In spite of its debt to structuralism, Foucault's early work may be said to be prestructuralist in one important sense. Whereas one of the central tenets of French structuralism is that energy is an effect of structure, one strand of Foucault's work up to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* posits energy and structure as being in a relation of antagonistic opposition: the category of energy is understood, in the framework of a romantic and libertarian tradition deriving from Nietzsche and Bataille, as transgression, as that which subverts structure (but covertly, of course, this also sets up a relation of dependence between the two). This understanding flows fairly directly into an anarchist politics of transgression.

This opposition, or something like it, structures John Rajchman's version of the development of Foucault's work. *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy* maps Foucault's course from a romantic literary modernism centred on the experience of language and of madness to a historical nominalism that ceases to privilege literary discourse. The narrative line is this:

In literary modernism, Foucault sought a romantic alternative to a culture obsessed with the principle of systematic reason and the idea of a foundational humanism. He found a madness that was not a mental disease and a writing that had fled the representational paradigm of language; the two were interconnected in a transgressive 'counter-discourse'. But he could not sustain this vision and abandoned this early romanticism. (6)

This movement is in turn linked to a larger cultural shift, 'the passing of a modernist sensibility combined with an alteration in the political self-image of the intellectual'. (10) In cultural terms, the passage to postmodernity means that the central questions are no longer about
'commentary, language, and avant-garde art' but are rather questions of subjectivity; and, in political terms, it means that 'it can no longer be taken for granted that an "engaged intellectual" is automatically de gauche, that his enemies are the state, the corporations, and U.S. foreign policy and culture'. (12)

Rajchman presents the modernism Foucault abandoned in terms of a constitutive self-reflexivity: turned in on the means of representation, what the modernist text most truly represents is its own material, its formal structure, its conditions of production, and 'in each literary work there is thus an "allegory of reading", a secret reflection on the nature of language and of literature, a hidden self-interpretation which ties the work to the whole fabric of the literary tradition, and which criticism must ferret out'. (13) Within this non-representational aesthetic the language of madness (language released into the purity of self-reference) plays a privileged, transgressive part, constituting the very emblem of the 'modernist sublime'. (22) It is this image of a language that opens directly onto the experience of an originary madness that Derrida takes as his point of criticism in 'Cogito et Histoire de la Folie', leading Foucault to suppress the Introduction to the first edition of Histoire de la folie.

In the 1970s, Rajchman argues, Foucault 'reverses the central premise of his own work: the "fundamental arrangements" in our history are not about language but about power'. (22) Put like this, the opposition is too simple, but Rajchman then recasts it more convincingly in terms of three moments of self-criticism of Foucault's earlier position of aesthetic modernism. The first is that it is wrong to locate the essence of art in its capacity to take itself as object. As a principle of criticism, self-reflexivity... commits one in the end to a misleading internal conception of tradition, to a 'literary' conception of literature. In modernity, it leads one to a politics of the supremacy of the literary and of the writer rather than to a politics of the specific ways in which works participate or have participated in concrete struggles. (30)

The second moment is Foucault's rejection of the opposition between 'poetic' madness and 'psychiatric' illness, and so between literary and scientific or technocratic modes of representation. He looks now to the analysis of a 'technology of the self' found in literature, and he is concerned not with what transcends the limits of representation but with how the terrible figures of the modernist sublime, death, desire, and anxiety, have been put into words. Literature has no privilege in this, and it would thus be misguided to see in literature as such the main source of opposition to the power of "normalisation" in our society'. (30) The third moment has to do with the concept of modernity itself, which is problematic because it is a shifting category rather than a fixed period term. To write a history of the present is to refuse any essential periodisation, and to concentrate instead on the ways in which the categories of the present have been historically

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constituted. This means that ‘we are committed to no general scheme of transformation and no single alternative. Hence, we no longer claim an avant-garde or vanguard relation to our own modernity, nor do we claim to announce a whole new form of thought and society’. (30) This last point restates the by now familiar paradox that modernism, when stripped of its particular (here ‘transgressive’) content and particular periodisation, becomes constitutive of that postmodernity which, in more simple accounts, is thought to have replaced it in a linear succession.

What seems to happen in the reworking of the central philosophical principles of Foucault’s thought is the development of a model of disciplinary power which at times looks strikingly like a model of base/superstructure causality. It is important to notice the ambivalence of this modern configuration of power: the ‘new, more efficient, downward-looking, normalising, and individualising “network” of practice Foucault calls “discipline” (564) derives directly from the democratic rights and liberties instituted during the French Revolution. This network is theorised in terms that recall Engels’ parallelogram of vectors – that is, in terms of a causality that cannot be reduced to a single input or to the sum of its inputs; it is ‘autonomous, anonymous, programmatic, and dispersed’, (64) and is not the direct result either of legislation or of social structure. The theoretical problems here are those of agency and causality, and Rajchman thinks them through a metaphor of depth. Foucault ‘has introduced a conception of power as a deep strategic configuration in which classes or groups are never controlling agents’. (66) Rather than being directed by the State, discipline, in its various aspects, was ‘an unheroic war waged by unsuspecting if uninspiring local technocrats dispersed in various institutions, whose projects fell into a strategic pattern that can be attributed to no one group’s interests or intentions … Disciplines are the various techniques that constitute a “deep” strategy for sorting people into disciplined, individualised, manageable groups’. (70) And disciplinary power is thus not to be found in the political superstructure, ‘but is paradoxically a depth property of activities that are not political. For the power of governments over societies always relies on a deep power within society, such that “power always comes from below”’. (70)

What Rajchman’s metaphor is unable to do is answer the question of the genesis and function of this power. What is it that gives rise to these ‘deep’ strategic patterns? If the agents of disciplinary power are ‘local technocrats’, are we talking of State power (as distinct from executive power)? Or perhaps of a relatively autonomous mode of governmentality exercised from within the State? How does it relate to economic power? Does it represent particular social interests, or is it severed from them? If – as Foucault would presumably argue – disciplinary power is dispersed and heterogeneous rather than unitary, how do its dispersed moments nevertheless cohere in a particular ‘strategic’ constellation? And above all, what are the political consequences of the ‘depth’ of disciplinary power? Rajchman himself acknowledges the political dilemma:
if we agree 'that deep or archaeological change is nondeliberate and nonnecessitated, what are we to do when confronted with "deep regularities" in our current situation to which we are opposed? Are we not reduced either to resigning ourselves to them or to hoping for some apocalyptic change?' (46) The aporia to which the account of disciplinary power seems condemned is that, 'on the one hand, change . . . risks becoming so deep that it remains beyond the reach of any reform or even revolution, and, on the other hand, the point of the analysis, inasmuch as it is not merely antiquarian, is to offer criticism and to help bring about some such deep change. In short, Foucault seems to be proposing a critical analysis without reformist or revolutionary possibilities'. (47)

Rajchman's book is an attempt to resolve these questions, and in particular to locate the possibility of critique in its relation to political action. One way of approaching this is through the opposition Rajchman sets up (it's a recurrent topos of Foucault criticism) between Foucault and a representative of a traditional Enlightenment model of critique, Jürgen Habermas. Foucault's suspicion of this model has to do with its linkage of reason to emancipation: by contrast, Foucault argues that 'domination is not based on a refusal of reason and is quite compatible with truths about ourselves'. (81) Similarly, the disciplines of knowledge are not grounded in anthropologically founded human interests, of which the branches of Reason would be the distillation or representation; they are constituted by a complex history of changing practices, and correspond to interests which are 'humble, practical, and changeable'. (82) Thus the practices of dialogue and measurement, for example, which for Habermas correspond to the human interests of understanding and explaining, for Foucault correspond to quite different, 'disciplinary' interests of control and individualisation which are clearly less ideal and more closely linked to power. (83)

As Rajchman points out, Foucault accepts the Kantian definition of the 'problem of knowledge' as a problem about its conditions of possibility, and the Kantian understanding of truth in terms of constitution rather than correspondence. In modifying this problematic, Foucault is concerned to historicise and pluralise the concept of knowledge, and to free it of all anthropologism. This project is itself finally grounded in what Foucault calls the 'historical a priori', 'a sort of transcendental realm which conditions knowledge but which is nonsubjective and changing'. (103) The status of this grounding is I think never fully worked out in Foucault's work, but it nevertheless produces a radically original understanding of knowledge in terms of the historical practices and discourses that make possible the constitution of its objects and its insertion into a historically finite system of truth.

Foucault's nominalist histories are thus not histories of things, but of the terms, categories, and techniques through which certain things become at certain times the focus of a whole configuration of discussion and procedure. One might say he
offers a historical answer to the philosophical question as to how such things are ‘constituted’. His answer is in terms not of transcen
dental conditions of experience, communication, or language, but of the emergence, at specific times, of assumptions common to a scattered body of thought and policy. (51)

Foucault’s histories are critical in the sense that they undermine the givenness, the unconditionality of the present, but they do not deduce from their critique what the alternatives should be. Foucault ‘uses history to make the “reality” of our current practices seem arbitrary and contingent; that is his critique. His is therefore a “singularising” history, not a universal one’. (58–9) The course of change is not em-
bedded in history or in the structure of reason – and this means that intellectuals, in particular, have no necessary or privileged role to play in articulating a critique of the social order.

The problem with this is that – to borrow a useful Hegelian concept – what we are offered is an indeterminate negation. The end-point of Rajchman’s essay is a politics of ‘rebellion’ or ‘revolt’ grounded in a rejection of the existing order, whatever it is. The possibility of our freedom is rooted

in the unwillingness to comply, the refusal to acquiesce, to fit ourselves in the practices through which we understand and rule ourselves and each other. Such noncompliance in concrete in-
stitutions of power is not something we can abstract and institute in a new form of life. It is specific and unpredictable, not universal and grounded. Foucault thinks freedom should not be analysed as an ideal form of life, just as domination should not be analysed as what prevents the realisation of such a life. Thus his critique is de-
signed to sharpen revolt but not to institute a new society. (92–3)

This is indeed not so much a politics as an anti-politics, with strong overtones of Camus’ metaphysics of revolt. It is thoroughly idealist in its lack of concern for existing institutional arrangements and for the possibility of altering the conditions and mechanisms which sustain asymmetrical relations of power. In this sense revolt remains thoroughly oedipal: it relies upon and confirms the power against which it is directed and which it needs in order to maintain its force as revolt. Rajchman opposes this ‘nominalist philosophy of endless revolt’ to an ‘Idealist philosophy of final emancipation’ (93), but these are not true alternatives. To seek to change institutions is not to guarantee freedom but merely to attempt to secure its practical con-
ditions. Rajchman thus ends by confirming the romanticism that he claimed Foucault has escaped.

V

Alan Megill’s chapter on Foucault in his Prophets of Extremity should be briefly mentioned here. Megill notes that what Foucault leaves be-
hind in the ‘break’ that The Archaeology of Knowledge represents ‘is not aestheticism as such but only the Romantic lyricism and sense of
nostalgia of his previous writings', and he sees this break leading to the political espousal of 'an unending action, whose point is not to bring into being a new present but rather to undermine any and all extant orders, past, present, and future'. Megill characterises this politics as a utopianism without content.

In contrast to Rajchman in particular, but more generally to commentators who assume that a particular politics is to be found inscribed in Foucault's work, Jeffrey Minson's *Genealogies of Morals* proposes making use of Foucault for his own (reformist socialist) political ends. This necessitates a 'strong' reading which refuses to accept certain emphases in Foucault's work; specifically, Minson wants 'to expunge the libertarian-oppositional strand in genealogy by writing out its overarching conception of power' (219) – that is, the conception of power as always and necessarily repressive and homogeneous.

In broad terms, it is the Nietzschean romanticism of much of Foucault's work that Minson subjects to a thoroughgoing critique; and he approaches this through its source. After a long analysis of Nietzsche's historical morphology of the will to power, Minson identifies a form of naturalistic reductionism in Nietzschean genealogy. This is in turn unpacked into two underlying problems. The first is 'a reduction to an invariant substance, i.e. the mutual identification of the will to power and nature'. (70) All power is thus ultimately naturalised, and ultimately deprived of its historical specificity. The second problem is the employment of a 'bipolar retrospective logic' (70) that divides history into two moments, 'a mourned past and a vile present', (71) and thus again functions as a cancellation of history. In this double movement of naturalisation the body takes on a privileged status, as 'the point of lodgement or leverage for the operation of power'. (76) The conceptual strategy is to posit the body as an alternative to the idealist privileging of consciousness; but as it comes to be identified with a unitary will to power the body in its turn is set up as a principle of unity and is given an almost ontological privilege.

Minson then argues for a reflection or a continuation of some of these problems in Foucault's work. He sees 'a retrospective construction of the past exemplified in a single form of sovereign power', identified with the 'juridico-discursive'; and, conversely, a tendency 'to define the non-symbolic and productive view of power in general in such a way as to conform, term by term, with the modern disciplinary instance'. (82) Power is thus thought through a single overriding historical dichotomy, and it tends to be generalised until it is coextensive with the field of social relations. In addition, the body is totalised as the exemplary object of power, rather than being thought in its specificity as the object of various knowledges. It is 'established as the substratum of social change and the natural target of all power relations. The body's resistance becomes a political virtue'. (83) Turning the body into a metaphysical principle makes it impossible to sustain the differentiation of the mechanisms by which power is exercised and particular modes of subject formation operate.
This is one set of emphases in Foucault's work, which are counter-balanced by others and which it is possible to accept or to reject for the purposes of a particular reading. By 'writing out' (in both senses) these Nietzschean emphases, Minson is able to produce what I think is a more profitable 'Foucauldian' definition of power. This is, roughly, that power has no general value — it is not inherently either good or bad — but it has a particular value under any particular complex of conditions. Disciplinary structures — such things as prisons, systems of therapy, technologies of schooling or training, practices of confessional self-shaping — likewise are practices of power that may or may not have a positive function. The converse of this is that power may be fully repressive: the argument against identifying power with repression is only an argument against accepting this as a general and ahistorical model.

Such an understanding of power provides the theoretical conditions for a politics that, rather than ascribing to particular social mechanisms an absolute value for good or evil, takes them seriously as means to an end. At the same time, resistance ceases to be a transcendental principle, but since power is not thought to be uniformly repressive, the criticism that Foucault leaves no space for real resistance to power is deflated: the relevant opposition is no longer that between power and resistance but rather that between unequal powers, or between a power and a counter-power; and both of these have the capacity to be either socially productive or repressive. This is not to say that a Foucauldian politics and a Foucauldian understanding of power must be neutral, detached from the battle: it would recognise the historical constructedness of any possibility of action, but it would equally recognise the impossibility of acting outside such frameworks, the fact that we are always already committed. There is no outside of power, and power is never overcome.

It is in the context of this argument that Minson locates the trajectory taken by Discipline and Punish and the published volumes of The History of Sexuality. These, he says, move along an 'ethical' vector in so far as the 'administrative domains investigated in these books tend to be viewed in terms of technical or scientific means serving or failing to serve ethical goals, such as those given in the justifications of imprisonment. Genealogies account for these moral developments in terms of the establishment of new power relationships'. (40) But what is involved in this shift to the ethical? It can't simply be a question of power, because this was already central to the books on knowledges (the 'archaeologies'). The formula Minson decides upon is that the movement in Foucault's work 'is from the question "Who rules?" to the question "How is power exercised?"'. (41)

The concept of power/knowledge that Foucault formulates in the later books can be described in terms of his increasing opposition to a rationalist view of truth, and a willingness to explore the consequences of this opposition. This is to say that knowledge can never be thought apart from particular political and administrative machineries; it is
always (like language) in use, and use determines how it works: there are no necessary effects that can be specified for any knowledge – which is why, for example, enlightened and liberal concerns for the mad or the imprisoned are able to produce effects which are all the more repressive for being ‘moral’. The development of Foucault's work thus carries him from the 'archaeological' mapping of the emergence of the human sciences and of the formation of their categories to the 'genealogical' concern with their strategic role in public administration and policy – that is, in the practical exercise of power.

The genealogies' broad domain of enquiry is the conditions of emergence of 'the social', in the sense of the field of social administration and welfare, with objects such as the family, sexuality, crime, insanity and so on. This domain is not coextensive with social relations; in particular, it excludes economic phenomena, and we could perhaps say that it is the domain of activities directed to the maintenance of the moral order. The key Foucauldian category here is that of 'police', which is not, as Dreyfus and Rabinow seem to think, 'the police', a body of State employees, but rather the programmatic regulation of security, welfare, morality and order. The category of police is transformed with the differentiation of state and civil society and as it increasingly comes to construct 'the population' as 'a statistical object and a political-economic resource in need of continuing and various governmental attention'. (105) It remains the key to the genealogy of the personal, however, and Minson indeed summarises the import of the genealogical studies in 'the general proposition that the figure of the person is an historical innovation consequent upon a series of "liberal" transformations of "police"'. (145)

Foucault's analysis of this field proposes that transformations in the structure of the personal and in the mechanisms and institutions that form it – from the prison and the asylum to the clinical gaze, the schooling system and the confessional – have to do not with a political programme, or with the intrinsic rationality of particular proposals, or with economic exigencies, but with the establishment of a specifically disciplinary rationality. Discipline in this sense is 'a way of exercising power which works by normalisation. It specifies norms and sets up techniques for distinguishing and correcting individuals deviating from these norms. Legal infractions from this standpoint become more like directional indicators, pointing towards a more general deviation such as a delinquent personality.' (23) Discipline depends centrally upon techniques of visibility, and it 'submits a whole mass of behaviour, speech, physical deportment and cleanliness, sexual activity, utilisation of time and space (matters hitherto of relative indifference to the law) to exhaustive, detailed inspection and disciplinary punishment'. (24) It is thus a centralised regulatory principle; and the question needs to be asked, I think, as to how disciplinary rationality differs from the Weberian category of rationalisation that informs, for example, Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialectic of Enlightenment.
Minson's account of the concept of discipline consistently poses, without resolving, the paradox of a strategic impetus which cannot be traced to any singular intent. He writes, for example, that 'social work, the psychiatric complex, national insurance, education, family life, family law and legal psychiatry are not realisations of any one deliberate project of social order, political theory, ideology or programme; yet strategic social configurations run through and link them to form ensembles of indirect government'. (60-1) It's not clear whether this 'configuration' is purely contingent or must be ascribed to some principle of rationality. Elsewhere Minson writes that disciplinary power cannot be derived from 'the logic of a general strategy'. (110) Rather, to speak of the "unintentional" character of strategic ensembles ... is to designate a strategy retrospectively, not in terms of intentions of individuals, plans or mechanisms but simply as effects'. (113) But again, it is difficult to see what it is that brings diverse effects together, and how these 'effects' are in some way transformed into a strategic volition.

The problem associated with this is how the domain of 'the social'—that is, the primarily administrative domain that Foucault places at the heart of ethical formation—is related to the systems of political and economic determination. Minson attempts to resolve this in two ways: by stressing that 'ethics and morality are quite material domains which are subject to real development'; (154) and by appeal to Foucault's reworking of the concept of 'context' in The Archaeology of Knowledge, where he denies it causal priority over what it contextualises. But in fact Minson does continue to hold to some model of efficient causality centred upon the complex of institutions, technologies, and practices of public policy and social administration. Minson ultimately fails to recognise, I think, that Foucault's conceptualisation of the domain of the social is both powerful and partial. He has essentially nothing to say about the political and economic instances, and this lack means that there can be no 'Foucauldian politics' in the strict sense. Minson's attempt to develop such a politics has the consequence that 'reform' occurs within the framework of a generality which is not that of a capitalist system but of a liberal social-administrative regime. With the 'administrative ethos' playing the role of last instance, questions of economic and political power come to be of secondary interest.

VI

To Jürgen Habermas, finally. In the two essays on Foucault in Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne, Habermas focuses on the category of power as the explanatory basis of Foucault's work and seeks to explore the limits and contradictions of its use. He has no doubt that this is a foundational category: it works as 'the basic transcendental-historistic concept of a historiography directed to the
critique of reason', (298) and its effectivity in motivating the contingent and discontinuous transformations of discursive structures is likened to the synthetic force of transcendental consciousness in enabling a description of the universe of objects of possible experience (only Habermas could get away with a comparison like this - and his German is even more daunting than my paraphrase). But this in itself is not the problem: the aporia into which Foucault writes himself has to do with the doubling of this transcendental principle by its empirical manifestation in history.

In this it ends up repeating the structural contradiction it was supposed to resolve. Like Dreyfus and Rabinow, Habermas suggests that the category of power was systematically deployed in an attempt to work out the problems Foucault encountered in trying to deconstruct the human sciences by means of a self-contained analysis of discourse. The supposed superordination of discourse to practices meant that discursive rules were seen as somehow regulating themselves; but, as Habermas argues, 'there are no rules which could regulate their own application. A rule-governed discourse can not itself regulate the context into which it is introduced' (in den er eingelassen ist: note how sharply this separates discourse from a context which is purely external to it, whereas the concept of discourse implies precisely a set of metarules concerned with contextual use). (315) Foucault then manages to evade this difficulty 'by surrendering the autonomy of forms of knowledge to their foundation in technologies of power, and subordinating the archaeology of knowledge to a genealogy which explains the generation of knowledge in terms of practices of power'. (315) But the price to be paid for this resolution is that, in generalising the will-to-knowledge into a will-to-power, Foucault must assume that the latter inhabits all discourses without differentiation, not just those involved in the production of truth. And this concealed origin of the concept of power in the Nietzschean critique of metaphysics explains its systematically ambiguous application. Habermas means by this that

on the one hand the category of power retains the innocence of a concept which can be applied descriptively and which contributes to an empirical analysis of technologies of power; methodologically it hardly differs from a functionalist and historically oriented sociology of knowledge. On the other hand, the category of power also retains from the concealed history of its origins the sense of a constitutive and originary concept, which is responsible for conferring on the empirical analysis of technologies of power its force as a critique of the power of reason, and which secures for genealogy its demystifying effect. (317)

This is to say that genealogy is split between an analysis of power as both condition of existence and social effect of scientific knowledge, and a transcendental explanation of power relations as the condition of possibility of scientific discourse in general. It is this systematic
ambiguity that brings about that curious blend of positivism and criticality that marks Foucault's writings from the 1970s onward.

In reversing the traditional dependence of power on truth, Foucault works with three methodologically consequential reductions: 'the understanding of the meaning of discourse by the participants involved in it is displaced from the perspective of the ethnological observer to the interpretation of discourses; ascriptions of value are functionalistically reduced to effects of power; and ought is naturalistically reduced to is'. (325) These can all properly be described as reductions because meaning, truth-claims and value don't go without remainder into practices of power; the repressed moments return at a metatheoretical level, where genealogy turns out to be unable to answer the question of its own situatedness, its partiality, its interest. Despite Foucault's attempt to dispense with the self-referentiality of hermeneutics, a Rankean description of self-contained events or structures is impossible, and precisely because such a description discovers the ungroundedness, the partiality, the interest of all knowledge. Foucault's 'happy positivism' thus turns into its opposite, a historiography which is narcissistically focused on the position of the historian and which 'instrumentalises the observation of the past for the needs of the present'. (327) Further, the relativism that flows from this means that the reduction of discourse to power equally affects genealogy. Foucault's appeal to genealogy's identification with repressed and marginalised discourses will not afford any way out of this reduction, since these discourses are of course still caught up in relations of power.

This can be put differently as a question about the normative basis of Foucault's critique. Foucault himself argues that traditional forms of critique simply invert the categories of power, and in any case are idealist in so far as power has to do with systems of practice rather than simply structures of ideas; the effective response to power is the tactical mobilisation of counter-practices rather than a critique of discourses. But Habermas responds that this resistance can still only be based in a normative position – that is, a value-decision that power is to be opposed. One of the few such decisions hinted at in Foucault's work involves the value given to the resistance of the body; but in his later work Foucault refuses the prediscursive naturalism that this entails. He is simply unable to answer the question of the philosophical basis of his critique. (335–6)

It is not only at the metatheoretical but also at the empirical level that the categories of meaning, validity and value are eliminated. Habermas concludes his reading of Foucault by arguing that he ignores the mechanisms of social integration in favour of purely strategic actions, and is thus unable to explain – for example – how local struggles can ever be consolidated into institutionalised power. There are two areas of social integration that Habermas designates as particularly crucial absences. Foucault is said to ignore language as a mediating system of socialisation, and instead to posit a simple form of integration of individuals in technologies of power. And he neglects the processes of
law in his exclusive attention to penal processes. This again involves a 'flattening' of culture and politics to the immediate substratum of the exercise of power, and in particular it involves a lack of attention to the constitutional mechanisms of the liberal state.

It is important not to be confused by the apparent lack of fit here between the insistence on linguistic mediation and the earlier criticism of Foucault for his exclusive emphasis on the discursive. What Habermas means by language is finally -- and to put it too simply -- a practice that transcends power to the extent that it is capable of converting the monologic and objectifying pressure of power into dialogue, into symbolic interaction. This is not to say that symbolic interaction is free of the distortions imposed by power, but that it is not simply equivalent to its exercise. Habermas thus argues for the exemption of certain 'remainders' from the play of power relations. The symbolic can be thought, at least counterfactually, in separation from power.

This is a clear point of disagreement between Foucault and Habermas, and it's not one that can be simply adjudicated. What might perhaps be useful, however, is to call attention to the particular problematic within which Habermas's criticisms of Foucault are developed. The questions of the 'integration' of the 'individual' into 'society', of the legitimacy of the social order, of the social functions of the mediating world of values, are all internal to the discourse of the social sciences; they cannot be asked, and would make no sense, outside of this formation. Now, in these two essays Habermas thematizes his own relationship to the social sciences in two different ways. In the first place, he relates them to the objectifying structure of the gaze. Paraphrasing Foucault, he talks of the controlling, dissecting, penetrating gaze of the subject of Western rationality as the central figure of a structure of power, expressed most clearly in the closed institution, which is built upon a strict separation between subject and object (a structure of seeing without being seen) and which provides the structural foundation for clinical psychology, pedagogics, sociology, political science, cultural anthropology and so on. (299) In the second instance Habermas presents an account of the current state of the social sciences, criticizing Foucault for failing to see that in the 1970s the objectifying tendency was no longer dominant but competed with and was contested by hermeneutic and critical methodologies, which 'in accordance with their form of production of knowledge [ihrer Wissensform nach] are adapted to other possibilities of use than manipulation and self-manipulation'. (321)

Again, this is not an argument which can be simply adjudicated; but it seems to me as a matter of empirical fact to be wrong. There is also a theoretical argument to be made about it: namely that the effect of knowledges cannot be measured either by their intentions or by their structure. By both criteria Habermas seems to be naive about the extent to which the social sciences can escape their historical destiny as modes of objectification. This is to suggest that Habermas displays a certain blindness about the horizon within which his criticisms of
Foucault are made – which is not to say that Foucault is not equally subject to the sorts of limitation that Habermas describes. Habermas’s need to exempt certain symbolic domains from the effects of power, and his apparent understanding of power as coercion rather than ‘integration’, indicate that, again, the specific point of blindness has to do with what Foucault means by power. Power as repression is the traditional target of the ‘critical’ social sciences; if Foucault is correct, this criticality has always to some extent been complicit with its object, just as liberalism has worked as a central instrument in the establishment of disciplinary control. Foucault’s own account of the productivity of power may not escape being similarly complicit with the Cunning of Reason, but it does help to problematise the good conscience of critique, and it does suggest that, rather than being simply the domain of the coercive and the repressive, power equally informs the ‘formative’ and ‘integrative’ domain of symbolic interaction. *De nobis fabula narratur.*

**NOTES**


28 Ibid., p.195.