I would call the *topos* of the “before” the ethical, in the sense of standing in front, as when we stand before a court of judgment, and the “before” in which we have no idea what the ethical issues are and how we could, should, would make ourselves act. But let me summarize this take on Foucault’s ethics in this way: we are not ethical because we are free, but rather it is our pragmatics of the self that make us both free and ethical. The ground of ethics is our practices of the self, which are the ways in which we make ourselves free.

PG: Let me zero in on this, since I think you all broadly agree that there is no “ethics” in the late Foucault—I don’t think there is either, but one can read an article here or there that supposes one can model a squishy “care of the self” always speaking truth to power in the late Foucault. But he can’t help but provide, as I think each of you mention in different ways, evidence of his own outlook and concerns, especially as Stuart documents well in his book, through his interviews and more or less polemical essays. Too simply put, there is no neutral investigation that Foucault is undertaking in his books and lectures any more than all of the ethical systems Eduardo mentions are extrinsic to their historical and geographical milieu—which is not to reduce his work to some individualistic, arbitrary investigations of history. Much great work is finally being published on Foucault’s more direct political investigations, but how much stock should we put in them for wider purposes?

³⁰ Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom,” (tr.) P. Aranov and D. McGrawth, in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, (ed.) Paul Rabinow (New York: The Penguin Group, 1997): 279–301, here 284.

EM: This is an excellent question, one that should be asked of any and all canonical philosophers. We are all in history, of history, by history, and this is the only way we access anything like the universality of human experience. Now, by this I don't mean that there is a "universal" human experience, but that as humans, living/suffering/transforming our sociality differently, we can't but help to shape that "universality." Universality is a site always under construction; universality is *à venir*, as Derrida used to talk. We can only speak of it in the mode of the "as if," or in the mode of an archeology/genealogy that traces the lines of co-implication and co-determination between a particular and localized claim and its effects on how we begin to think of the empty site of a collective "we" that is larger, broader, more capacious. Now, with respect to Foucault vis-à-vis his "Frenchness," his "Europeanness," his seeming to be such a relentlessly Eurocentric philosopher, I would like to say three things. First, I am always overwhelmed by both the scholarly labour, the time spent among dusty, crumbling, forgotten books, and, at the same time, the imaginative leaps, the rigorousness of pursuing an intuition, of seeing the barely traceable links among different archives, practices, institutions, and of course, eventualities in which a certain configuration of society flashes up. Foucault's texts are exercises in eruditeness, one that is always localized, grounded in very specific archives, sedimentations, layerings of knowledge and sovereignty. And yet, and yet, no matter how "local" Foucault sometimes appears in his archeologies/genealogies, he has had an immense impact across the West and non-West, and I am aware that these big labels should be used with great caution. Still, Foucault, like very, very few thinkers, has had tremendous and intractable institutional and intellectual impact. His work has directly impacted how we think about mental illness, how we punish, how we think about sexuality, and after his death, even on how we think about economics and political agency. Did not Deleuze talk about a "Foucauldian Age"? Sometimes I want to line up Foucault with Descartes, Voltaire, D'Alembert, Diderot, those great figures of the French Enlightenment, but this would be an anachronism, for if there is an Enlightenment it is because there is a process of enlightenment, and each Enlightenment is distinct. Still, Foucault's name is now associated with a set of Rubicons, those of "unreason," of "criminality," of "sexuality," of "how not to be governed in this or that way." Third, Foucault, precisely because of his "Eurocentrism" has turned out to be a most generative ally for a type of thinking that some of us call "decolonial thought." Decolonial thought argues that when we talk about either "post-colonialism" or "post-Eurocentrism" we are de facto re-

centring Europe and the West in an unassailable epistemological tower. We can no more let go of the West than of its other, which was constitutive of both the figure of Europe and the figure of its “other.” Some of us have been trying to think through these co-constitutions and the tangles of complicit, never pure, never innocent, epistemologies. Power and knowledge are implicated in colonialism, imperialism, and genocidal wars and practices. And this is where Foucault has turned out to be a most beneficial intellectual friend; and an example of how Foucault’s work can be made to work beyond its Eurocentrism is Santiago Castro-Gómez’s wonderfully generative work, and the work of Achille Mbembe who has also challenged us to think differently some of Foucault’s basic assumptions and categories. For instance, the whole theme of the relationship between biopolitics and necropolitics³¹ and the dependence of modern governmentality on thanatological orders. In any event, Richard Rorty used to talk about himself as a “post-modern bourgeois liberal” as a way to say that he was a very, very local intellectual... a kind of epistemic homeboy. This was his rhetorical gesture of calling into question Eurocentric Universalism. Sometimes Foucault’s silences seem to be saying something similar. And there we find an invitation to open up other archives, to give voice to those “subaltern knowledges” that are always being colonized, expropriated, but that resist and enable new ways of thinking ourselves differently.

SE: Since Eduardo has discussed the broad question, I’ll focus on the specific. I do think that the treatment of Foucault’s political activism is overdue, and is slowly becoming a major topic of investigation in English language debates. Marcelo Hoffmann’s *Foucault and Power*³² was an important statement, and the recent Zurn and Dilts collection *Active Intolerance*³³ looks at the prison group in some detail. There are lots of articles as well, and scattered treatment elsewhere. The forthcoming translation of key documents from the prison group will really help to provide the basis for future Anglophone investigations. I think that to make sense of those quite specific interventions it is necessary to get a grasp of the “very specific milieu” in which they took place, but that doesn’t mean that there are not wider issues that

³¹ Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2003): 11–40.

³² Marcelo Hoffman, *Foucault and Power: The Influence of Political Engagement on Theories of Power* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

³³ Perry Zurn and Andrew Dilts, eds., *Active Intolerance: Michel Foucault, the Prisons Information Group, and the Future of Abolition* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016).

come from them. In the second of my two Foucault books, I discuss his work of the early 1970s in detail, and pair investigation of the texts he wrote at that time about madness, health, and prisons with the political activism. While the *GIP* is becoming better known, the parallel groups on asylums and health are much less discussed.

The *Groupe information asiles (GIA)* had almost no involvement from Foucault, but it continues today and aimed to give a voice to those incarcerated. They published various reports as well as the journal *Tankonalsanté* and newsletter *Psychiatisés en lutte*. The *GIA* worked quite closely with the *GIS*, in which Foucault did have a more active role. David Macey's biography³⁴ gives a good outline of the story, but I tried to go a little deeper, looking at various reports and publications of the group, newspaper reports, and so on. The health group's work was in multiple areas, but three key ones were immigrant health, industrial accidents and health, and the abortion rights struggle. Foucault was not nearly so involved as he was with the *GIP*, but he did play an important role, helping to shape the group's agenda, writing some texts, being a public spokesman, and also doing some of the more mundane work behind the scenes. Daniel Defert says of the *GIP* that "there is no politics without logistics," and I think that this helps explain some of the importance of what Foucault did. He helped to make things possible. That may be as much of an inspiration as the specific focus of their work.

DT: I agree with Stuart that the fact that Foucault's political activism, as well as writings in which he discusses his own political commitments, are framed by a particular sociopolitical and historical context doesn't mean either is unrelated to the rest of his work and therefore irrelevant for his readers. Stuart speaks very clearly to points of connection between Foucault's activism and "activist writings," so to speak, and his books.

We might also consider here, as I point out in my response to the next question, that Foucault's work problematizes the idea that there is any text or point of view that is not itself sociopolitically and historically framed. Foucault's books are framed by the context within which they were produced, but they are also—even if implicitly—informed by his own political and ethical commitments. This is the case for all of us; certainly, the thinkers we choose to read, what we choose to write about in our work, are not simply arbitrary. As we discussed earlier, Foucault wanted to remove himself (and to have himself removed) from his texts, and there are philosophical

³⁴ David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (New York: Vintage, 1995).

underpinnings for this desire. At the same time, it's possible to acknowledge that part of ourselves is always written into our work without engaging in some sort of anti-intellectual psychologizing. We can recognize that our "personal" commitments frame and are even reflected in our work (which, I would argue, was also the case for Foucault) without reverting to the kind of reductive humanism from which Foucault endeavored to remove himself and his work. I think Foucault's work points toward acknowledging and grappling with how we wish to confront such framing and reflection as opposed to simply trying to deny or mask it.

PG: This brings us to Foucauldian critique—that urgency Dianna mentions, or the *topos* before ethics as Eduardo would have it—that is, the urgency to articulate our own historical conditions of possibility. One claim made about Foucault—Badiou stands out, but he's not alone—since his death is that Foucauldian critique cannot say anything positive, since any claim would have to be historicized and given its own genealogy, which is like trying to stand on a tree limb as one saws it off. What do you make of this critique? Or is critique itself something "positive"?

EM: I feel rather uncomfortable with this last question inasmuch as it is framed by something that Badiou said that does not necessarily coordinate with the little Badiou I have studied. I read some of Badiou's works and I have found them extremely powerful, especially his *Philosophy for Militants*³⁵, and his *Pocket Pantheon*³⁶, and others, but these two in particular do not seem to be framed in terms of a rejection of Foucault. What I read of Badiou on Foucault seemed to be extremely respectful and appreciative. Let us, then, say that your question is really: can genealogy have any political efficacy, or what is the relationship between genealogy and explicit critiques that are oriented towards transformative praxes? Here, we have to thank Stuart once again, whose work on Foucault now enables us to get a measure of Foucault's extensive and indefatigable practical and critical projects. Foucault was truly an organic intellectual. A lot of his work emerged from his engaged political praxis. As I noted already, Foucault's work has had a tremendous institutional impact precisely because a lot of it is grounded in very specific struggles, archives, and sites of contestation. The critical edge of his work resides precisely in that it is very focused, very targeted, while also

³⁵ Alain Badiou, *Philosophy for Militants*, (tr.) B. Bosteels (London: Verso, 2012).

³⁶ Alain Badiou, *Pocket Pantheon*, (tr.) D. Macey (London: Verso, 2009).

being grounded and informed by very specific knowledges and institutional framings. Still, I think your question is also aimed at the suspicion that genealogy is not critique, that genealogy is a form of archival aestheticism. The fact is that we now have substantive work that thinks of genealogy as a form of “immanent critique.” Some of what one could call a fourth generation critical theorists refer to Foucauldian genealogies as forms of immanent critique—I am thinking of Martin Saar³⁷ and Rahel Jaeggi.³⁸ I am also thinking of the work by Colin Koopman³⁹ as well as my colleague Amy Allen.⁴⁰

Let me also note that Habermas, who is generally associated with what you gather under the label of “positive,” has been using the term “genealogy” in his most recent work. In his collection of essays, titled *Nachmetaphysisches Denken II (Postmetaphysical Thinking II)*, which I think is forthcoming from Polity soon, he uses the term freely. He is also working on a huge manuscript, now tentatively titled *Versuche Ueber Glauben und Wissen: Zur Genealogie nachmetaphysisches Denken (Investigation On Faith and Knowledge: On the Genealogy of Postmetaphysical Thinking)*. In the introduction, Habermas takes up Koopman’s and Allen’s differentiations between three ways of thinking about genealogy, namely vindicatory, subversive and problematizing. Habermas argues that while his genealogy of appears vindicatory, he is interested in how reconstructions turn out not to be subversions but a *Rechtfertigung*, a type of justification or grounding that elucidates how we have come to acquire the unique discursive and critical capacities that make us “modern” subjects. Now, the term *Rechtfertigung* does not translate well into English. It means more than “justification”; it really means that one is giving an account of reasons and the grounds for those reasons. It is to reconstruct and elucidate the “space of reasons” within which we find ourselves always. In this sense, Habermas is offering a fourth type of genealogy that aims at clarifying, making explicit, reconstructing, and thus making us both aware and accountable for our

³⁷ *Genealogie als Kritik: Geschichte und Theorie des Subjekts nach Nietzsche und Foucault* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2007) and “Genealogische Kritik,” in *Was ist Kritik*, (ed.) Rahel Jaeggi and Tilo Wesche (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2013), 247–265.

³⁸ Rahel Jaeggi and Tilo Wesche, eds., *Was ist Kritik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2013) and Rahel Jaeggi and Daniel Loick, eds., *Nach Marx: Philosophie, Kritik, Praxis* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2013).

³⁹ *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013)

⁴⁰ Amy Allen, *The End of Progress: Rethinking the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming).

justificatory/rationalizing practices. Evidently, this *justificatory genealogy* has a practical intent.

In any event, I think the key point of reference for this question is one of Foucault's lectures from 1978, a lecture that I think he delivered before the Kant Society in France, when he lecture on the genealogy of the critical attitude. The lecture appeared in English in a book title *The Politics of Truth*.⁴¹ In the first lecture in this compiled text Foucault says that he did not have a title for his talk, but at one point, he says that he in fact had wanted to lecture on "What is Enlightenment?," but the trust of his remarks there is really on the emergence of what he called the "critical attitude," which he framed in terms of a reading of Kant's famous essay, which is included in the volume as a kind of extended epigraph. In the lecture Foucault defines critique in this way:

Critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects on power and to question power on its discourses of truth. Well, then, critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability. Critique would essentially insure the desubjugation of the subject in the context of what we could call, in a word, the politics of truth."⁴²

We can say then that for the late Foucault, genealogy is at the service of this "politics of truth" that simultaneously involves challenging certain games of veridiction and their corresponding forms of governmentality that involve de-subjugation and, evidently, new orders of subjectivation. I take it that Foucault is saying something like the following: there is no enlightenment without the creation of new forms of agency, and there are no new forms of agency that do not require that we generate new knowledges as we demystify and challenge those that give us a social reality that is monolithic and fated. I think he meant to challenge us to think that there is no liberation without new forms of agency, new practices of freedom, new knowledges that recognize their entanglements with past and present forms of subjection, epistemologies of ignorance and dispossession and the governmentalities that they potentiate. In short, he meant to instigate a suspicion of projects of liberation and critique

⁴¹ Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, (ed.) Sylvère Lotringer (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press/Semiotexte, 2007).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 47.

that are not aware of their own historicity, of their entanglements with our historical ontology.

SE: Again, Eduardo has said a lot about the general question. I certainly think that a historical, critical investigation of something can be positive. I've always been slightly baffled by people who say that Foucault undermines the possibility of his saying something positive because of the critique, who then think that they can dismiss him and carry on doing whatever they were doing before. When Foucault talks about the "toolbox" idea—a notion he borrowed from Deleuze in their joint interview—he says explicitly that he hopes the tools can be used to interrogate his own work critically. The internal tensions this might produce don't seem to me to allow simply avoiding the whole issue.

In my own writing I'd say that there has been three kinds of work. One, very explicitly inspired by Foucault was *The Birth of Territory*, a book which I wrote on and off for over a decade, and which attempts to be a history of the concept of territory in Western political thought. The second was a handful of articles about how territory figured in contemporary politics, which culminated in the book *Terror and Territory*.⁴³ While writing what became *The Birth of Territory*, I'd regularly get the question of how does this matter, what does this say to contemporary events, and so on. So I put the historical work aside and wrote an article, which led to another, some talks and so on, and eventually the book. For me, it was clear that the historical, conceptual work helped me to understand the background of what was taking place, and allowed me to write the more contemporary, engaged work. Additionally the historical work has a deliberate political point, of understanding the conditions of possibility for things being as they now are. The third kind of work has been the investigations of specific thinkers, of whom three remain central to my thinking—Heidegger, Foucault, and Lefebvre. I'm convinced that I could never have written the historical or political studies without their inspiration, though there were minimal references and even less discussion of those thinkers in the more concrete books. Foucault was invaluable for writing the historical work, and posing questions in the way I did, and that historical work was fundamental for me in opening up new perspectives on a contemporary instantiation of these issues. The kinds of work seem to me to be mutually reinforcing, even if they operate in quite different registers. And, to

⁴³ Stuart Elden, *Terror and Territory: The Spatial Extent of Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

return to Foucault's activism, he certainly didn't see his work as politically disabling.

DT: As Eduardo points out, Foucault's readers disagree as to whether and to what extent his work either offers or is able to facilitate the development by others of "positive" (emancipatory, counter-normalizing, counter-oppressive) undertakings and change. This question and subsequent debate are reflected in and have in some ways gained traction through Habermas's charge that Foucault engaged in a sort of "crypto-normativity."

I've argued elsewhere, and I think the point is relevant here, that this charge holds only if we ourselves continue to adhere to the traditional view that ethics and politics, or indeed any positive or counter-normalizing endeavour, requires "normative foundations." Foucault, like Nietzsche, shows that such a view is simply that: one particular way in which it's possible to frame and thus make sense of an aspect of our reality, albeit a way of framing and meaning-making that has been broadly and uncritically accepted over such a long period of time that it is experienced as an ineluctable fixture. As we've been discussing, Foucault makes clear that uncritical acceptance of prevailing modes of meaning-making stems from and in turn reproduces normalization and thus inhibits creation of potentially counter-normalizing alternatives. It's therefore crucial that we subject to critical interrogation in particular those aspects of our reality that are presented to us as given or immune to such scrutiny.

Eduardo appeals to Foucault's analysis of the critical attitude in "What is Critique?" in order to show that it's possible from a Foucauldian perspective to create alternatives—that Foucault doesn't limit us to critical interrogation, or that we aren't simply, as Peter's question suggests, caught in an interminable cycle of interrogating our own critical and creative endeavors. I turn again to "What is Enlightenment?" where Foucault directly addresses this question. Foucault advances that text in part through a progressive reformulation and fine-tuning of his conceptualization of the critical attitude. After articulating what it is not (under the sub-head "Negatively"), he moves on to articulate what it is (under the sub-head "Positively"). The first formulation he offers under this sub-head describes the critical attitude as a "historico-practical test of the limits that we may go beyond, and thus the work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings."⁴⁴ (We see here, then, a variation on the formulation he offers in "What is Critique?" concerning the desubjugation

⁴⁴ Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," 47.

of the subject). Foucault then acknowledges that this formulation might appear to catch us in the cycle I note above when he says that despite the fact that “we are always in the position of beginning again” it is not the case that “no work can be done except in disorder and contingency.”⁴⁵ Thus, Foucault proceeds to present the “generality, systematicity, homogeneity, and stakes” of the work of freedom.⁴⁶

Without going into the details of Foucault's understanding of each of these characteristics, part of what he shows in his presentation of them is that adopting a critical, historically specific position relative to one's own mode of existence (as well as such modes more broadly) is paralyzing only if we accept the idea that an ahistorical position is both possible and ultimately necessary. If we call into question the possibility and necessity of ahistoricity and the removed, ostensibly neutral (or at least disengaged) stance it promises, then what we mean by a historically specific position in turn becomes unsettled. For Foucault, such a position takes the form of a “historico-practical test” that affords both critical engagement with the limits and constraints of the world in which we live, and creative activity through which we “experiment with the possibility of going beyond” those limits and constraints.⁴⁷

PG: What are the remaining challenges for work on Foucault, or using Foucault?

SE: For me, the next challenge is Foucault in the 1960s and possibly even earlier. What we know about his work in the 1970s and 1980s has been transformed by the publication of the *CdF* lectures and some other materials. I've tried to integrate treatment of all those materials into the studies I've written. But the 1960s is a period for which almost all the publications we have are those that appeared in Foucault's lifetime. As such, the accounts by people like Gary Gutting⁴⁸, or more recently David Webb⁴⁹, remain essential works. There are plans to continue the publication of lecture courses to include ones from before Foucault was elected to the *Collège de France*. We

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁴⁸ Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason: Science and the History of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁴⁹ David Webb, *Foucault's Archaeology: Science and Transformation: Science and Transformation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

know a little about his lecture topics, but as yet very little of their actual content. He lectured on sexuality, heredity, and Nietzsche at the University of Vincennes, and on art, Descartes, Western philosophy, and thought in Tunisia. There were even earlier courses on philosophical anthropology and psychology at the *École Normale Supérieure* (ENS) in the 1950s. Jacques Lagrange's notes on the ENS courses are available at the IMEC archive, but I understand that Foucault's notes for these all still exist. There are no tapes of these early courses, so like the early *CdF* ones they would need to be versions of his manuscript, not transcripts of what he actually said.

I suspect that these courses will transform our understanding of Foucault's 1960s and possibly the 1950s in the same way the courses so far published have done for the 1970s and 1980s. For me, these courses will likely be the fuel for further work on Foucault. At present, the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (BNF) archive is not entirely open, and the boxes that have been made available are largely his reading notes in preparation for books and courses. The boxes which contain lecture notes are only available where the course has already been published. So any work I might do on that earlier period will require either the courses to be published, or the notes to be made available—though I suspect the latter is dependent on the former.

One thing that would be a really interesting project is to compare the different versions of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. An earlier version, probably from 1965–66 has been available at the BNF for years, but there is another version archived there which is not yet available. The introductions for each have been published, and they are quite different from the 1969 book. The work Foucault did in Tunisia will doubtless be important for understanding a range of concerns in his work, including his political activism, so I hope the archive will shed more light on this period. I'd also like to see what the archive would tell us about the almost complete publication silence of the late 1950s. Foucault published *Maladie mentale et personnalité*⁵⁰ in 1954, along with his long introduction to Ludwig Binswanger's *Dream and Existence*. Two articles followed in 1957, and then nothing until the *History of Madness* in 1961. Obviously he was writing that major work during those years, but the shift from the 1954 book to the 1961 one is enormous, leading Foucault to want to prevent republication of the earlier one, and eventually relenting

⁵⁰ Michel Foucault, *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954).

by extensively revising it into *Maladie mentale et psychologie*⁵¹ in 1962. (That's the version which we have in English translation.) So I'd be really interested in digging into that period, which I think would require work in the same library Foucault used, in Uppsala.

Of course, there are draft manuscripts written by Foucault in the archive, of which the most famous is the fourth volume of the *History of Sexuality*. If this or others appear then this will of course give a lot more material to study and reflect upon. But I would expect that publication of this manuscript, and perhaps others, will follow the remaining lecture courses. It took 18 years for the 13 *CdF* courses to be published, so it may well be some time before the posthumous publication work is completed. That's my sense of the challenges remaining in filling in the gaps in our understanding of Foucault, at least from my historical perspective.

DT: I'm going to respond to the second part of Peter's question, about challenges of using Foucault's work, since that is the direction my own scholarship has taken over the past several years. In many ways, my work on Foucault has itself taken the form of problematization: reading and analyzing Foucault's work has facilitated my working through a number of philosophical and practical questions. My 2009 *Foucault Studies* article, "Normativity and Normalization,"⁵² was formative in this regard, insofar as it enabled me to work through the problem (addressed in our conversation above) of "normative foundations" in Foucault's work. That problem had occupied me for a long time, and having worked it out to my own satisfaction in turn enabled me to use Foucault's work in new ways in the sense that I began to draw upon it more and more in order to grapple with concrete problems. This is not to say that I simply started to "apply" Foucault's work; rather, I began to apprehend (and, again, I think working out the problem of normative foundations facilitated this) contemporary manifestations of problems Foucault addresses in his work; among these, the problem of normalization figured and continues to figure most prominently.

For a while now, as I mentioned at the outset of this discussion, I have been concerned with the problem of how the self-relation is implicated in normalization. In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault says that cultivating an ethic of the self may be "indispen-

⁵¹ Michel Foucault, *Maladie mentale et psychologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962).

⁵² Diana Taylor, "Normativity and Normalization," *Foucault Studies*, no. 7 (Sept. 2009): 45–63.

sable” in countering normalization, at the same time that he expresses doubt about whether such cultivation is possible within a contemporary context. It’s this problem that I see him grappling with in the *CdF* courses between 1980 and 1984. I think (and have argued elsewhere and as well as in my current book project) that in those courses he exposes subjectivity as a normalizing and contingent mode of self-relation, and that he identifies within Hellenistic/Roman and Cynic contexts modes of constituting, understanding, and relating to self that did not possess the characteristics of subjectivity that he implicates in (re)producing normalization. This is not in any way to say that Foucault thought those of us in the contemporary West can simply and uncritically engage on Stoic and Cynic practices of the self; if this were the case then Foucault would not be ambivalent about the possibility of ethical self-cultivation and counter-normalization. The Stoics and Cynics are significant because they show that the early Christian mode of self-relation from which modern Western subjectivity emerged is historically contingent and thus not necessary, as well as that it’s possible to develop alternative, counter-normalizing ways of constituting, understanding, and relating to ourselves. Foucault shows us that such development has historically been possible; it’s up to us to foster conditions under which it’s possible within a contemporary context.

So my work of late has involved identifying within a contemporary context conditions that produce a normalizing relation of self to self, analyzing the individual and broader social effects of a normalizing self-relation, and trying to see whether and how it’s possible to create alternative modes of self-relation. In the book project I’m finishing, I consider these questions within the context of conceptualizing and countering the harms of sexual violence against women. More recently I’ve interviewed people within highly normalizing contexts (prison, so called “post-conflict” societies) who seem to me to be actively engaged in a process of self-transformation: of endeavouring to constitute, understand, and relate to themselves in ways that don’t merely reproduce the conditions for the possibility of their own self-subjugation. As I noted in my response to the question about Foucault and ethics, the latter project in particular has made clear to me the depth and complexity of normalization as it pertains to our self-relation and has therefore given me an appreciation for Foucault’s ambivalence about the possibilities of ethical self-cultivation in the face of it.

My own work is thus in fact characterized by both sets of challenges: those of working on Foucault and those of using Foucault’s work. It has been my experience that doing the former has opened

onto the latter, and that it has done so in ways that surprised and changed me, as well as changed my approach to doing philosophy. In many ways it has been a process of, not always willingly, "straying afield of" myself.

EM: There are two types of Foucauldian scholars: disciplined and undisciplined ones. I think Stuart belongs to the former type, while I belong to the second type. I am not sure where Dianna would put herself. Now that is the extent of my Foucault jokes. Kidding aside, let me just say that I am in awe of the kind of discipline that enables Stuart to work both like a mole and a fox. Stuart and I have been friends for over a decade, I think, and I have benefited more from his scholarship than he has from mine. He has been generous in sharing his work with me, us in general, and I never turn down an opportunity to read and comment on one of his manuscripts, because he is the mole with the good nose, digging, digging, and writing about the traces of Foucault's work, which keeps surfing up, bubbling up like the remains of a shipwreck that lets the luggage slowly float up from the sinking mess. On the other hand, Stuart has written some truly original texts, like *The Birth of Territory* that is clearly informed by Foucault, but that goes beyond him. When Stuart wants to be a fox, he can do it and does it very well.

In any event, I am not sure I can or would like to write something that would be a direct contribution to Foucault scholarship. First, my competency in French is nearly zero; and second, I don't have the credential to do archival work, much less the temperament. I am much more interested in being a fox. Still, there are three areas that I am interested in working with/through/beyond Foucault. The first has to do with what we can call "reception history." I am particularly interested as a philosopher in the way Foucault was educated, challenged, and transformed by Nietzsche. As Stuart notes, Foucault lectured on Nietzsche before his return to the Paris. A very nice dissertation/book could be written on Foucault's Nietzsches. I recently heard my colleague Robert Bernasconi give a wonderful lecture on precisely this topic. He read Foucault's early 1971 essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"⁵³ against the 1975–6 *CdF* course *Society Must be Defended*. Robert did a *tour de force*. I hope it comes out soon as a publication. Then, there is Nietzsche's Heidegger. We know Stuart wrote perhaps one of the earliest and best books on this

⁵³ Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, (ed.) Donald F. Bouchard, (tr.) D. F. Bouchard and S. Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139–64.

issue. But Stuart's book was researched and written before most of the *CdF* courses, especially the early ones, where Foucault is explicitly taking up Heidegger's notion of truth, and critique of Nietzsche, were available. There is a third area of "reception history," and this has to do with the ways in which the Black Panthers influenced Foucault's thinking about racism, race, biopolitics, and what he called "the war of races" in the *CdF* course *Society Must be Defended*. Brady Heiner, a former student, has written on this. His work is probably the best on this. But he also wrote some of his research before some of the archives Stuart has been excavating were available. I think that what DuBois said about the "colour line" remains as true as when he said it, and I think that Foucault's relationship to this "problem" needs to be toiled.

The second area is, interestingly, related to Dianna's preoccupations, and I am glad to hear that she is writing on this, namely the questions of norms, normalization, normality, etc. I wrote an essay in response to Koopman's work where I laid out my take on this problematic in Foucault.⁵⁴ In this essay, as well as my contributions to the *Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*⁵⁵ that my colleague Len Lawlor edited, I trace Canguilhem's influence on Foucault, and using his teacher's work, I tried to argue that operative in Foucault's work is something like an investigation not of normativity, or normality, which he without question worked on, but rather of what I call, following Canguilhem, "normativeness." By this term Canguilhem meant, with reference to how organisms get over pathologies, how a new order is established. To be healthy does not mean, according to Canguilhem, again, that we can restore our organism to an *ante re* order of normativity, but rather, that we have the capacity to establish a new order, a new level of coping and living. This is normativeness—the ability of a system to establish a new order of norms, of self-regulation and self-ordering. This sounds a bit like systems theory, *à la* Luhmann, but I am really interested in how Foucault gets us to think about new normative orders, which, evidently, are both contingent, albeit immanently transcendent, yet revisable.

The third area has to do with Foucault's generative work on practices of the self; except that I want to focus on the way his work can be useful to get us to think through the resilience and generativity of racism; that is, how despite all our rationalist and Enlightenment

⁵⁴ Eduardo Mendieta, "On Left Kantianism: From Transcendental to the Critical Ontology of the Present," *Foucault Studies*, no. 18 (October 2014): 245–252.

⁵⁵ Leonard Lawlor and John Nale, eds., *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

confrontations with the myth of race and the institutions of racism, we are still mired in both. So, I have been working through what I call the “Technologies of the Racist Self.” I have written a couple of essays on this, as ways to explore how we are normed into racist selves. Essays are a way for us to explore and experiment. They are our laboratories. In any event, I have been working on the topic of racism and race. At the centre of the whole research agenda is Foucault's notion of the *dispositif*, which I take to be a key Foucauldian tool—the tool of tools. So, I have been thinking a lot about “Thanatological” dispositifs. Thus, I have been writing about the U.S. border, drones, and race as Thanatological dispositifs. I don't know where I am in this project. But, as I said at the outset, I am an undisciplined Foucauldian who wants to use his work rather than to work on his *œuvre*. But, we always need both moles and foxes.

DT: Just a quick response to Eduardo's question as to whether I identify as a mole or a fox. I'm wondering if there isn't a mole → fox continuum, since Eduardo says Stuart is more mole than fox, but possesses elements of both. As I've described the trajectory my work has taken, it appears I've been more mole-ish but would be closer to the fox end of the continuum at this point. At the same time, it's worth noting that foxes also dig...

SE: I'm not sure how far we can push this metaphor, though I think on reflection I prefer it to Isaiah Berlin's hedgehog and fox idea, because it is about method and approach. But it's interesting to me that the text of mine which Eduardo generously sees as the most fox-like, *The Birth of Territory*, is the one for which the research was the most mole-like. I won't go into the details of the research involved in that, but I will say that Foucault—whose childhood nickname was of course “the fox,” from the German *der Fuchs*—was very mole-like in his research. The boxes and boxes of closely written pages of notes, taken over years in libraries and archives and organized into thematic folders attest to that. As I've been working through these I've been in awe at the breadth of his reading and engagement, which is not nearly so explicit in the published volumes or lectures. One of Foucault's many talents was to integrate all of that detailed work into the wonderful sweeping statements and synthetic works to which we all owe so much.