

Kant, Foucault, and Forms of Experience

Marc Djaballah

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 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
New York London

First published 2008
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Simultaneously published in the UK
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk.”

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Djaballah, Marc, 1975–

Kant, Foucault, and forms of experience / by Marc Djaballah.

p. cm. — (Studies in philosophy)

Includes bibliographical references (p. 339) and index.

ISBN 978-0-415-95624-6

1. Kant, Immanuel, 1724–1804. 2. Foucault, Michel, 1926–1984. 3. Experience. I. Title. B2798.D55 2008

194—dc22

2007038793

ISBN 0-203-92908-X Master e-book ISBN

ISBN10: 0-415-95624-2 (hbk)

ISBN10: 0-203-92908-X (ebk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-95624-6 (hbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-203-92908-7 (ebk)

for Bernice and Madeleine

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Acknowledgments

The following is a revised version of a PhD dissertation submitted to the Department of Philosophy, University of Chicago, in June 2005. For financial support of research on the project as a doctoral dissertation, I wish to acknowledge the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Earheart Foundation, the Chicago-France Center, the Department of Philosophy, and the University of Chicago. I also wish to recognize the exceptional research conditions granted to junior faculty members in the philosophy department of l'Université du Québec à Montréal, which allowed for the revision of the manuscript over the past year. I would like to signal the hospitality of the IMEC and the Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne, where I was able to consult otherwise inaccessible documents that proved indispensable.

My heartfelt thanks to Arnold I. Davidson, who supervised this project as a Ph.D. dissertation and from whom I learned what I got right about Foucault, and to the other members of my committee, Robert B. Pippin and Micheal N. Forster, whose effects on this study are incalculable. I seize the occasion to thank Jim Conant, who has offered valued insight and support. I should also like to acknowledge Robert Bernasconi, for including this book in this fine series, and for his helpful remarks on an earlier draft. I would like to thank Amar Djaballah and Dan Wack: they know how much this study owes to them. I would also like to thank Cheri Lynne Carr and Andrew Djaballah who have contributed to the project in more ways than they know.

Finally, at the cost of unveiling my secret, I would like to acknowledge the unfailing support of my mom, Jeanne Ibbotson Djaballah.

Introduction

Foucault's Kantian Enigma

. . . [T]he child is innocence, substantial purity itself, but by definition knows nothing of it: the child is pure, but does not know it, and is pure precisely only on condition of not knowing it; the conscious adult would know it all too well if it were pure, but the adult is no longer a child precisely because it knows it.¹

. . . [W]e belong to an age of criticism . . . : the age of intelligence that keeps us irremediably at a distance from original language. For Kant, the possibility and the necessity of criticism were tied, by way of certain elements of science, to the fact that there was knowledge. Today, we know from Nietzsche the philologist that this possibility and this necessity are connected to the fact that there is language and that, in the innumerable words spoken . . . a meaning takes shape that overcomes us, guides our blindness, and waits for us in the darkness to become conscious, to enter the light of day and to begin to speak. We are historically tied to history, to the patient construction of discourse on discourses, to the task of hearing what has already been said.²

Léon Brunschvicg's signal 1924 exposition of Kant begins with the recollection of a conversation in which Jules Lachelier had disclosed a secret to him. The key the first hundred years of the reception of Kant's thought in France, he confided, is that "for the first fifty years, Kant was refuted and was not understood, and in the past fifty years, he has been admired, but he is no better understood."³ Brunschvicg's essay, driven by reflection on the problem of what it means to *understand* Kant, favorably diagnoses the emergence of a new set of conditions for the understanding of Kant over the roughly twenty years since the conversation with Lachelier would have taken place. It introduces a distinction between the *doctrine of the Kantian system* and the *idea of criticism* that has remained a reference point in French history of philosophy

in the organization of the contemporary options available for understanding Kant:

. . . [I]t is possible to discuss the Kantian doctrine of science in the literal terms that Kant proposed it in, on a track along which he was followed by the schools for which *KrV* shares the fate of the univocally and exclusively defined *a priori* character of forms or categories. Everything that came to disturb the wise ordering of Classical knowledge, from the discovery of non-Euclidian geometries to the advent of theories of relativity, directly targets and destroys the critical idea of science at the root. But a no less legitimate attitude is to leave to the neo-Kantians and to Kant himself the postulate of the solidarity between this critical idea and the table of the forms or the categories, that we know today express the most superficial and fragile aspect of the doctrine, and to abstract from it in order to release (*dégager*) the purity of the idea of criticism.⁴

The importance and the risks of this act of abstraction will be a constant point of reference in this study, and when considered in relation to Foucault's understanding of Kant, it is indicative that, while Brunschvicg analyzes criticism as an *idea*, and the system as a *doctrine*, he refers without commentary to the theoretical standpoints available as *attitudes*. This suggests that what it means to understand Kant—whether in terms of doctrinal systematicity or the coherence of an idea of criticism—is most fundamentally a question of adopting an attitude in thought. Foucault's conception of criticism as an *attitude* resonates with Brunschvicg's model. It marks a way of relating to Kant determined by the act of abstraction from the literality of the systematic doctrine, to define a unified, regulated level of consideration of the text and its context. This approach to the problem of what it means to understand Kant indispensably involves the reflective exercise of a properly Kantian capacity: the capacity to abstract and the correlative notion of conceptual purity. The obscurities of the problem of abstraction in a Kantian context are addressed in detail below, but Brunschvicg's distinction based on it stands as a perspicuous early statement of a quietly decisive model in 20th century French thought. Brunschvicg's grid figures in the background of Foucault's readings of Kant, no less than his practice of Kantian criticism as a form of historical analysis. It is a fundamentally double-tracked schema, not only in terms of his system, but also and more distinctively in terms of the historical significance of his thought: the systematic Kant and the popular Kant respectively generate two entirely different paths of investigation. By specifying the particular form of this

reading that functions in Foucault, at both first and second orders of consideration, the problems with which this study is occupied will begin to take shape by negation.

While previous scholarly treatment of Kant and Foucault has almost without exception dealt with the Enlightenment, this question in fact represents a very limited dimension of a more complex and varied relation between the two, and of the idea of philosophy as criticism for which it provides the material.⁵ Foucault's late use of Kant's discussion of the Enlightenment, formulated in terms of the legal image of humanity's age of majority, as a historically located type of intellectual and spiritual *attitude*, rather than as a chronological *age*, has been frequently discussed. The sources of this theme in Foucault's research are more rarely considered, however. A trace of these is left in the passage cited above from the Preface to his 1963 *NC*, one that repeats Kant's familiar assessment from the Preface to *KrV*: "Our age is the genuine age of *criticism*, to which everything must submit" (Aixn). This diagnosis of the historical present in Kant is developed in the course of an analysis of the popular writings on the Enlightenment, in which Foucault later finds the emergence of the critical attitude that aims to make the present problematic as a historical object. Foucault's use of the Kantian diagnostic is part of his own fragmentary and shifting attempt to characterize the present in terms of a riddled self-obscurity, an enigma generated in the gap that separates the heterogeneous attitudes historically associated with Kant. Foucault schematized his relation to Kant not only as a figure of vision, knowledge, and an activity of illuminating, but also according to an undefined figure of language, meaning, and an activity of problem-posing that obscures the clarity that hides mysteries. The obscuring function of the enigmatic is a methodological one, needed as a result of the concealing capacities of light. It takes the form of speaking in riddles and writing enigmatically. This figure also aptly schematizes Foucault's relation to Kant at the level of the form of their discursive practice. In the course of a critical review of the French edition of Ernest Cassirer's *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, with his trademark baroque élan, Foucault diagnoses that "the Kantian enigma" has "stupefied Western thought, leaving it blind to its own modernity for nearly two hundred years."⁶ When described in its specificity, this figure of the enigmatic frames the relation between Kant and Foucault more conspicuously than that of the Enlightenment.

While the literary figure of the enigma is often used—Merleau-Ponty, Benjamin, Blanchot and Borges do so very effectively—it is itself rarely examined. Roger Caillois's 1958 piece "L'énigme et l'image," with which Foucault would have been familiar, is a notable exception. Foucault's historical use of the figure to characterize the Kantian moment and the emergence of

modernity generally can be defined with more precision in view of Caillois's schema. His analysis of the enigma is found in the course of criticism of André Breton's conception of the literary image. Caillois submits that Breton is mistaken to assimilate the enigma to the poetic image, reasoning that the image, whose value "rests on its newness," its "shock value," is itself rooted in the figure of the enigma, which is by contrast "liturgical and immutable," invoking a distinction at the heart of this study, Caillois specifies that one is a matter of *creating*, and the other of *knowing*.⁷ Whereas the image "demonstrates the capacity to discover a relation between two terms that is both surprising and convincing," Caillois explains that this enigma serves "to verify that the postulator is in fact in possession of knowledge held secret" (p. 154). He defines the creative capacity of the enigmatic in terms of its self-contained quality, specifying that it "does not call for a response properly speaking, but for a key phrase tied to it either by an instructive analogy or one that has argumentative force," which "alludes to anecdotal facts lived by the asker and known by him alone" (p. 155). In this respect, the enigma is a particular form of Kant's concept of a problem—"The problem is one and the same as the solution," he aphorizes in *Opus Posthumum*, for example (22: 464). There is, moreover, an ascetic and probative dimension to the form of the enigma, such that it can be thought to "disguise a trial (*une épreuve*)," a challenge, such as a test to prove one's worth for entry into the society of humans as an adult (p. 156). As such, the enigma, Caillois writes, "cannot be guessed, it is not even guessable," and in order to win, "one must acquire the solution by ruse, or acquire it by following the appropriate instruction, or simply still, buy it" (p. 157). This schema defines the enigma as an epistemological figure for the form of problems that implicitly contain their solutions, that aim to prove the possession of secret knowledge, knowledge that cannot—for reasons of form that will be examined—be brought to the light of day. The enigmatic character of the Kantian moment in Foucault's historical discourse functions on the model of this figure.

Although Foucault does not provide an overview of the various aspects of the Kantian enigma, one can see the figure functioning as an enigma in Caillois's sense more or less explicitly throughout his work, and often with immediate implications that outreach his relation to Kant. While in a sense it occupied him for at least twenty-five years after the main lines of the problem were in place, the conception and the formulation of the problem being addressed here under the figure of the Kantian enigma in Foucault remained fragmentary until the end of his life. Given his unflinching concern to formulate problems precisely, and to do so in light of the form of problems itself, it is not surprising that Foucault nowhere attempts to discover the truth of

the enigma by solving something that one might imagine to be Kant's riddle. However, it is exceptional that he fails to arrive at an adequate formulation of Kant's role in the domains of the history of thought he analyzed, *i.e.*, of the Kantian enigma. Foucault's accounts of the Kantian riddle take the fragmentary form of a series of remarks and discussions scattered throughout his writings. When considered as a part of a unified standpoint, each of these generates perplexity. While these individual puzzling discussions are not the primary concern of this study, its sources, its objectives, and its limits can be aptly formulated in relation to them—it is a preparatory and critical exercise needed to dissolve them. The definition of a unified but polyvalent standpoint from which to describe the Kantian enigma is a condition of these perplexities taking shape as a problem. The exposition of such a Kantian standpoint is the primary task of the present study. It will be useful, therefore, to be able to situate it in relation to the perplexities generated by Foucault's discussions of Kant and the Kantian enigma. Considered as moments of Foucault's intellectual trajectory, these naturally fall into narrative configuration.

As a student of Jean Hyppolite, the preeminent French Hegel specialist of his generation, in his final year of *lycée*, Foucault received solid instruction in the history of Modern philosophy.⁸ In the late 1940s he studied closely with Hyppolite and wrote his D.E.S. thesis on Hegel under his supervision in 1949. He also followed Merleau-Ponty's lectures during this period, which featured vibrant but serious treatment of Modern philosophy. Some of Foucault's first teaching experiences involved Kant and this period of the history of philosophy, and one of Foucault's earliest publications was the translation of Kant's lectures on anthropology discussed below.⁹ The translation was part of a dissertation project (his *thèse secondaire*, the second of the two required doctoral theses in France at the time, supervised by Hyppolite) that also included an introductory monograph. The translation remains in print with Vrin, who have also just published the monograph. The text examines the relation between the three *Critiques* and the *Anthropology*. His analysis is organized by a contrast between popular and systematic practices of criticism in Kant, and it deploys an early version of the distinction between the ontology of actuality and the analytics of truth, as discrete types of post-Kantian theoretical outlooks. Kant's text, for Foucault, is enigmatic as the source of both standpoints. He describes this face of the Kantian enigma as an anthropological repetition of criticism.

Foucault presents Kant's standpoint in the *Anthropology* as bearing a paradoxical relation to his more familiar analysis of the conditions of experience in *KrV*. When set into an inverted analogy, according to Foucault's

schema, anthropology takes form as the negative of criticism. Noting that the order of exposition of the *Anthropology* follows the division of mental capacities from *KrV*, Foucault submits that its primary domain of analysis is not however the regularity of their exercise, but rather the site of their immanent breakdown, the path of their possible derivation, “the perils where they are in danger of getting lost” (p. 76). And yet, the two domains overlap completely, and Foucault explains that the anthropological standpoint “says nothing *other* than criticism,” it does not introduce a new series of questions, but simply poses the relevant critical questions anew, marking “the level of the structural foundation of the *anthropologico-critical repetition*” (p. 76).

This relation of repetition is paradoxical on Foucault’s reading. Anthropology is both included in and programmed by criticism, while it does not explicitly refer to or depend on criticism for its principle of organization. It takes the main articulations of criticism and the division of the capacities of the mind as given, without making this implicit sustained reference into a foundation or principle, resting on its results but not anchored in it. Foucault understands Kant’s claim that the *Anthropology* is both systematic and popular against the background of this paradox. His suggestion is that the anthropological repetition of criticism “secretly guides Kantian thought toward a foundational reflection at the popular level of advice, narrative, and examples,” most distinctively by introducing an empirical dimension to critical reflection (p.77). Foucault points out that Anthropology is systematic in that it forms a coherent whole, and that the principle of this totality, the object of this coherent discourse, is not the human being who is already tied to the world and can be known only through the indefinite work of empirical investigation, but is borrowed from critical thought in the domain of pure reason, such that the systematicity of the *Anthropology* is a factor of the practice of criticism that it repeats. This repetition is not, however, without variation. Foucault is careful to note that the relation of determination between passivity and spontaneity is described in the *Anthropology* at a level of abstraction that admits an aspect of “temporal dispersion,” and that “remains incomplete and never began” (p. 83). Consequently, its object is “always already there and never entirely given,” dependent on “a time that in every way envelops it, from afar and from above” (p. 83). He does not mean to suggest, however, that this implies that the problem of the origin is foreign to the anthropological in Kant, but on the contrary that it reframes it, restoring its real meaning; the search of the origin aims “not to bring to light and isolate the initial in the instant, but to recover the temporal track that is not less radical for having already begun,” and the origin is not “what is *really* primitive, it is what is *truly* temporal,” it is the locus of time, truth and freedom prior to their separation (p. 106). Foucault’s exposition of the anthropological

standpoint pursues the analysis of the empirical and temporal dimension of the anthropological repetition of criticism in connection with the critical notions of source, domain, and limits, that are fundamentally rooted in this repetition, and the origin of the a primary problem of contemporary philosophy, the dispersion that “divides the entire field of philosophical reflection into the *a priori*, the *original*, and the *fundamental*,” and that “the project of all philosophy was to overcome,” until it becomes apparent that “this overcoming is impossible outside a reflection that repeats it, and in repeating it grounds it” (p. 106). The form generates the tendency for a kind of confusion in anthropological reflection, one around which Foucault will orient his historical work throughout the 1960s. He does not in this text impute this mistake to Kant, but diagnoses that the intermediary character of the anthropological concept of the origin, and of the space of anthropological analysis itself between the *a priori* and the fundamental, as Foucault explains, “authorizes it to function an impure and unreflective mixture in the interne economy of philosophy,” where it enjoys the privileges of both the *a priori* and the meaning of the fundamental, the preparatory character of criticism, and the completed form of transcendental philosophy, it ambles irregularly from questions of necessity to questions of existence, and conflates the analysis of conditions and the question of finitude (p. 106). Foucault’s ultimate suggestion in relation to this aspect of the Kantian enigma as ‘destructuralization’ of the philosophical field is that it would be fruitful to redo the entire post-Kantian history of philosophy from the standpoint of the consideration of this confusion and of its denunciation before the fact in Kant’s anthropological repetition of criticism.

For the next eighteen years, Kant’s role in Foucault’s work remains largely implicit, and his remarks on Kant often verge on the cryptic. This is not to say that Foucault put aside the problem of the Kantian enigma, but the historical and philosophical functions he attributes to Kant are perplexing. This is particularly true in relation to the two guiding philosophical themes of Foucault’s work during the 1960s, the coupling of the empirical and the transcendental as the confused form of discourse on the human, and the analysis of literary discourse as the form of thought indicative of a transformation in it. Both themes are treated in detail in the course of the following study as moments not only of Foucault’s reading of Kant, but of the Kantian form of Foucault’s thought, and thus can be passed over summarily.

While *MC*’s reputation for impenetrability may be slightly exaggerated, it is certainly true that in Foucault’s 1968 *reconditus opus*, the absence of a well developed methodological apparatus and the affected style of expression do much to conceal the precision of its analysis and the wealth of its insight. It is no surprise that, although Foucault’s analysis of Kant’s role in the history

of the human sciences, which in this text is condensed into three sections that span a mere fifteen pages, its importance in the economy of the historical transformations described in the text is unparalleled. This is less puzzling in view of one of Foucault's central strategies in the book: to analyze central and broadly recognizable historical transformations in Western thought through the analysis of minor figures, who are all but unknown outside narrow fields of specialization. Indeed, a great part of the rhetorical effectiveness of the book derives from this strategic hyperbolic marginalization of Kant and other canonical philosophical figures. However—and the perplexity of this fragment of the Kantian enigma lies here—Foucault defines the key idea of this history, and at a second order, of the archeological method of analysis generally, in terms of Kant and the enigmatic singularity of the contribution and the effects of his work. On the one hand, the effectiveness of the analysis of the text makes it impossible to think of Foucault's strategy as having a purely rhetorical function, but on the other, when deployed in relation to Kant, the reflectively Kantian character of the methodological grid through which the analysis is conducted undermines the idea of the strategy of hyperbolic marginalization at the root. This perplexity falls into place as part of the Kantian enigma only in light of consideration of the details of Foucault's analysis in relation to the strategy in question and its place in the method of the analysis (see Chapter Three).

The other notable theme of Foucault's work on Kant in the 1960s concerns the historical and epistemological relevance of contemporary literary discourse. These discussions belong to his field of analysis of discursive practices more generally, and the account of the historical function of contemporary literature as a form of discourse in the closing pages of *MC* is manifestly the result of the work presented in previous individual pieces on Blanchot, Bataille, Klossowski, and Artaud. Kant's importance in this connection is less visible in *MC* than in certain passages of the essays in which Foucault makes detailed reference to the Kantian texts that serve as his material, and this is not difficult to understand in light of Foucault's strategy of hyperbolic marginalization described above. But the discussions of Kant in the individual essays, particularly on Blanchot and Bataille, are confounding thematically, in that concepts from Kant's precritical work are analyzed as the sources of the particularly contemporary dimension of literary discourse. This perplexity in the face of the Kantian enigma is treated from the standpoint of criticism as a practice in Chapter Five.

There is a perplexity proper to Foucault's exposition of the Kantian enigma hidden in his review of Cassirer discussed above. In the course of discussing the contemporary relevance of the book, Foucault nests a general diagnostic of the Kantian enigma in terms of its effects, namely that Kant's thought produces an

insurmountable historical and conceptual break that generates the indefinitely repeated injunction to discover and take stock of its necessity, and that corresponds to the birth of the Modern world. Forgetting the event historically liberated what Foucault describes as “a double nostalgia”: for the Greek elucidation of our relation to being, and for the 18th century investigation of the forms and limits of knowledge.¹⁰ Modern thought, according to this assessment, has yet to escape what Foucault calls “the dilemma” that pits “the Hellenistic dynasty” (the Hölderlin-to-Heidegger track) against “the dynasty of the Modern *Aufklärer*” (the Marx-to-Lévi-Strauss track), with Nietzsche gracing the model with “the monstrosity” of belonging to both dynasties (p. 547). It is true that Foucault does not enter into the details of what makes the bilateral form into a regularly exclusive proposition, or the characteristics of Nietzsche’s discourse on the strength of which it serves as an exception to the exclusivity of the horns, but the perplexity in question is not merely one of underdetermination. In the face of the enigmatic quality of the source of the two tracks, the perplexity manifested by Foucault’s analysis is at its most basic that the return to Hellenistic problems and the pursuit of conditions of knowledge and truth, apparently unrelated, can find their origin in a single forgotten source. How could it be possible to describe such a mysterious source? This perplexity is left suspended in the transformation of Foucault’s standpoint in the transposition to a field of relations of power.

In the decade following the publication of *MC*, Foucault refers to Kant in print only as a broad moment in the history of philosophy and of thought and his remarks are not guided by an underlying problem or distinctive insight into Kant’s significance. In a lecture presented to the Société française de philosophie in 1978, however, Foucault presents an extraordinarily complex genealogy of Kantian criticism. Suddenly Kant is once again at the center of Foucault’s research. His lecture provides a certain number of clues that indicate how to connect the previous Kantian problems of his analysis of relations of knowledge with the results of his historical research on relations of power, and particularly the relation of governing and the governmental power that belongs to the sources of contemporary power as security—with his work on the problem of the Enlightenment and the attitude of the historical ontology of actuality, and ultimately his ethical analysis of self-relations. Indeed, it is impossible to situate the space of Foucault’s later ethical work without confronting the concept of criticism as a practice and an attitude that emerges from the reconfrontation with Kant.

The sense of suddenness in this reemergence of Kantian themes and textual attention to Kant is intensified by the utter absence of all things Kantian in Foucault’s 1977–78 lectures at the Collège de France. Given that much of

the material for these lectures was certainly written (if not researched) as they were being given on a week-to-week basis, and that the course ended scarcely two months prior the lecture for the Société on criticism, Kant seems to have fallen back into Foucault's lap from nowhere. The conceptual needs at the origin of this return are in large part silent in Foucault, and left to be specified on the basis of the transformations in his practice itself (this theme is treated in Chapter Four). However there are factual traces of this movement in the form of two minor conceptual events between 1971–2 that are captured in Foucault's published work. If they do not in themselves provide the key to understanding the origin of Kant's reappearance in Foucault's work, as hints of what may have brought Foucault's attention back to Kant, they may make it seem somewhat less sudden.

The first occurs in the midst of a biting exchange with George Steiner, in which Foucault associates his concept of archaeology to Kant's use of the term in a 1793 essay "Fortschritte der Metaphysik" (20: 260–351). In a biting, often hilarious response to Steiner's *New York Times* review of *The Order of Things*¹¹, Foucault castigates the reviewer for misattributing this use of the word "archaeology" to Freud:

This word must come from somewhere, Mr. Steiner thinks. Let's attribute it to Freud. Mr. Steiner doesn't know that Kant used the word to designate the history of what makes a certain form of thought necessary. Besides, I have spoken of this use in another text. Far be it from me to suggest that Mr. Steiner must read me. But he should skim through Kant. I know very well, however, that Kant is not as fashionable as Freud.¹²

The essay Foucault alludes to, a fascinating history of metaphysics that Kant never completed, has been of interest primarily to Kant scholars. The use of the term, which occurs in a section not integrated into the essay called "Of a Philosophizing History of Philosophy," is extraordinary in Kant, and he defines it perspicuously: "A philosophical history of philosophy is itself possible, not historically or empirically, but rationally, i.e., *a priori*. For although it establishes facts of reason, it does not borrow them from historical narrative, but draws them from the nature of human reason, as philosophical archaeology" (20: 341). One finds the term "archaeology" on at least two other occasions in Kant's published works, both of them in marginal notes, in relation to nature and to art.¹³ But in the text to which Foucault alludes, Kant uses the idea of philosophical archaeology to mark a formal quality of a philosophical history of philosophy. While Foucault's remark to Steiner is

not an appeal to intellectual autobiography—he is reporting the fact that Kant used the term ‘archeology’ and not that this was at the origin of his own conception of it—the reference to Kant represents a clear statement of allegiance, and suggests continuity between Kant’s understanding of archeological history and his own historical analysis. More pertinently, it indicates that Foucault was at the time, and perhaps in connection with the Steiner exchange, once again working with Kant’s texts in detail. This discussion of Kant brushes by the enigmatic historical and conceptual quality of Kant’s thought in its reference to an incipient conception of a formal history of philosophy, one that does not by virtue of its formality sacrifice its popular form of expression and specificity of empirical content of the historical field.

The second relevant event occurs in connection with Foucault’s 1972 debate with the Italian neo-Kantian Gionno Preti. Their discussion is indicative not only for the content of their exchanges on Kant, but also for the access it gives to what seems to be a contributing factor at the origin of Foucault’s later standpoint in relation to Kant. When Preti presses him on the proximity of the configurations of relations of knowledge Foucault called *epistemes* to Kant’s categories, he provides Foucault with an occasion to reassess just how Kantian his historical method is. Initially, Foucault rejects the association unceremoniously, but as the debate progresses, he gradually comes to appreciate the level of formal similarity Preti is suggesting, to a point that invites speculation about the possibility that this discussion may have in part led Foucault to return to the study of Kant, and to fundamentally rethink the implication of the perplexities left hanging in his analysis of discursive practices. In this light, the debate has a function of shock in the trajectory of Foucault’s research that immediately conditions his treatment of the problem of the Enlightenment and the history of the present as well as the analysis of ethical relations.¹⁴

While these historical factors may help make Foucault’s return to Kant seem less sudden by registering affectively charged conceptual moments in his thought, possible seismic points that may have roused his attention back to Kant, the connection is entirely speculative. It certainly does not make either Foucault’s various attempts to pose the problem satisfactorily, or absence of any apparent unity between them, less perplexing. The basic problem here arises in relation not, as one might think, on the basis of Foucault’s most well-known text on Kant, “What is Enlightenment” (1984), to the investigation of conditions of knowledge, but to the general apparatus of power as security, and to the art of governing populations that includes the function of normalization within its exercise. Everything indicated that Foucault became aware of the importance of government as form of relation of power

somewhat abruptly, leaving the security model itself and the lesson plan aside in the third lecture of the 1977–8 course, in order to pursue the analysis of governmental power and to explore various registers of its sources, organized around its origins in pastoral power, and its object in state reason.¹⁵ While Kant is not discussed in the text of the course, within weeks Foucault has integrated a modified version of his bipolar reading of Kant into the analysis of relations of power by way of a prospective extension of the analysis, treating governmental power as the source of criticism, thereby identifying the will not to be excessively or poorly governed. In this context, the origin of Kantian criticism is a problem concerning power. Foucault never left the problem of governmental power, and he devoted his final courses at the Collège de France to the government of self and of others. In Foucault's more familiar discussions of Kant on the Enlightenment, the primary conceptual hinge is the perplexing distinction between two very different but equally important and viable historical strands of Kantianism: analytics of truth and ontology of actuality or history of the present. The perplexity in the face of a single conceptual source for two deeply different historical forms reemerges in this context, compounded by the fact that Foucault's own standpoint ambulates from a position of neutrality with respect to the two forms of Kantianism to allegiance to either with various degrees of explicitness.

While the matter is not made explicit, all of Foucault's discussions of the Kantian enigma and the perplexities they leave suspended serve the function of resisting the tendency in the study of Kant toward the hypostasis of the doctrine of the system, at the exclusion of the formal specificities of his popular discourse. In each of the contexts discussed above, Foucault emphasizes the importance of Kant's popular discourse as a distinct standpoint with which he associates his own discourse, and this functions as a counterbalance to the relegation of Kant's non-speculative work to the status of material for the clarification of the three *Critiques*. In the context of the contemporary Kant, this emphasis on the popular serves a valuable corrective function in view of a balanced grasp of Kant's thought, especially when considered in relation to the basic complexity of its form at any level of abstraction. Foucault's critical exposition of Kant's thought serves as an indispensable point of access to the order of consideration of the relation between Kant in Foucault primarily occupied in the present study. However, it also marks the point at which Foucault's reading of Kant's relation to contemporary thought and to his own work begins to show its limitations, and a balanced study of Foucault's relation to Kant cannot remain at this level of consideration. In fact, the attention Foucault gives to the popular writings as an autonomous standpoint in Kant, specifically, the need to appeal to the doctrinal and systematic standpoint

as a counterpoint to the standpoint primarily under consideration, tends to underplay their affinity, one that Foucault himself demonstrates strikingly by appealing to the dynamic of the anthropological *repetition* of the practice of criticism in his Introduction to Kant's *Anthropology*. This disequilibrium has the effect of concealing the relevance of the systematic standpoint that plays an entirely negative role in Foucault's apparatus. Thus, the very effectiveness of Foucault's reading generates the risk of a further misrepresentation of the formal unity of Kant's thought. One tends to come away so convinced by Foucault's demonstration of the relevance of the non-speculative standpoint that the standpoint seems to have only a negative function, and no real role in the Kantian dimension of Foucault's thought.

And yet, removing the source of the standpoint occupied on a popular field of investigation would be fatal for an understanding of even the popular Kant and of the tradition it made possible. Foucault's bi-polar reading of Kant underestimates the relevance of the formal similarity of the way of thinking that regulates both systematic and popular discourse in Kant. By defining, in the terms and on the basis of textual material from the systematic works, a level of abstraction at which two Kantian enigmatic points of view in Foucault can be considered in concert, this study attempts to forestall this risk of further concealment of live elements of Kant's work. It does so by outlining the form of critical thinking that regulates both the systematic and the popular in Kant, as well as the standpoint occupied by Foucault. Such, in any case, is yet another perplexity generated by Foucault's indispensable descriptions of the Kantian enigma. Indeed, by so perspicuously shedding light on conceptual bearing of Kant's popular discourse that the standpoint which conditions it is obscured, these fragmentary discussions of a Kantian enigma were perhaps too successful for their own good.

The perplexities they generate remain implacable without a unified standpoint from which to assess them, and thus the relation between Kant and Foucault in all its dimensions. While all of these perplexities deserve to be considered extensively, the prior problem examined here concerns the form of Foucault's discourse itself. Rather than a point of intervention of Kant in Foucault's work, in other words, it attempts to unify formal aspects of Kant's criticism in relation to those of Foucault's historical analysis around a shared practice of criticism. The relation between is drawn not in terms of their projects and stated methods, but in terms of their discursive practice, the form of thinking that regulates their works. This practice of thought is described as a configuration of regulating factors that determine its possibilities: the intelligible statements and claims, ones that belong to the category of true or false within the particular discourse.

In the attempt to articulate this shared practice, this study addresses Kant's theoretical writings and Foucault's historical studies of discursive practices as exercises of a single form of thinking in this Kantian sense, as a type of discourse regulated by a discursive practice regulated by a number of specifiable conceptual factors. At this level of consideration, one that undercuts the relation of influence and the authority of an author's self-understanding, Foucault's conceptual proximity to Kant can be articulated directly, unobscured by the question of influence, and of what it would mean to demonstrate this relation, or even to describe it with any degree of precision. Whereas Foucault's characterizations of his own understanding of his relation to Kant may seem inconsistent and ideologically suspect, the proximity in terms of form, in terms of the rules of the way of thinking functioning in their work, is stable. At this level of analysis, one can appreciate that the theoretical possibilities within the context of Foucault's studies are determined by a configuration of concepts that at a still substantive level of abstraction aligns with the form of thought that regulates the practice of criticism of reason. Consider, *e.g.*, the *object* of Kantian criticism. This practice studies the formal dimension of experience, and in Kant, this object of inquiry is addressed in terms of the activities of the mind, inferred from formed experience and articulated in terms of mental capacities and conceptual functions through which the subject forms experience. This formation, the complex of conceptual capacities that determines the possibilities of objective experience, is what Kant's criticism ultimately describes. In Foucault, this object of investigation is plural: rather than addressing the elements of the form of all possible experience, of the universal and necessary conditions of any experience at all, he undertakes to describe experiential form at a finer grain of abstraction, at the level of formal determination of specific kinds of experience, of practices, forms of human action and comportment. In this case, the form not only determines the possibilities of the experience it regulates, but distinguishes that experience from others that are characterized by different series of possibilities. Whereas the object of critical investigation in Kant is the form of cognitive experience generally, in Foucault's work, it is the historically successive local forms of experience, exercises of stable and regulated practices.

Although the characterization has clear limitations, it can be helpful to think of Foucault's standpoint as a form of idealism. Whatever paradox in this characterization dissolves at the qualification that it is a form of *objective* idealism, in a Hegelian sense: the focal point of Foucault's studies is not the ideas of an individual subject of knowledge, but a telosless *Geist*, an open

field of ideas, populated by thought, forms of reasoning, various types of cultural practices, etc.. But this specification reveals a less tractable assault on what one might expect to find in Foucault, one that concerns the nature and the role of subjectivity. Foucault once described the orienting task of his research as “a ‘nominalist’ reduction of philosophical anthropology.”¹⁶ In concert with many of his peers, a basic negative drive in Foucault is to deploy strategies to resist the Cartesian tradition of ‘philosophies of the subject.’ It aims at a conception of non-subjective idealism, of the possibility of an outlook that both refuses to organize the form of experience around the subject and defines a field in terms of ideas, thought and reasoning. To be sure, in this regard, the Hegelian model is of little help. But the problem can be addressed by attending to Foucault’s concept of a system as object of historical analysis that defines a level of abstraction. A version of it was central in his exposition of Kant in *GSA*, and continues to occupy Foucault throughout his career. When he was elected to Le Collège de France, he entitled the chair he would occupy “History of Systems of Thought.” The terms of the title reward scrutiny.

In an interview with Madelaine Chapsal in 1966, Foucault explains that meaning, “a sort of surface effect, a shimmer, a foam,” is conditioned by a *system*: “what went through us deeply, what was there before us, what supported us in time and space.”¹⁷ He defines a system as “a set of relations that maintain themselves, transform themselves, independently of the things they relate,” and his description of the object of his analyses as systems suggests a conceptual allegiance between meaning and subjectivity, both subordinate to the configuration of a particular system.¹⁸ In the presentation of his research for his candidature to the Collège de France, Foucault describes the object and the field of analysis of this historical research as the “precise and articulated knowledge (*savoir*) [. . .] invested in complex systems of institutions.”¹⁹ The object of Foucault’s studies, the concrete manifestation of this knowledge and the system that orders it, its “visible body,” is not, he explains, either a theoretical, a scientific, or a literary discourse, but “a daily and regulated practice.”²⁰ This emphasis on the category of the system is driven by the idea that, as Foucault puts it in the Chapsal interview, in every historical period, “the way that people reflect, write, judge, speak (all the way into the street, the most quotidian conversations and writings) and even the way that people undergo things to which their sensibility reacts, all of their conduct is ordered by a theoretical structure, a *system*, that changes with the ages and societies—but that is present in all ages and in all societies.”²¹ As Foucault had emphasized in an interview a few weeks earlier, the object of his project of analyzing systems of thought in history is not only

the 'high' thought of scholarship in scientific and academic texts, but also "everything that 'contains thought' in a culture, of everything in which there is thought," and there is not only thought in philosophy, but in all cultural products: there is also thought "in a novel, in jurisprudence, in law, even in an administrative system, in a prison."²² Thus, Foucault does not oppose the systematic to the popular in his own work as he does in Kant: systems are conceptual organizations that regulate any human conduct, and practices are the observable manifestations of these systems in it. These practices are the primary objects of Foucault's analyses.

Foucault's analysis of determinate practices is the result of what amounts to a transposition of the phenomenological insight that meaning is always already pervasive into a frame of reference that is not laden by the subject-object dualism from the outset. From this standpoint, systematically organized thought, and not immediately available meaning, is invested in everything that can be experienced. The theme reemerges in Foucault's work during the last years of his life. We too often forget, Foucault points out in a late interview with Arlette Farge (his co-editor for *Le désordre des familles*), "that people think, that their behaviors, their attitudes and their practices are inhabited by thought."²³ The reminder aims to undercut the dichotomy between the analysis of behavior and the history of ideas in favor of the categories of thought and the practices that give thought a visible form.²⁴ "There is always," Foucault maintains in 1981, "a little bit of thought, even in the most derisive institutions; there is always thought, even in silent habits."²⁵ The category of thought, as the object of Foucault's historical analysis, is thus neither restricted to the discursive experience of a thinking subject, or to the manifestation of subjective thought in scholarly theoretical texts, but the accessible form of what is intelligible in any particular *practice*. This connection between thought and practices is further defined in the general overview of his work in the eventually discarded general introduction to *L'histoire de la sexualité*:

Thought . . . is not to be found only in theoretical formulations, such as in philosophy or in scientific discourse; it can and must be analyzed in all the ways of saying, of doing, of conducting oneself in which the individual manifests itself and acts as a subject of knowledge, as an ethical or juridical subject, as a subject conscious of oneself and of others. In this sense, thought is considered the form of action itself, action as implying the play of truth and falsity, the acceptance or the refusal of the rule, the relation to oneself and to others. The study of forms of experience will thus be conducted on the basis of an analysis

of 'practices,' discursive or not, if this designates different systems of actions as inhabited by thought thus understood.²⁶

The description of thought as the *form of action* gets to the nerve of the critical object of Foucault's studies. In this context, "action" is used broadly, it includes all conduct defined by the three fields of human relations with which Foucault was concerned: relations of knowledge ("the play of truth and falsity"), relations of power ("acceptance or refusal of the rule"), and relations of self ("the relation to oneself and to others"). Action, in this sense, is the conduct regulated by a practice, be it discursive, political (institutional), or ethical. Within Foucault's schema, these practices are forms of action and conduct, that is, they are the thought content of actions, of anything humans do. As the organizing category of Foucault's analysis of experience, practices are the visible matter of otherwise unassailable lived experience, and forms of experience are differentiated as particular practices. Thus, Foucault defines practices in light of both the Kantian association of *formality* and acts of *thought* (experiences captured in practices are formed by thought, which explains Foucault's focus on this category) and of the awareness of the ontological pervasiveness of thought (practices differentiate and unify systems of human action, cultural systems that are in each case formed by thought). Without attending to this form and to the origin of its formation in thought, practices cannot be adequately described or analyzed. In this respect, any modality of cultural reality that can be experienced is, on Foucault's schema, realized in the medium of thought. Foucault calls this the principle of the irreducibility of thought: "There is no experience that is not a way of thinking and that cannot be analyzed from the standpoint of a history of thought."²⁷ This way of conceiving thought and its conceptual priority in relation to meaning, objects and subjects is best understood as a variation on Kant's conception of experience as formed by an activity of thought. However, Foucault's preoccupation with practices and the experiences they form is directed at a level of abstraction of experience quite different than Kant's criticism is; with respect to the conceptual import of the object of investigation of both discourses, however, this divergence is contingent. It risks occluding the more central formal similarity if it is not examined closely.

As part of his candidacy to the Collège de France in 1969, Foucault was institutionally required to provide an exposition of his past research. In this general characterization of his work to that point, he describes the *object* of his studies as "the knowledge invested in complex institutional systems," and his *method* by explaining that "instead of going through, as it is not unusual to do, only the library of scientific books, it was necessary [for him] to visit a

set of archives that include decrees, rules, hospital or prison registers, acts of jurisprudence;” as a result, he undertook “the analysis of a knowledge whose visible body is not rhetorical or scientific discourse, or literature either, but a daily and regulated practice,” by going to “the Arsenal or in the National Archives.”²⁸ Practices, the form of action, and the visible, describable presence of the knowledge present in systems, represent the conceptual unit of Foucault’s analysis. His appeal to practices as the most basic object of study remained constant through the divagation of his terminology, and is not limited to the analysis of relations of knowledge. In one of his last interviews, he explains:

What I try to analyze are practices, the logic immanent to a practice, the strategies that support the logic of these practices and, consequently, the way individuals, freely, in their struggles, in their confrontations, in their projects, either constitute themselves as the subjects of their practices or refuse the practices proposed to them.²⁹

These three aspects of the practices—their internal logic or form, the strategies that support them, and their exercise by individuals who constitute themselves as subjects—punctuate Foucault’s three principal fields of analysis, relations of knowledge (discursive practices), relations of power (political practices), and reflective relations (ethical practices), presented here as dimensions of human practices generally.³⁰ In all cases, the object of study has the same form, the form of familiar, everyday practice, but one that is not by virtue of its familiarity any less regulated than the most technical theory.

The category of a practice also serves to mark the level of comparison between Kant and Foucault occupied in this study. Although the practice of Kantian criticism that will be defined is proposed as the functional model of reasoning in all three domains of criticism, it is articulated strictly in the terms of his theoretical philosophy. In other words, despite the limitation of its exposition to the field of knowledge, the form of the practice of Kant’s criticism outlined in Chapter One can be transposed, with requisite peripheral amendment, into practical and aesthetic contexts as a variation of the model in theoretical philosophy. This practice of criticism is, for the purposes of the following exposition, unified by the relation between five regulating segments. Its proper function is (i) the critical capacity to abstract, and its exercise begins with (ii) a moment of skeptical provocation through which one comes to recognize the need for criticism. These aspects of the practice of Kantian criticism are showcased in a certain form of skepticism, exercised in the treatment of rational antinomies and illustrated by the image of being

aroused from dogmatic slumber by the recollection of Hume. It involves both a mechanism of shock (that interrupts the comfortable familiarity of our habitual practices) and an explanatory dimension (that alerts us to the dogmatic character of these uncritical habits, and to the hazards associated with the failure to take stock of our predicament). By contrast to Humean skepticism, Kant calls this process “the skeptical method,” in order to highlight the fact that it aims to occupy a standpoint from which well-grounded knowledge is possible, not in the discrediting of the possibility of knowledge itself. By alerting us to the perils of dogmatism, this segment of the Kantian practice accounts for the need for criticism as a condition of scientific discourse. From the aroused state that it provokes, the three other formal factors of the practice interact to generate an attitude toward the origin, the limits and the possibilities of forms of experience. There is (iii) the constitution of experience in cognitive thought, which determines that experience, (our only access to real objects, is formed by activities of empirical thought). The functions that are exercised in forming experience make an indispensable contribution to the objects experienced. Within the practice of Kantian criticism, (iv) thought is understood in terms not of a substantive conception of the soul or of a mind conferred with foundational unity, but as a complex of functions or capacities with which experience is invested. Thus the unit of thought is not the knowledge of an individual or a collective subject, but these functions themselves, which can be described as discrete agencies that intervene in the constitution of experience. These are unified in their formation of an experience, not around a subject of knowledge; thought is not in the first instance the thought of an ‘I,’ but the thought of the form of experience under analysis by the practice of criticism, for which it determines the categories of possibility. For Kantian criticism, (v) the relevant modality of possibility is not merely logical possibility, but real possibility. The possibilities determined by the exercise of the functions of thought in formation of a given experience involve more conceptually substantive factors than merely the absence of self-contradiction. Real possibility marks out what is and what is not intelligible for a particular form of experience, or what can and what cannot be said comprehensibly. In a modality that remains open to various permutations and variations of interaction, these five segments comprise the primary object of analysis in the following, the conceptual practice of Kantian criticism, or simply the ‘practice of criticism.’ Just as discussion of the practice of criticism in Kant’s texts is limited in its exposition to the texts and the idiom of theoretical criticism, its exposition of Foucault’s practice of criticism is textually limited to his analyses of discursive practices, constituted by relations of knowledge. Similarly, the practice of criticism in Foucault can

be transposed from the analyses of discursive practices to his other fields of analysis as another variation of the practice. In light of these delimitations of scope, it will be helpful to situate the standpoint defined in the following study in relation to the conception of the sorts of theoretical shifts that occur across Foucault's work.

This trajectory is typically broken into three periods that correspond to three distinct areas of concern and three different methodologies (archaeology of knowledge, genealogy of power, and history of ascetic ethics in Greco-Roman culture). There is some basis for this classification, and Foucault encourages it at times. However, it is ultimately not sufficiently detailed to account for the complexities of the shifts involved. Although it is clear that at different times Foucault developed three distinct *modes of analysis* in order to explain corresponding *types of historical material*, these do not cleanly map onto corresponding methodological orientations. The mutations of the theoretical underpinnings of the whole array of his writings must be described otherwise. At least two levels of theoretical specification are required. On the one hand, a theoretical dimension is needed to isolate the form of the conceptual grid through which historical material is analyzed. On this level, the *aim* of the analysis can be distinguished from its *method*: the aim of Foucault's practice determines its object of analysis, and its methodological aspect, the manner of approaching it.³¹ On the other hand, another dimension determines the relational *field* or domain of analysis on the basis of the type of theoretical items involved in the relation under analysis. This is the relevant aspect to consider in relation to the theoretical shifts in question. In Foucault's texts, one can distinguish three fields of analysis that correspond to three forms of experience: epistemic relations embodied in discursive practices, power relations embodied in political practices, and ipseic relations embodied in ethical practices. Among these, however, there is a single and specifiable theoretical grid that is applied in various ways according to the field under analysis. This grid is generated from and regulated by the practice of Kantian criticism within which Foucault's discourse functions. The exposition of this practice focuses exclusively on its exercise in the description of epistemic relations that are embodied in discursive practices, and on the form of experience that is conditioned by discursive mechanisms of capacities and concepts. In doing so, it applies not only to the analyses conducted in texts in which Foucault was exclusively concerned with discursive practices (e.g., *La naissance de la clinique*, *Histoire de la folie*, *Les mots et les choses*, *L'archéologie du savoir*), but also the ones found in later texts in which his studies deal primarily, but not exclusively, with relations of power (*La volonté de savoir*, *Surveiller et punir*), or with

ipseic relations (*L'usage des plaisirs, L'herméneutique du sujet*). In other words, the scope of the analysis of Foucault's practice in this study is limited to the field that remains present throughout his studies—the field of knowledge as *savoir*, of discursive practices, of statements that lay a claim to truth—rather than to a specific work or period of the development of his thought, or to a method associated with it. This way of directing the focus of the present project has the corollary advantage of simplifying the comparison with Kantian criticism as practiced in Kant's writings: the field of epistemic relations is the only domain of analysis in Foucault's triad that meshes cleanly with one of Kant's fields of critical investigation, the theoretical.³²

A threadbare overview of the content of this study may be useful. Chapter One outlines the practice of Kantian criticism in its original version in Kant's theoretical writings in terms of five regulating segments, and each of the ensuing chapters addresses a particular aspect of the relation between Kant and Foucault in terms of these segments. This allows me to specify the character of Foucault's Kantianism in formal terms, by identifying his modality of historical analysis as an exercise of the practice of criticism. Chapter Two transposes the moment of the arousal to criticism into the historical-cultural context of Foucault's analyses. Just as an affective moment of distancing shock is formally required as an orienting pre-condition of critical reasoning in Kant, there is a need for a similar moment of estrangement in Foucault's practice of criticism, required in order to alert one to the historical contingency of one's form of experience. In Foucault's historical context, this recognition of rational limitation is required to detach us from the false confidence that both our own form of thought and rationality itself are immutable, in a way that does not eliminate the possibility of historical cognition. The form of the antinomies of reason is illustrated by Foucault's device of staging a juxtaposition of descriptions of heterogeneous practices, in order to acquaint us with the experience of formal foreignness, thereby skirting both historical dogmatism and skepticism. Chapter Three examines the aim of Foucault's analyses: criticism, in the way that Foucault uses the term, is the philosophical attitude that corresponds to these theoretical objectives. After establishing that the association of the theoretical motivations of Kant and Foucault is justifiable internally to Foucault's position—on the basis of Foucault's identification of Kant as a historical hinge-figure in the epistemological shift of theoretical landscape from the classical to the modern layout, in conjunction with his commitment to the historical continuity of form between modern and contemporary forms of experience—this chapter examines the aspects of Foucault's criticism that are part of the form of this practice. The attitude of criticism generates a particular type of

philosophical investigation, one that Foucault describes as a diagnosis of the present. Through a detailed analysis of Foucault's notions of discourse and practice, Chapter Four maps the transposition of the forms of theoretical experience involved in Kant's criticism onto a diachronic framework, and provides a detailed exposition of the concept of a practice in Foucault in which these forms are incorporated. It addresses issues such as the role of deductive argumentation, the need for legitimization, and the contribution of the subject in Foucault's model of experience, and culminates with a suggestion about the pragmatic aspect of Foucault's practice that indicates the modalities of its second order application. Finally, Chapter Five isolates the transformation involved in Foucault's practice of Kantian criticism. It appeals to the technical concept of literature in Foucault's writings, formally situated as the particular form of receptivity functional in Foucault's analysis of historical practices, in order to mark the reorientation of Kantian criticism in Foucault, particularly in relation to the role of the subject.

A Standpoint in Kant's Critical Philosophy

I. INTRODUCTION

Brunschvicg's distinction between the systematic doctrine and the idea of criticism remains helpful for understanding the sources of the enigmatic uses of Kant in post-Bergsonian French thought.¹ In retrospect, it provides the model for an attitude of interpretive discrimination that has been pervasive, one that abstracts what is actually valid and needed as criticism from the dead weight that is the systematic doctrine. While the viability of this means of access has generated extraordinarily inventive uses of Kant within the space of the *idea* of philosophical criticism, by severing ties to the second order details and complexities of his system, it also helped to conceal the risks and the conceptual interest of these very uses of Kant. This is particularly true for Foucault and others who worked on contemporary problems as Kantian problems, on the basis of study of Kant's text at its most systematic, historical, at times even philological order of consideration; however, the effects of this work are not always immediately visible in their writings. It is precisely the effectiveness of Brunschvicg's distinction between the idea of criticism and the doctrine of the system in Kant that invites its own transformation, one that it programs before the fact. The limitations of the idea-doctrine reading of Kant suggest a transposition of this conceptual couplet to a field receptive to the dynamic features of the sources and the form of criticism. The present analysis outlines such a field. It presents a general grid for understanding Kant that is organized not by the idea of criticism-doctrine of the system opposition, but by a conception criticism as a practice described in terms of its degree of abstraction from the historical, philological, and systematic details of the text. Rather than two types of standpoints in relation to Kant with different objects, methods, and implications, this way of reading Kant defines

a single standpoint that can be occupied at different levels of abstraction. The appropriate level of consideration can only be fixed in relation to the object of criticism, in terms of more or less determinate objectives. On this grid, Kant and Foucault practice criticism as a way of thinking, and the ideal space of analysis of the relation between them is the point of abstraction at which criticism functions as a single shared practice, in each case described in relation to different problems and texts. This practice involves the exercise of a standpoint from which Kant's texts can be understood in a historical and conceptual space regulated by a conception of its object, its method, its unity, and its implications at a second order. The following analysis targets that ideal point, the optimal level of abstraction for the description of the practice of Kantian criticism, and has no pretension to exegetical originality or philological proof: while constructed from textual material in Kant, its main points are at a remove from the current problems of Kant scholarship, and although philological and historical problems are involved in the analysis, they are not its primary object. When considered from a unified standpoint, the Kantian problems treated represent a distinctive and recognizable practice. The textual exercise aims to reorganize a series of problems in Kant in order to accentuate his affinities not only with Foucault, but with a series of figures in the history of thought whose relation to him are obscured by peculiarities of the way he is studied, and that may appear arbitrary, contingent in relation to what is in fact accessible for study in Kant's texts. As it might have amused Foucault to think of the strategic need in the present context, through textual analysis of the unity of criticism as a practice, one can relieve a certain number of instruments of thought like troops from a fruitless battle without issue in the heights of Kant-studies, freeing them for use on more fructuous terrains.

This objective is pursued by configuring textual and conceptual elements from Kant into a unified discursive practice defined by a series of exegetical stages. These mark the level of abstraction from which interpretive problems concerning what is and what is not conceptually possible in Kant's thought will be considered in relation to particular problems. While exhaustiveness is not an objective pursued by the analysis—for this activity of bringing a form of thought to description, completeness would in any case be a false ideal—it does outline a model that has a claim to the unity of a single standpoint and a certain generality of use. In other words, Kant's conception of criticism is presented as a way of thinking, defined not only by the exclusion of a series of determinate possibilities, but by the specificity of a standpoint. This standpoint organizes a practice that, with minor shifts in accent, can be and has been exercised in relation to a wide array of problems.

These traits of Kant's thought do not correspond either to chronological or to logical stages in the development of his philosophy, but mark the formal elements that regulate his thought, moments of his way of thinking that can be exercised as a practice in the deployment of a particular a standpoint, one occupied by Foucault and others.

Everyone knows that the basic aim of Kant's critical thought is to determine and to fix boundaries for the legitimate exercise of human reason. Criticism, the preparatory task for that exercise, is a method that explains the objectivity of experience in terms of the characteristics of the mind of the subject that constitutes the experience. As far as caricatures from the history of philosophy go, this gloss seems relatively benign. But it is misleading and stultifying to isolate the innovation of Kant's contribution in this manner, even though it undeniably captures much of what has been attributed to Kant, and that there is an intellectual tradition of considerable pedigree based on associating this characterization of the Kantian project. Two aspects of this view of Kant are problematic in the context at hand. The first, already addressed from a certain angle, concerns the relation between *the method* of criticism in Kant and *the role of the subject* in the account of the forms of thought and experience. This exposition aims to account for Kant's criticism as a textually-based method whose unity, specificity, and originality does not need to be considered at a level at which there is disequilibrium in the subject-object relation. The second problem concerns the way to capture Kant's particular contribution in connection with the project of delimiting the legitimate exercise of reason. The insight that the nature of human reason implies that there are specific employments for which it is suited, and that its use ought to be curtailed to these activities, is by no means a conceptual innovation in Kant's work, and his project was not defined by the goal of determining these limited legitimate uses. In a swath: similar interests had been driving projects that bear similarity to what Kant called criticism since the middle of 17th century, when philosophical reflection began to take stock of the implications of scientific developments, especially in connection with religious belief, thereafter progressively unmasked as superstition. Indeed, at the level of abstraction in question in this myth, the Cartesian project itself fits nicely into the frame of a criticism of reason.² But this fact need not be taken as the basis for a *rapprochement* of any philosophical consequence between Descartes and Kant; it is indicative, rather, of the fact that Kant's fundamental motivations made of him a man of his times: at a level of abstraction still well within the threshold of the interest of conceptual analysis, his writings are thoroughly contemporary, guided by the Enlightenment ideals that were thriving all around him, and that had been in the air for more

than a century. In this respect, Kant's articulations of the basic features of the Enlightenment in his popular essays are indicative of something central, but by no means unique or new about his thinking. In his own view, his age was an age of criticism, which with philosophy had finally hit its stride. Now, the trajectory pursued in what follows does not primarily concern either Kant's critical precursors and the consequences of the possible grievances of the received version of the idea of Kantian criticism against either those precursors demanding reparations, or Kant himself desecrating slander. Instead, by beginning to present a version of Kant's conceptual historical innovation with slightly different accents, one that is more specific but largely in line with the received caricature, it endeavors to take a step in the direction of uncovering and articulating the germ of a less widely acknowledged, but not completely hidden line of inheritance of Kant's thought.

By contrast with previous projects of criticism—as undertaken by Descartes, Locke, or Hume, for example—that integrate a method to delimit the use of reason so that mistakes can be avoided by ensuring certainty in knowledge, Kant develops a method to delimit a sphere outside of which empirical knowledge is impossible. Outside this space of real objects, thought has no empirical content. This is one of the ways in which Kant's own critical method is more specific than the broader critical movement to which it belongs: it is a discursive instrument deployed in response to criticism as a general way of questioning, as a form of interrogation. While it is true, for example, that an important methodological feature of Kant's approach is based on the goal of determining the conditions under which objective experience is *possible*, the concept of possibility in question does not belong to either a merely logical, or a merely psychological register, and the originality of Kant's path is precisely a function of the specificity of this intermediary level. In short, in order to distinguish Kant's point of approach from the broader line from which it emerges, a specifically Kantian practice of criticism must be defined against the background of the source of the problem of criticism.

Consider Kant's letter to Hertz of February 21, 1772, the hermeneutically precious document that registers this decisive, otherwise silent moment in the emergence of the critical standpoint. There Kant reports having discovered "the key to the whole secret of metaphysics, hitherto still hidden from itself" (10: 130). He is referring to the methodological shift from the problem of how it is possible for our representations to conform to objects (either actively by causing them or passively by being caused by them), to the problem of how the relation of the representation of objects in general is possible. The first effect of this reversed orientation is the recognition that there is a secret

of metaphysics, that is, that there is an enigmatic dimension to the relation between our representative capacities and the objective reality to which they relate. Kant maintains that he discovered the solution to a problem that had itself been hidden, that is, one that had not previously presented itself as problematic. Consequently, Kant's reversal of the order of investigation involves two distinct steps. It does ultimately clear a path in the direction of a solution, but in order to do so, it first recasts the metaphysical question of the relation between thought and the world as something mysterious: the fact that we have awareness of real objects is a mystery that is baffling from the standpoint of the existing ways of doing metaphysics, and therefore calls for an entirely different formulation.

Kant poses the new problem in terms of "the ground of the relation of that in us which we call 'representation' to the object" (10: 130). He surveys three possible responses, two that he considers coherent but misrepresentative, and a third that he dismisses as nonsense, since it results in *aporia*. In the first case, where representations are taken to be "the manner in which the subject is affected by the object," Kant reasons that it is easy to explain its conformity with this object, "as an effect accords with a cause," just as it is to see "how this modification of our mind can *represent* something," that it can have an object (10: 130). Kant also considers the second option to be comprehensible, because if "that in us which we call 'representation' were active with regard to the object," that is, if "the object itself were created by the representation (as when divine cognitions are conceived as the archetypes of things)," there would be no further issue about the conformity of the representations to their objects (10: 130). He attributes versions of the third option to Plato, Descartes, Malebranche and Crusius, who all held variations of the idea that the relation between representation and object is guaranteed by divine grace. From Kant's standpoint, however, the *deus ex machina* is not only "the greatest absurdity one could hit upon in the determination of the origin and validity of our cognitions," thus in addition to its "vicious circularity," it is also dangerous in a second order of consideration: "it encourages all sorts of wild notions and every pious and speculative brainstorm" (10: 132). He is left with two cogent alternatives, but neither provides a satisfactory account of the capacity to understand in light of the representations that it generates. On the one hand, this capacity is not the cause of the object through its representations: the mind does not generate the existence of a real object just by thinking it. On the other hand, the object is not the cause of the capacity's representations "in the real sense": the mind is not a passive receptacle for objects that impose themselves on it. Thus, Kant concludes, the pure concepts of understanding "must not be abstracted from sense perceptions, nor must they have their origin in the nature of the soul, they are neither caused by

the object nor do they bring the object itself into being” (10: 130). Kant’s reflection reaches a dead-end, and recognizes the need for another, one that would become a primary source of Kant’s practice of criticism.

For Kant, in order to account for the possibility of cognition of objects, that is, for the possibility of what he would come to describe as synthetic *a priori* cognition (necessary and universal knowledge whose negation is not self-contradictory), intuitions of sensible objects must be both: (i) considered to be the catalyst in the relation to objects (objects must be taken to conform to our intuition of them, not vice versa), in order to account for their *a priori* status, and (ii) taken to “refer as representations to something as their object” that is determined through them, in order to account for their objective value (for the fact that intuitions of objects are possible). The latter requirement, the alternative that had presented itself at the level of intuition, can be rearticulated in terms of concepts: intuitions can be referred to “something as their object” by supposing either that the concepts through which the intuitions are determined conform to objects (this would again leave the *a priori* character of the cognition unaccounted for), or that the objects conform to the concepts. Kant opts for the latter, which allows him to account for the fact that, he reflects, “experience is itself a kind of cognition requiring the understanding, whose rule I have to presuppose in myself before any object is given to me, hence *a priori*, which rule is expressed in concepts *a priori*, to which all objects of experience must therefore necessarily conform, and with which they must agree” (Bxvii). Reflection about the attempt to *think* objects that cannot be given in experience with reason, according to Kant, provides “a splendid touchstone” of his new way of thinking, *i.e.*: “that we can cognize of things *a priori* only what we ourselves have put in them” (Bxviii). This way of thinking initially orients itself by the realization that the habitual impulse (shared by the history of metaphysics and by ordinary intuitions) to understand the relation between thought and the world in terms of the question of how and whether the content of the mind conforms to the objects in the world that it represents inevitably leads to impasse. Since the attempt to account for our subjective awareness of objects is a question of how mental items can conform to the objects in the world they represent is theoretically hopeless, the polarity of the approach needs to be reversed.

Recast in this light, the form of the criticism *as a problem* comes in focus—recall Kant’s aphorism invoked above: “The problem is one and the same as the solution” (22: 464)—its solution is incipient in its formulation. This relation is the object of analysis in the Preface to the B-edition of *KrV*:

Now if we find that on the assumption that our cognition from experience conforms to the objects as things in themselves, *the unconditioned*

cannot be thought at all without contradiction, but that on the contrary, if we assume that our representation of things as they are given to us does not conform to these things as they are in themselves but rather that these objects as appearances conform to our way of representing, then *the contradiction disappears . . .* (Bxx)

This way of casting the problem—in terms of how objects conform to our capacity to represent them—involves a transposition of the concept of an object and of the capacity to represent it, into the field of acts of thought, a whole series of implications falls out of this initial reversal of explanatory direction in accounting for cognition. For example, the mind cannot be considered to be a passive entity in this process, but necessarily plays an active role in the combination of the elements that make up experience. Moreover, on Kant's model, mental representations cannot be attributed the function of reflecting nature, among other reasons, because the sensory contact the mind has with the world only takes the form of objects as the product of an activity of determination by mental conceptual capacities. Further, as the regulated actualizations of these capacities, representations cannot be understood merely as the content of the mind either in a Cartesian sense of being internal episodes of the reflecting subject, or in a naturalistic sense merely as products of physical laws.

While any of these consequences might be pursued for a closer examination of the matter to sketch the elements of the approach, from the standpoint of the history of thought, a remarkable breadth of implications fell from the formulation of the reversal in terms of the human understanding as “the source of the laws of nature” (A127):

Thus we ourselves bring into the appearances that order and regularity in them we call nature, and moreover *we would not be able to find it there if we, or the nature of our mind, had not originally put it there*. For this unity of nature should be a necessary, i.e., *a priori* certain unity of the connection of appearances. But how should we be able to establish a synthetic unity *a priori* if subjective grounds of such a unity were not contained *a priori* among the original sources of cognition in our mind, and if these subjective conditions were not at the same time objectively valid, being the grounds of the possibility of cognizing any object in experience at all? (A125; my emp.)

Kant's insight here is that the order and the regularity of experience is a contribution of the experiencing mind. He defines this regularity in terms of *a*

priori formal conditions that determine what can be cognized, is the guiding thread of Kant's enigmatic response to the problem of criticism. For the purposes of the present discussion, this solution is defined in terms of a configuration of five further interrelated problems. These function as the faces of Kant's standpoint, and the regulative segments that define the practice of criticism in its use on a theoretical terrain: (II) the capacity to abstract, (III) the need for an exercise of skepticism, (IV) a functional understanding of the capacities of thought, (V) the submersion of experience in thought, and (IV) the distinction between real and logical possibility as a background to the definition of the aim of philosophy. Each of these requires detailed consideration as capacities of the practice of criticism.

II. THE CRITICAL CAPACITY TO ABSTRACT

The concept of abstraction has not attracted much attention in Kant scholarship, and indeed, there is little indication in Kant's writings that it deserves interpretive scrutiny. There was a time, however, when abstraction was considered to be at the heart of Kant's project. This decisive role was a point of emphasis in the immediate post-Kantian context, most dramatically in J. G. Fichte. His outline of idealism in the first Introduction to the *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre* ascribes a central, indispensable role to abstraction in its description of Kant's practice of criticism. The theme intervenes in relation to Fichte's recognition that the principle "nothing is possible alone" is the "fundamental assertion of idealism."³ He explains that consciousness can only have access to "the whole," and that idealism "seeks a closer acquaintance with this whole and so must analyze it, and this not by a blind groping, but according to the definite rule of composition, so that it may see the whole take form under its eyes," and *this* it can do "because it can *abstract*; because in free thought it is surely able to grasp the individual alone."⁴ In the *Wissenschaftslehre*, he expresses the content of "the rule of reason in general," the definite rule of composition required for an experience of a whole, as that which tells us to abstract; this leads him to go so far as to describe abstraction, that he presents as a *capacity* (*Abstraktionsvermögen*), as "simply reason itself" or "*pure* reason," that is, the theoretical reason "that Kant made the object of his investigation in *KrV*."⁵ Now, without unqualifiedly endorsing this assimilation of reason to abstraction, and independently of the philosophical background against which he arrived at it, the primary goal of this section is to reconstruct textual support for the Fichtean insight that abstraction is a mental capacity of unparalleled importance for Kant's practice of criticism, one that unlike any other capacity proper is indispens-

able to the practice of criticism. This reconstruction shows that abstraction functions in Kant's practice of criticism as an act of thought that is theorized by and regulates the exercise of the practice. It proceeds by an examination of a series of Kant's remarks about abstraction in *KrV*, with attention to Kant's tendency to draw and imply analogies between criticism and other sciences, and in relation to his characterizations of abstraction in other contexts.

And yet, there are many reasons to find this emphasis on abstraction as a capacity puzzling. Already Nietzsche chided Kant and the generation of his epigoni for priding themselves on discovering new capacities, a focus that betrayed what he called the "comical *niaiserie allemande*," and that exemplified Kant's self-misevaluation.⁶ For Nietzsche, the appeal to capacities was theoretically opaque and genealogically suspect. He questioned the character of Kantian claims that had the form "by virtue of a capacity," which he took to be hopelessly ambivalent—he asks "is that really—an answer? An explanation? Or instead just a repetition of the question?"—and symptomatic of the inability to distinguish between *discovering* and *inventing* new capacities (*JGB*, §11/25). While filtered through systematic concern in architectonic terms—and so as Nietzsche puts it "so laboriously, reverentially, and with such an extravagance of German frills and profundity" (*JGB*, §11/25)—the Kantian appeal to capacities is in fact regulated by a very clear conceptual dynamic, and Nietzsche's denunciation of the focus on capacities gains from being rethought in this context, where the appeal to the concept of capacities provides a perspicuous idiom in which to recast the problems of Kant's practice of criticism.

It will be helpful initially to distinguish two points of intervention of abstraction in Kant's critical philosophy. While Kant does provide various definitions of abstraction, there is, in the actual work of criticism, a ubiquitous exercise of abstraction to which Kant does not call attention, and which is drastically more indiscriminate than the theoretical characterizations indicate. These can be thought of respectively as the major and the minor exercises of abstraction in criticism. The major exercise of abstraction in *KrV* is the capacity of isolation of *a priori* from empirical elements in given representations. In this sense it amounts to a process of conceptual purification through which a field of inquiry is determined: the domain of pure reason. Kant discussed this capacity of abstraction frequently and consistently, from an early point in his writings and lectures, and he calls attention to its role in both theoretical and practical philosophy. This is the dimension of concept of abstraction that is most expressly incorporated into the terminological framework of criticism, but it would be a mistake to consider this to be either the only, or even the most pervasive actual functioning abstraction in

Kant's criticism. There is a more flexible, apparently promiscuous modality of abstracting operative in Kant's critical philosophy, one by no means limited to a broad-based elimination of the empirical. Although this more highly differentiated form of the activity is indeed involved in many of the dramatic moments of the development of *KrV*⁷, more often it is at work quietly in the minutia of the language and reasoning of Kant's criticism. This more implacable exercise of abstraction might be thought of as its minor use, as against the major exercise of abstraction that issues in a rational field of inquiry for criticism; but it is certainly not for that reason secondary or marginal: beyond the significance of the frequency of its use in Kant's reasoning, its absence from the discourse of Kant's criticism, it functions like a conceptual stutter in the language of criticism, a snag in the fabric of Kant's arsenal of concepts that is symptomatic of a structural weakness. Indeed, the difficulty and the importance of achieving a grasp of this understated use of abstraction are considerable. Its difficulty is due primarily to the systematic understatement of the role of abstraction in criticism: Kant engages in this theoretical activity with compulsive regularity without ever theoretically attending to its most basic and pervasive functioning. Its importance ultimately attaches to the hermeneutic instructiveness of its minor use: recognition of the exercise of the capacity to abstract is a negligible but often decisive factor in the interpretation of specific details of Kantian texts. The following exposition presents materials for a standpoint that will allow a distinctive critical conception of abstraction to emerge as *a specifically critical capacity of thought*, one that accounts for both what can be distinguished as the major and the minor uses of abstraction in Kant's criticism. Indeed, the key to understanding the role of abstraction in Kant's criticism is to recognize that it functions as a faculty or capacity (*Vermögen*) of thought.

Kant presents abstraction as a type of mental action, and it functions as a unified capacity of thought that has an indispensable role in critical reasoning.⁸ This particular capacity equips Kant-as-critical-philosopher to attend to a specific component of a given object of experience for descriptive purposes (*i.e.*, in order to determine and characterize its proper function) by artificially separating it from the representations that are otherwise encountered with it as a part of a whole. One of the significant and problematic factors involved is that this isolation does not presuppose the possibility of non-theoretical access to what it isolates; often Kant describes in isolation the functioning of a capacity that in its actual use never functions in isolation, independently of the complexity of the process of which it is a part. It will be helpful, in view of an appreciation of implications of this order, to begin with a survey of Kant's various discussions of this capacity. Two exegetical paths will be explored to this end: one exam-

ines a series of suggestive remarks about the function of abstraction by analogy to chemistry, and the other, by tracking the source of this conception both in Kant's pre-critical work and in the history of philosophy, aims to further clarify its role in criticism, to distinguish it from a particularly tempting misconstrual, and to frame the important distinction discussed above. Before taking this route, however, it will help to take bearings from Kant's remarks on abstraction in *KrV*. Although ultimately no more than suggestive, these indicate the level at which this act intervenes in criticism, and thus the stakes on getting clear about what it means in this way of thinking.

The indispensability of the activity of abstraction for Kant's critical philosophy is indicated by one of his most penetrating and historically marking formulations of the situation and the task of criticism. In the Preface to the second edition of *KrV*, he proposes that metaphysics, by contrast with the empirical interest of the natural sciences, is "a wholly isolated speculative cognition of reason that elevates itself completely above all instruction from experience," and one that does so "through mere concepts" as opposed to "through the application of concepts to intuition," as in mathematics (Bxiv).⁹ Criticism aims to establish that reason, in metaphysical thinking, must be considered to be "its own pupil" and in this respect, it is a practice of reason thinking itself (Bxiv).¹⁰ Kant pitches the practice as the requisite preparatory exercise of all possible scientific use of reason, including this peculiar self-directed variety. He recognized that the source of the difficulties that were threatening the scientific viability of metaphysics was the tension between its *a priori* character and its claim to the extension of cognition, and that these could be avoided by integrating the implications of having reason itself as an object into a methodological orientation. Taking up the terms that he used in the Letter to Hertz of 1772, Kant presents the diagnosis and the prescription in the B-edition Preface:

Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing. Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us. (Bxvi)

By redirecting metaphysical questioning, from how our cognition conforms to objects to how objects conform to our cognition, the tension and the root of metaphysics' floundering is diffused: the extension of cognition is sub-

ject to its a *priori* character, realigned with reason and thus the source of the extended cognition. This reorientation—what he calls the “altered method of our way of thinking”—is built around the recognition that “we can cognize of things a *priori* only what we have ourselves put into them,” that “nothing can be ascribed to objects except what the thinking subject takes out of itself” (Bxxiii, Bxviii). The imagery of this description of the situation of criticism directly implies the role of abstraction in critical thinking: in order to determine what it is that we can cognize a *priori*, this method unavoidably involves *the capacity to put things in and take things out of cognition*, or the capacity to abstract.¹¹ Thus, according to the logic of the imagery the practice of criticism, the use of abstraction, construed as a specific analytic capacity to isolate and remove elements or aspects of our cognition of objects, is plainly indispensable to the reflective dynamic which is the distinctive feature of the use of reason in critical philosophy. By appealing to the idiom of being able to have cognition only of what the subject of cognition takes out of itself and puts into the object, Kant implies that the capacity to abstract the part contributed by the experiencing subject from objects in cognitive experience is centrally required for criticism.

Kant’s characterization of the envy of metaphysics for success of the natural sciences and mathematics, and his insight that metaphysics can learn from how they achieved it provides further indication of the importance of this act of abstraction in criticism. He presents his new philosophical method in the mode of a hypothesis, on the model of the natural sciences and mathematics, and voices the hope for an analogous “revolution all at once” in metaphysics. In this context, the most remarkable feature of this comparison is that in the outline of the methodological program of criticism, Kant’s models for this “experiment of reason” include not only Galileo and Torricelli, but Lavoisier’s precursor G.E. Stahl:

. . . [O]r when in a later time Stahl changed metals into calx and then changed the latter back into metal by first removing something and then putting it back again, a light dawned on all those who study nature. They comprehended that reason has insight only into what it itself produces according to its own design; that it must take the lead with principles for its judgments according to constant laws and compel nature to answer its questions, rather than letting nature guide its movements by keeping reason, as it were, in leading-strings . . . This is how natural science was first brought to the secure course of a science after groping about for so many centuries. (Bxiii, Bxiv)

Here Kant appeals to chemistry not only as one of the sciences that he considers to be potentially exemplary for metaphysics, but as a particularly valuable one: more perspicuously than the other examples that he provides, its defining activity serves as a helpful analogy for the method of the criticism of reason. The chemist's investigative, temporary alteration of substances by "first removing something and then putting it back again" is the image that Kant borrows to define the methodological outlook recommended by the basic insight of criticism: since we can ascribe to objects only what we ourselves have put into them, objects in experience must be compelled to answer our questions, rather than letting ourselves be kept in the leading-strings of the objects of its inquiry. Here, the critical role of our reason is to be its own judge, one whose jurisdiction is delimited by an act of separation of what it contributes to the experience of objects, from what it receives, that functions on the model of chemical manipulation of substances.

There is a trace of this affinity between the criticism of reason and chemistry in the very idea of a criticism of *pure* reason. The definition of the semantic field of the criticism of reason by appeal to a contrast between the empirical and the *pure* suggests the analogy with chemistry, and indicates the importance of an act of abstracting that functions like a process of chemical purification.¹² Kant distinguished the criticism of pure reason from a doctrine by explaining that criticism aims only "for the purification of our reason," that is, for the estimation of "its sources and boundaries" (A11/B25). More specifically, shaped after the procedure of a chemistry experiment, Kant holds that critical thinking requires an act of isolation, separation and purification, followed by a constructive act of analysis or synthesis. In the Architectonic of Pure Reason, Kant emphasizes the indispensability of this type of activity:

It is of the utmost importance to *isolate* cognitions that differ from one another in their species and origin, and to carefully avoid mixing them together with others with which they are usually connected in their use. What chemists do in analyzing materials . . . the philosopher is even more obliged to do, *so that he can securely determine the part, the proper value and function, that a special kind of cognition has in the aimless use of the understanding.* Hence human reason has never been able to dispense with a metaphysics as long as it has thought, or rather reflected, though it has never been able to present it in a manner sufficiently purified of everything foreign to it. (A842/B870)

This passage suggests that abstraction, the isolation and evaluation of individual components of cognition, by allowing reason to determine its part,

the *a priori*, in the constitution of experience as a whole, is the defining function of speculative metaphysics as a science. This is already implicit in Kant's identification of synthetic *a priori* cognition as the proper object of metaphysics: the analysis of reason's contribution to cognitive experience indispensably involves the capacity to abstract—to identify, remove in thought, and individually examine—these conceptual but amplifying aspects from the experience of an object as a whole. It is through this exercise of abstraction that metaphysics as the science of reason itself will be able to be “purified of everything foreign to it,” and thus to delimit the sphere of the use of reason to which critical metaphysics must restrict itself.

Kant proposes a similarly broad analogy between chemistry and practical metaphysics. In the second *Critique*, he writes:

We have at hand examples of reason judging morally. We can analyze them into their elementary concepts and, in default of *mathematics*, adopt a procedure similar to that of *chemistry*—the *separation*, by repeated experiments on common understanding, of the empirical from the rational that may be found in them—and come to know both of them *pure* and what each can accomplish of itself; and in this way we can prevent on the one hand the errors of a still *crude*, unpracticed appraisal and on the other hand (what is far more necessary) the *leaps of genius* by which, as happens with the adepts of the philosopher's stone, without any methodical study or knowledge of nature visionary treasures are promised and true ones are thrown away. (5: 163)

Kant is prescribing that the moral philosopher draw the distinction between the rational and the empirical, in this context, between virtue and happiness, and between heteronomy and autonomy, by an act of thought that mirrors the chemist's method of distinguishing heterogeneous substances. One arrives at conceptual purity through abstraction, not only of the rational component, but also of the empirical: the state of purity of an element involved in the constitution of a given experience is analytically related to the activity of abstraction, it is a description of its actualization.¹³ The purity of an element of experience is Kant's image, among other things, for the simplicity of the relation between a function and the product of its operation, between a capacity and its actualization; beginning with experience as a whole, the heterogeneous product of a complex interaction of mental capacities, abstraction singles out simple functions and monolithic aspects of experience.¹⁴

While Kant includes the mathematical isolation of magnitude among the models for abstraction in philosophy in the passage from the Architectonic,

he typically distances the two. For example, although the geometer's precision and scrupulousness ought to be emulated in distinguishing between the empirical doctrine of happiness and the *a priori* doctrine of morals that is identified by Kant as the first task of the Analytic of pure practical reason, he considers this to be insufficient as a guide for criticism:

A philosopher, however, has greater difficulties to contend with here (as always in rational cognition through mere concepts without construction of them), because he cannot put any intuition (a pure noumenon) at its basis. He has, however, the advantage that, almost like a chemist, he can at any time set up an experiment with every human practical reason in order to distinguish the moral (pure) determining ground from the empirically affected will (e.g., that of someone who would gladly lie because he can gain something by it). (5: 92)¹⁵

The image of the mathematician's method of entirely *a priori* construction is not appropriate to define criticism, in which the act of separation of various pure elements in order to determine their properties is undertaken in experience. As Mai Lequan notes, in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, Kant considers that empirical chemistry is not mathematizable because its principles are not constructed *a priori* in intuition.¹⁶ While this is to Kant's mind a failing of chemistry as a science, it is the source of its analogical value in connection with the idea of the criticism of reason. Taking up a theme that had played an important role in his resistance to rationalism in his precritical writings, in the Doctrine of Method of *KrV*, Kant had explained the relevant difference between mathematics and philosophy to which he alludes in the cited passage from the second *Critique*. It is not a distinction between objects of inquiry or subject matter, but between reason's manner of dealing with this object in each case. Whereas philosophical cognition is "rational cognition from concepts," mathematical cognition is rational cognition "from the construction of concepts" (A713/B741). This formal distinction amounts to the fact that the former "considers the particular only in the universal," while the latter "considers the universal in the particular" (A714/B742). While the philosopher confines herself strictly to concepts, the mathematician "cannot do anything with the mere concepts but hurries immediately to intuition, in which it considers the concept *in concreto*, although not empirically, but rather solely as one which follows from the general conditions of the construction" (A716/B744). This amounts to a distinction between "the discursive use of reason in accordance with concepts" and "its intuitive use through the construction of concepts" (A719/747). Like the chemist, the philosopher,

by analyzing concepts without thereby producing anything new, is restricted to the former. This image of a chemistry experiment is just as applicable to the practice of criticism from a theoretical as it from a practical standpoint. The idea of an experiment of reason is essentially that of a process of purification, most generally of the rational elements of cognitive experience, then more specifically of individual components through the isolation of their properties and functions.

Kant makes this clear in a footnote in the B-edition Preface, where he draws the comparison between criticism and chemistry with a further degree of specificity:

This experiment of pure reason has much in common with what the chemists sometimes call the experiment of *reduction*, or more generally *the synthetic procedure*. The *analysis of the metaphysician* separated pure *a priori* knowledge into two very heterogeneous elements, namely those of the things as appearances and the things in themselves. The dialectic once again combines them, in *unison* with the necessary rational idea of *the unconditioned*, and finds that the unison will never come about except through that distinction, which is therefore the true one. (Bxxi)

Although the generality of this characterization of the respective roles of the Analytic and the Dialectic creates the risk of oversimplification and distortion, the point of application of the reference to the synthetic or reductive method in chemistry is reasonably clear: it is the abstraction of our relation to objects from the experience that generates the distinction between appearances and things in themselves. A thing as it appears is abstracted, and a thing considered in itself, as an analytic matter, is what remains. Moreover, this passage is unique in its inclusion of a process of recombination of the abstracted elements. The abstraction of our relation to things generates a distinction between a level of empirical cognition from a supersensible level in which no cognition is possible, that is, between things as they appear to us and things considered independently of our relation to them, as they are in themselves. The legitimacy of this separation in thought is then confirmed by the recombination of the separated elements, which is shown to be required for the initial given state. This provides a clue that will be pursued below in relation to the question of the indissociable, of whether there are experiential elements that cannot be abstracted without irrecoverable loss.

The appeal to chemistry as an analogy for the critical employment of reason in philosophy helps provide a general orientation for an understanding of the function of abstraction-purification in Kant, but these indications are

no more than suggestive. To be sure, a fuller account is required in order to place abstraction within the economy of Kant's criticism. Since Kant's characterizations of abstraction typically occur as asides that are not straightforwardly connected to his primary concern in the context in which they are made, what is at stake in this connection for the idea of criticism itself can be elusive. In this situation, one way to begin to reconstruct a unified account of the matter is by distancing an obvious and damaging misunderstanding of the way in which abstraction is important for Kant. The elements for such a discussion can be found in his response to Eberhard, *On a Discovery Whereby any New Critique of Pure Reason is to be Made Superfluous by an Older One* (1790).

The question of abstraction arises as Kant is considering Eberhard's alternative explanation of the origin of concepts.¹⁷ On Kant's report, Eberhard maintains that we "cannot have any general concepts that we have not *derived* from the things that we have perceived through the senses, or from those of which we are conscious in our own soul."¹⁸ Thereafter, our understanding would put "concepts together out of this sublimated matter" (8: 215). For Kant, this twofold act of understanding amounts to an abstraction, by means of which "understanding has arrived (from sensory representations) at the categories," before ascending "from these, and from the essential components of things to their attributes" (8: 215). He cites Eberhard as maintaining that "the understanding with the help of reason therefore obtains new composite concepts, just as it *ascends* for its own part, by means of abstraction, to ever more general and simple concepts, up to the concepts of the *possible* and the *grounded*" (8: 216). It is on Kant's view inappropriate to think of this act as an ascent, in as much as it is "only an abstraction from the empirical in the use of the understanding in experience," which "still leaves the intellectual, namely the category, which we ourselves, in accordance with the nature of our understanding, have installed *a priori* beforehand" (8: 216).

It emerges from this discussion with Eberhard that whatever role Kantian criticism incorporates for abstraction, it clearly does not have the function acquiring of concepts.¹⁹ Despite the wholly negative mode of this discussion—Kant says nothing directly in it of how to understand the role of abstraction he endorses—it is valuable for an understanding of his own view. It set it apart from the concept of abstraction that is at work in inductive theories of conceptual acquisition²⁰ with which it risks being confused, and also provides a backdrop for a decisive and historically decisively overlooked distinction between two fields of actualization of the capacity of abstraction that Kant frequently draws already during his pre-critical period.

Given that the role of abstraction in Kant's criticism does not belong in an account of conceptual acquisition, there remains to determine the structure of the context in which it does belong. The *via negativa* can be pursued further in this connection. Along with comparison and reflection, abstraction is listed in Kant's lectures as one of the logical acts of the understanding, but its role as one of these basic logical functions "is not always used correctly in logic" (16: 905). Indeed, a pervasive theme in Kant's characterizations of abstraction is that its role in the practice of criticism is to be distinguished from a different function, one with which is it frequently confused. Close examination of this obscure contrast between reference to concepts themselves and to the use of concepts—one that is drawn frequently by Kant and in a variety of forms—brings an important aspect of Kant's conception of abstraction into focus.

In his *Inaugural Dissertation*, Kant presents this distinction as an "extreme ambiguity of the word '*abstract*,'" that risks spoiling the investigation of the capacity to understand:

Strictly speaking, we ought to say: *to abstract from some things*, but not: *to abstract something*. The former expression indicates that we should not attend to other things in a certain concept that are connected to it in some way or other, while the latter expression indicates that it would be given only concretely, and separated from the things that are joined to it. Hence, a concept of the understanding *abstracts* from everything sensitive, but it is *not abstracted* from what is sensitive. Perhaps a concept of the understanding would more rightly be called *abstracting* rather than *abstracted*. For this reason, it is advisable to call concepts of the understanding '*pure ideas*,' and concepts of which are only given empirically '*abstract concepts*.' (2: 394; trans. mod.)

While this precision does little to make the difference behind the ambiguity Kant marks perspicuous, it does provide a pair of clues that make the difference Kant marks perspicuous. On the one hand, the distinction involves the contrast between not *attending* to what is being abstracted from and *separating* something from what is joined to it. This way of marking the distinction will be elaborated on below in the context of the Aristotelian background of Kant's conception of abstraction and of the criticism of abstractionist accounts of conceptual acquisition, from which the role of abstraction in critical philosophy stands apart as act of abstraction that takes place *in thought*, rather than an empirical process, a separation through which a real alteration occurs. On the other hand, it is remarkable that Kant describes the

former in terms of *the act* of not attending to the other elements related to what is being considered. A concept is abstracted from an object of experience, for example, by actively neglecting its sensible elements. The tension in the formulation of the capacity, one that generates an act that consists of withholding an act, recalls the status of sensibility as a receptivity, midway between passivity and activity. But neither of these indications marks the distinction between *abstracting from something* and *abstraction something from* decisively or with much determinacy. Kant is clear about the need to recognize ambivalence, but not about what the difference between the concepts amounts to.

A further clue is provided, however, in a note to Kant's discussion of Eberhard's proof of the objective reality of the concept of the simple, where Kant illustrates the distinction at hand with an example about pedagogy:

Whoever wishes to formulate rules for education can do so by basing them either merely on the concept of a child *in abstracto* or of a child in civil society (*in concreto*), without mentioning the difference between the abstract and the concrete child. The distinction between abstract and concrete concerns only the use of concepts, not the concepts themselves. The neglect of this scholastic precision often falsifies the judgment concerning the object itself. (8: 199)

It will be instructive to begin with Kant's reference to the "scholastic precision" between concepts themselves and the use of concept. It is probable that this alludes to the Aristotelian concept of intellectual abstraction as defined in *De Anima* and to Aristotle's concept of mathematical abstraction more generally.²¹ Aristotle addresses abstraction in Chapters Four and Seven of Book Three of *De Anima*. Chapter Four is a treatment of the question of whether the intellect, *i.e.*, "the part of the soul by which it knows and understands," is "separable *spatially*, or not separable spatially, but only *in account*."²² Once the intellect learns to think philosophically, once it has "become each thing in the sense in which one who actually knows is said to be (which happens as soon as he can exercise his capacity by himself)," then "it is capable of (actually) thinking itself" (429b5–7). The intellect becomes its own object when, in the examination of individual objects, it abstracts from their sensible character, for "where the objects are immaterial that which thinks and that which is thought are identical" (430a1). In this regard, Aristotle reasons, *contemplative knowledge* and its *object* are one and the same (see 430a2–3). The separation thought of the forms of sensible objects from their materiality thus provides a way of understanding the requisite point of interaction between

the intellect and sense perception, *i.e.*, of how, having nothing in common with anything else, it can act upon something: it thinks only of the part of objects that it has become. Aristotle's focus is on the distinction between two ways in which this part can be separated, namely, spatially or in thought, and on the dismissal of the one and the acceptance of the other.

But the abstract things, as they are called, the intellect thinks as it might conceive the snub-nosed; *qua* snub-nosed, it would not be conceived apart from flesh, whereas *qua* hollow, if anyone ever had actually so conceived it, he would have conceived it without the flesh in which the hollowness resides. So, too, when it [the intellect] thinks of mathematical objects, it thinks of them as separate though they are not separate. And, speaking generally, the intellect in active operation is its objects. (431b13–19)

The possibility of, and the capacity to separate aspects of objects in *thought* that cannot be separated in *matter*, is admissible to the extent that the concept of what is being separated is not contained in the concept of that from which it is being separated. According to Aristotle, the intellect can consider these elements of sense-objects discretely, while withholding any claims about the possibility of their existing independently of the objects to which they belong. In these cases of abstraction, it considers the properties of the aspect in question as though it existed independently, separated from its material characteristics. This possibility is accounted for by the fact that in its exercise, the intellect becomes its object; in the case of material objects, it only has contact with what it knows in the degree to which and with respect to the aspects which it abstract from sense-perception the formal components with which it is of a part. Thus it seems probable that the precision that Kant invokes is the distinction—and this was a point of emphasis for Aristotle's early commentators such as St. Thomas Aquinas²³—between the impossibility of spatial, material abstraction and this possibility and necessity of mental abstraction of formal aspects of objects from the perception of them.²⁴

In the Kantian context, the distinction in question—one that Kant also marked in terms of the contrast between 'abstracting from something' with 'abstracting something from,' and that is drawn by Aristotle in terms of separability in thought as opposed to in matter—is expressed in the passage above in terms of the contrast between the *use of concepts* and *concepts themselves*.²⁵ Kant's example of the rules of education illustrates this distinction by opposing the use of the concept of a child (the rules can be based either on an abstract or a concrete use of the concept a child) and the concept

itself of the child (that will not be a point of consideration in formulating the rules). These define respective semantic fields: the use of concepts can be either abstract or concrete, whereas the concepts themselves can be considered either as abstracted from something, isolated from the rest of the whole, or as an undistinguished part of the whole. The concepts themselves, to use the Aristotelian idiom, are not in reality altered by the act of thought of abstracting; the alteration effected by the abstracting isolation is one that occurs only in thought, at the level of how the concepts are used.²⁶ According to Kant, the idea of distinguishing between an abstract and a concrete concept involves a mistake of category: concepts themselves do not differ along the axis of abstractness and concreteness. As he puts it in his logic lectures, “every concept is an abstract concept,” for the terms “*abstract* and *concrete* relate not to concepts in themselves,” but “only to their *use*,” thus, “there are not *abstract concepts*,” Kant explains “we can only abstract *from something*, from certain differences, marks of things.” (16: 909, 16: 753) More generally, within this framework, one can either abstract from a representation or compare it to others: “I can either abstract from the variety of the things to which this concept is common, or I can attend to this in comparison with others,” which corresponds to a concept’s uses “in the first case *in abstracto*, on the second case *in concreto*” (16: 754). This use of a concept admits various degrees, “accordingly as one treats a concept more or less abstractly or concretely, *i.e.*, as one either leaves aside or adds more of fewer determinations” (16: 909). Kant gives the example of the analysis of a scarlet cloth, in which “if I think only of the red color, then I abstract from the cloth; if I abstract from this too and think the scarlet as a material stuff in general, then I abstract from still more determinations, and my concept has in this way become still more abstract,” thus “the more the differences among things are left out of a concept, or the more the determinations from which we abstract in that concept, the more abstract the concept is” (16: 905). Thus, to abstract is a passive type of mental activity—what Kant calls a negative concept “in the philosophical sense,” namely, the capacity to “not attend,” for through abstraction, Kant explains, “nothing is produced, but rather left out” (16: 754).

In *On a Discovery*, after reiterating the familiar distinction that one “does not abstract a *concept* as a common mark, rather one abstracts in the *use* of a concept from the diversity of that which is contained under it,” Kant returns to the comparison of philosophy and chemistry to illustrate: “Chemists are only able to abstract something when they remove a liquid from other matter in order to isolate it; the philosopher abstracts *from* that which he does not wish to take into consideration in a certain use of the concept”

(8: 199n). One abstracts from an object of inquiry by provisionally ignoring the features that are irrelevant; it is act of *abstractio notarum* defined in Blomberg's logic lectures: "that action in which, in making distinct its representation, I ignore all such marks of a thing as could hinder and disturb me, or are not of use to me and thus are superfluous" (16: 137). This is not a retraction of the analogy between the chemical and philosophical abstraction, but a way of making the difference between chemistry and philosophy perspicuous within their analogous relation. It marks the difference between two fields in which the capacity to abstract is operative. In chemistry, elements are actually isolated and removed, whereas in philosophical discourse, they are abstracted in thought, in order to be individually characterized, *i.e.*, assigned a proper function in the cognitive experience in which they are a component. In this respect, it aligns with the general program of criticism: to describe formal conditions that both can be found without leaving experience that make experience possible.

The failure to recognize this difference encourages mistaking the abstraction involved in criticism for an account of conceptual acquisition. As discussed above, this sort of misconception ignores the orientation of Kant's thought:

If I say: abstract time or space have such and such properties, this suggests that time and space were first given in the objects of the senses, like the red of a rose or cinnabar, and are only extracted there from by a logical operation. If I say, however, that in time and space considered *in abstracto*, *i.e.*, prior to all empirical conditions, such and such properties are to be noted, I at least leave it open to me to regard this as also knowable independently of experience (*a priori*), which I am not free to do if I regard time as a concept merely abstracted from experience. In the first case, I can judge, or at least endeavor to judge, by means of *a priori* principles about pure, in contrast to empirically determined, time and space in that I abstract from everything empirical, whereas in the second case, I am prevented from doing so if (as is claimed) I have only abstracted those concepts from experience (as in the above example of the red color). (8:199n)

The critical abstraction of a concept from the plenitude of cognitive experience, by contrast with a process through which a concept would actually be abstracted from experience in the process of acquisition, is essentially a *way of considering* the conceptual—or pure, or *a priori*, or formal, which are at this level of abstraction interchangeable—aspects of experience.

Kant's more extensive elaboration in his anthropology lectures helps to make sense of this instance of a paradoxical structure, one that is familiar from the idea of the form of sensibility in *KrV*:

The effort to become conscious of one's sense impressions is either the perception (*attentio*) or the abstraction (*abstractio*) of a sense impression of which I am conscious within myself. Abstraction is not just a neglect and cessation of perception (since that would be distraction [*distractio*]), but rather it is a considered act of the capacity of cognition; it is a sense impression of which I am inwardly conscious, keeping it separate from other sense impressions in my consciousness. Therefore, one does not speak of abstracting (separating) something, but of abstracting from something, that is, abstracting a definition from the object of my sense impression, whereby the definition preserves the universality of a concept, and is thus taken into the understanding. (7: 131)

Kant had already emphasized the negative dimension of this capacity in his treatise on negative magnitudes. There abstraction is the defining mental activity of a certain way of coming into being, namely of something's coming to be through the passing away of its contrary:

. . . every passing-away is a negative coming-to-be. In other words, for something positive which exists to be cancelled, it is just as necessary that there should be a true real ground as it is necessary that a true real ground should exist in order to bring it into existence when it does not already exist. [. . .] our inner experience of the cancellation of representations and desires which have become real in virtue of the activity of the soul completely agrees with this. In order to banish and eliminate a sorrowful thought a genuine effort, and commonly a large one, is required. And that this is so is something which we experience very distinctly within ourselves. It costs real effort to eradicate an amusing representation which incites us to laughter, if we wish to concentrate our minds on something serious. Every abstraction is simply the cancelling of certain clear representations; the purpose of the cancellation is normally to ensure that which remains is that much more clearly represented. But everybody knows how much effort is needed to attain this purpose. *Abstraction* can therefore be called *negative attention*. In other words, abstraction can be called a genuine doing and acting which is opposed to the action by means of which the representation is rendered

clear; the combination of the two yields zero, or the lack of a clear representation. (7: 190)

In the anthropology lectures, Kant draws attention to the paradoxical nature of this mental act of negative attention. He contrasts it to a mere cessation of perception by introducing a distinction between abstraction and *distraction*, and elsewhere he extols the intellectual virtues of abstraction as distinguished from both a *lack of knowledge* and *ignorance*.²⁷ Much like the capacity of sensibility itself, the capacity to abstract is actualized in the passive sort of mental activity that Kant calls receptivity. Now, in this context, the capacity to abstract is described in terms of the definition of a concept obtained from a sense impression. Transposed into language more familiar to *KrV*, this dynamic takes the form of a transition in thought from an object of cognitive experience considered integrally to a specific discursive (*a priori*) element that contributes to its form or determination (a concept, or a form of intuition). The distinction between abstracting and abstracting from something amounts to a distinction between an activity that has real and physical effects and one that is ideal and methodological in scope: the latter is “a considered act of the faculty of cognition.” In his logic lectures Kant puts it in these terms: “We do not attain any representations through abstraction, rather, representations must be given prior to abstraction, and through it they only become clear” (16: 201). Thus, the critical capacity to abstract is realized in a conscious act of thought directed at objects that have already been constituted by the cognitive functions of thought, specifically, the act of not attending to certain features of objects, of deliberately keeping particular elements of objects separate from others for the purposes of analysis. This is the sense in which abstraction is “only the *negative* condition under which universal representations can be generated,” as opposed to combination, comparison and reflection, which are positive conditions: “no concept *comes to be* through abstraction; abstraction only perfects it and encloses it in its determinate limits” (16: 905). The perfection of an abstracted element is another way of describing its purity: it is isolated in theory as the result of a specific function of thought. But this in no way implies the possibility of non-theoretical access to the abstracted element, which is the difference between philosophy and the chemistry model: the actual combination of elements of experience and their theoretical scrutiny function in entirely distinct registers, they are not of a kind.

A rehearsal of certain aspects of Kant’s conception of the process of the constitution of objects in cognitive experience can be of help to understand the conceptual background of this distinction and its implications.

There is an element of complexity in the dynamic at hand that is generated by an implication of Kant's idealism: that empirical objects—cognitive experience—are formed by a complex of acts of thought that are continuous with, while remaining distinct from the mental acts involved in *thinking about* empirical objects or cognitive experience. As a result of the structural dissymmetry between empirical objects and discursive objects, two types of mental acts should be distinguished in terms of their use: on the one hand, the ones that make cognitive experience possible, and on the other, the ones involved in reflection on this experience.²⁸ Nevertheless, the two are not fundamentally different, they are not of a different nature, both are a type of capacity of thought. They can be labeled first and second order mental activities. This distinction between the mental acts involved in ordinary experience and those involved in theoretical reflection is radically different than uncritical distinctions between the passive perception of pre-existing objects and the knowledge we can actively construct of them. Furthermore, unlike the structural difference between, for example, the two basic capacities of thought within Kant's own frame—sensibility and understanding—the difference between the capacities involved in first order constitution of experience and the one involved in second order philosophical reflection about experience emerges only in connection with the conditions of their legitimate actualization. But the spontaneous capacities that function together in the constitution of experience also have a legitimate and indispensable use in thinking about experience and how it is constituted. In the activity of criticism, for example, spontaneity is exercised on itself. This reflectivity is part of what makes it tempting to attribute a role in the constitution of experience to abstraction, such as the engine of conceptual acquisition. But on Kant's model, abstraction has no role in the first order acts of thought, it has no constitutive function in experience whatsoever. As a result, the capacity to abstract can be thought of as the properly critical capacity of Kant's conception of thought.

In a certain respect, this restriction of abstraction to second order thinking is a singularly unsurprising result of the general orientation of criticism, insofar as it moves from an experience of objects to a description of the mental capacities whose operations account for that experience. In these terms, the first order thinking that constitutes experience is described in the latter as an account of the former; it is the point of departure of criticism and its description is the point of arrival of criticism. The second order thinking is what allows criticism to get to that level of description through various devices that involve abstraction, which is crucially different than a situation in which abstraction would be included in that description. The capacity

to abstract must be brought into play due to the nature of the account that criticism requires of the description of the capacities of thought that constitute experience. This helps make sense of Kant's appeal to the formulation 'to abstract from' a given combination as opposed to abstracting something from something else: as a result of the secondary nature of its appropriate use, the movement of abstraction inevitably goes from a constituted whole that is complex and heterogeneous, to a specific element taken in thought from that whole in a state of purity, that is, as the actualization of a single unified function.

The distinction between first and second order uses of mental capacities is closely related to another distinction between two aspects from which Kant describes features of experience, but does not explicitly distinguish them. On the one hand, he describes experience from the standpoint of that to which one can have access in experience, where what is being described is what appears as it appears, and should be constrained to corresponding standards: that what is separated is separately accessible in experience taken as a whole. On the other hand, experience can be described without regard for their presence in conscious experience, on the basis of imperatives of philosophical reasoning; they are described as actualizations of functions that are postulated as conditions without which experience would not be possible. The contrast can also be thought of in terms of two types of theoretical objects, two ways in which items attributed to experience can be said to exist: features of possible conscious experience and elements of experience reconstituted by theoretical means. Whereas the first type of object would be available from a non-reflective standpoint, the second would exist within the context of second order thinking.

This leaves open the Aristotelian question of whether there is anything that cannot be abstracted in thought from experience, of whether there are aspects of experience that are indissociables even in thought, aspects in relation to which there is unavoidable functional distortion when considered in isolation from their effective state of combination with other functions. Certainly Kant would not have disputed Aristotle's restriction of separation to that which is not analytically related,²⁹ but this begs the question of the possibility of irremediable distortion as a result of severing synthetic relations³⁰. Without attempting to address this question comprehensively, a pair of considerations will indicate the direction of a fuller account of the matter. On the one hand, Kant held what can be thought of as a functional conception of the formal aspects of experience (*i.e.*, the forms of sensibility, concepts and the capacities that exercise them). He considers the possession and the use, or exercise, of a concept or a capacity of thought, to be different descriptions

of a single state. What it means to have a concept is to be able to use it, and similarly, the existence of the various mental capacities is coextensive with their employment in the formation of experience. This ontological vacuity of the mental is relevant in this context because if there are indissociables in thought, the question arises of the basis on which, in this framework, their individuality can be maintained. Aspects of experience are understood to be actualizations of specific functions of thought, and these are postulated on the basis of the indispensability of their contribution to experience: if the possibility of isolating what a particular function produces in experience is denied, the basis for the capacity is thereby rejected, and the effective reality of the capacity and of its contribution can no longer be maintained. On the other hand, there is a clue for the reconstruction of Kant's view on the matter in one of Kant's comparisons between criticism and chemistry cited above. In the second edition Preface to *KrV*, Kant compared his way of thinking to the experiment of reduction or the synthetic procedure in chemistry, in which an initial separation of heterogeneous elements is neutralized by their subsequent unification. Since the unison will not come about except through the distinction, the process serves as a verification of the legitimacy of the separation of the elements as those elements. This requirement of recombineability might provide a standard for abstraction, a way of insuring that what has been abstracted functions within the whole from which it has been removed in the way that it is described as functioning when considered in isolation. The capacity to abstract, in short, exercises a function indispensable to the practice of criticism. As such it functions prior to, and as a factor that conditions of the exercise of the capacities described in this practice, not—like sensibility, understanding or imagination—as a function indispensable to the formation of cognitive thought, but as a function indispensable to the practice of criticism itself, and thereby as a regulative segment of the practice of criticism, and the only capacity proper to it.³¹ Its initial function in this practice is exercised in the description of the need and limitations of the logic of Humean skepticism within criticism.

III. SKEPTICISM WITHIN CRITICISM

“The consciousness of my ignorance,” Kant writes in a section of the Discipline of Pure Reason devoted to the poverty of the standpoint he calls skepticism, “should not end my inquires, but is rather the proper cause to start them” (A758/B786).³² His appeal to the autobiographical from a speculative standpoint is incongruent, and resonates in this and other regards with a very familiar passage from the opening of the *Prolegomena*, a confession from his

intellectual autobiography. The statement in question is found in the Preface: “I freely admit that the remembrance of *David Hume* was the very thing that many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave a completely different direction to my researches in the field of speculative philosophy” (4: 260). The indeterminacy of the interjection is striking, and suggests the threads of an analysis. Kant’s story gives no indication of (a) what it was that he had remembered, of (b) what it was that he had been awoken from, and perhaps most importantly, of (c) how and why it had had this effect.

a) What Kant Remembered

Kant considered Hume’s contribution to the development of his conception of criticism to be of tremendous importance. In the Preface to the *Prolegomena*, for example, Kant maintained that no event in the history of metaphysics had been more decisive than “the attack made upon it by *David Hume*” (4: 257). He describes *KrV* itself as “the *elaboration* of the Humean problem in its greatest possible amplification” (4: 261). Hume’s problem as Kant presents it concerns the rational grounds of the concept of causality, its stakes are coextensive with those the criticism of reason itself: the risk of the self-destruction of metaphysics. For Kant, Hume’s approach to the problem—one that he labels “the censorship of reason”—proceeds by “subjecting the *facta* of reason to examination and when necessary to blame” (A760/B788). Its results are skeptical in so far as they inevitably lead to doubt concerning the legitimacy of the transcendent use of causality and metaphysical concepts generally: “reason completely and fully deceives herself with this concept, falsely taking it for her own child, when it is really nothing but a bastard of the imagination, which, impregnated by experience, [. . .] passes off subjective necessity (*i.e.*, habit) for an objective necessity” (4: 257–8). The necessity of the connection between cause and effect in experience is provided by reason; since it lacks the capacity to generate such a connection, all putatively *a priori* cognition ought to be considered a sham. For Kant’s Hume, the causal connection is in fact “falsely marked ordinary experience” that derives its authority not from its truth, but from “its merely general usefulness in the course of experience” (4: 257, A760/B788). Consequently, on Humean grounds, what Kant calls metaphysics in this context is itself impossible³³: “from the incapacity of our reason to make a use of this principle that goes beyond all experience, he inferred the nullity of all pretensions of reason in general to go beyond the empirical” (A760/B788).

The connection between Hume and skepticism in relation to the possibility of metaphysical cognition (as opposed to sensible knowledge of the external world) helps to reconcile Kant’s declaration about his recollection of

Hume with an apparently inconsistent, less familiar autobiographical report made by Kant in a letter to Garve: "It was not the investigation of the existence of God, immortality, and so on, but rather the antinomy of pure reason [. . .], that first aroused me from my dogmatic slumber and drove me to the criticism of reason itself, in order to resolve the scandal of ostensible contradiction of reason with itself" (12: 258). On the surface, in this statement Kant is giving credit for his wake-up call to two different agencies: the recollection of Hume, on the one hand, and the antinomy of pure reason, on the other. To be sure, the half-decade that separated this statement from the publication of the *Prolegomena* might be thought more than sufficient to suppose that Kant simply changed his standpoint in the intervening years. It is true that Kant may also have made the claim to Garve for non-philosophical, primarily circumstantial reasons. But there is a more conceptually compelling hypothesis, namely, that what it was that Kant remembered of Hume was precisely the antinomy of pure reason.³⁴ Kant defines the idea of an antinomy or an antithetic—by contrast to a *thetic*, which is "any sum total of dogmatic doctrines"—not as "the dogmatic assertion of the opposite," but rather as "the conflict between what seem to be dogmatic cognitions (*theism cum antithesis*), without the ascription of a preeminent claim to approval of one side or the other" (A420/B448). It is not concerned with "one-sided assertions, but considers only the conflict between general cognitions of reason and the causes of this conflict" (A421/B449).³⁵ Kant calls the philosophical procedure associated with this state of reason the *skeptical method*, it is a "method of watching or even occasioning a contest between assertions, not in order to decide it to the advantage of one party or the other, but to investigate whether the object of the dispute is not perhaps a mere mirage at which each would snatch in vain without being able to gain anything even if he met with no resistance" (A747/B775). He is careful to distinguish this way of treating apparently contradictory claims of reason from what he calls *skepticism*, understood as "a principle of artful and scientific ignorance that undermines the foundations of all cognition, in order, if possible, to leave no reliability or certainty anywhere" (A424/B450). Unlike skepticism, the skeptical method "aims at certainty," it aims "to discover the point of misunderstanding in disputes that are honestly intended and conducted with intelligence by both sides, in order to do as wise legislators do when from embarrassment of judges in cases of litigation they draw instruction concerning that which is defective and imprecisely determined in their laws" (A424/B450; cf. A507/B535). As this allusion to and extension of the legal imagery developed out of the *Rechtmäßigkeit* issue in the context of the Transcendental Deduction illustrates, Kant integrates the skeptical method into the

more general attempt to establish the grounds of the legitimacy of objective experience. The skeptical method intervenes in this project as a strategy to draw advantage from the conflicts that are generated by ungrounded claims, claims based on “defective and imprecisely determined” grounds.

According to this terminology, Hume’s problem, skepticism, is generated by the same state of reason as the skeptical method. This state allows him to recognize the antinomy of reason, but the solution he provides amounts to skepticism. This is made particularly clear in a lecture from the period of the *Inaugural Dissertation*:

In these writings of Hume [“Philosophical Inquiries” and “Miscellaneous Writings”] is to be found a gentle, calm, unprejudiced examination. In them he considers, namely, first of all one side of a thing; he searches for all possible grounds for it, and expounds them in the best oratorical style. Then he takes up the other side, presents it for examination, as it were, completely without partisanship, expounds again all the opposing grounds with just the same eloquence, but at the end and in conclusion he appears in his true form as a real skeptic he complains about uncertainty of all our cognition whatsoever, shows how little these can be trusted, and finally he doubts instead of inferring and settling which of the two cognitions is true and which is false. He would, however, certainly be one of the best authors to read, if only he did not have the preponderant inclination to doubt everything, but instead wanted to seek to attain true certainty by means of the examination and investigation of cognitions (24: 159–161).

This makes it clear that the particular type of skepticism that Kant associates with the antinomy of reason and attributes to Hume is the result of the application of the so-called skeptical method, but a mode of application of this method that does not subsequently carry through with an exercise of criticism, in order to establish the objective value of cognitive experience, which would begin by dissolving the apparent antithetical contradiction.³⁶ The skeptical moment itself occurs at the realization that reason necessarily produces contradictory propositions. On Kant’s view, criticism shows the conflict to be merely apparent; there seems to be a contradiction until two ways of considering objects are distinguished: they can be considered either as they are, or as they appear to us, *i.e.*, in relation to the way we represent them. This duality of points of intervention becomes apparent as a result of criticism.³⁷ The skeptical method itself places contradictory assertions of reason in juxtaposition with the design of unmasking their object as illusory.³⁸

And it is to the idea of this procedure and this predicament that Kant attributes his awakening.

Unlike Hume, Kant drew the methodological benefit from dogmatism by the antinomy of reason, and integrated the skeptical method into the practice of criticism, which does not give rise to skepticism, but to objective cognition: "This is the great utility of the skeptical way of treating the questions that pure reason puts to pure reason; by means of it one can with little expense exempt oneself from a great deal of dogmatic rubbish, and put in its place a sober criticism, which, as a true cathartic, will happily purge such delusions along with the attendant punditry" (A485–6/B513–4; trans. mod.). He goes as far as to claim not only that it is useful, but that reason "very much needs such a conflict," and that had it "been undertaken earlier," a mature criticism would have come about sooner, at the appearance of which all of this controversy would have had to disappear, since the disputants would have learned insight into the illusion and prejudices that have disunited them" (A747/B775). Kant considered the skeptical recognition of the antinomical character of reason to be a necessary moment in the path toward metaphysics, but unlike Hume, did not consider it to be the final word on the possibility of knowledge and the ground of experience. It was needed as a challenge "to demonstrate those *a priori* principles on which the very possibility of experience depends" (20: 263).

b) The Enigma of Slumber

If this approximates what it was that Kant recalled of Hume, roughly the particular mode of skeptical attack that issued from the recognition of the antinomy of reason, the matter of what it was that remembering it awoke Kant from—marked by the metaphor "dogmatic slumber"—is left to be interrogated and its conceptual import approximated. There have been entire books structured around how to understand the idea in the context of Kant's philosophical development, addressing the question of the extent to which Kant's philosophy prior to the discovery of Hume in the late 1760's had in fact been lulling in Wolffian dogmatism, and whether the change it provoked is equal to the philosophical drama the image conjures.³⁹ But while the details of the mutations of Kant's pre-critical thought are of a truly overwhelming complexity, the bulk of these can be put aside in order to focus on the schema that makes it perspicuous: thought lying in dogmatic slumber and the logic of its need to be shaken back into a state of awareness.

One of the prominent themes of the Preface of the first edition of *KrV* is the actual state of metaphysics in Kant's day in the context of its history. Kant's remarks on this question read like trace manifestations of a hidden

underlying theory of the historical development of reason and its speculative capacities. The history that it produces is a caricature, but its details are not meant to be empirical reports of the development of metaphysics: Kant is providing an account of the present state of reason and of the sciences of which it is capable. The details of the characterizations of past states of metaphysics are not primarily offered as historical insights, but as indications of the internal logic of these positions in relation to the sort of approach that had become possible in the present. The diachronic account functions as a device to make this problem more perspicuous.⁴⁰

There are several versions of this story about metaphysics, and there is something to be gained from a survey. None is more familiar than the one from the first edition Preface, where Kant writes:

In the beginning, under the administration of the dogmatists, her rule was despotic. Yet because her legislation still retained traces of ancient barbarism, this rule gradually degenerated through internal wars into complete anarchy; and the skeptics, a kind of nomads who abhor all permanent cultivation of the soil, shattered civil unity from time to time. But since there were fortunately only a few of them, they could not prevent the dogmatists from continually attempting to rebuild, though never according to a plan unanimously accepted among themselves. (Aix)

Considered as the definition of a standpoint in thought, Kant's figure of the skeptic functions metaphorically. Skeptics are like nomads, relatively few in number, descendents of the barbarians, and violently opposed to agricultural stasis and political unity. In his essay on the progress of metaphysics in Germany, a substantial part of which is devoted to an exposition of the stages of metaphysics in which this figure of the skeptic is *mise-en-scène*, Kant specifies that once "the first two stages have been passed, the state of metaphysics can continue to vacillate for many centuries, leaping from an unlimited self-confidence of reason to boundless mistrust, and back again" (20: 264). He diagnoses the need in reason's contemporary state for a third moment, required to stabilize reason's state of vacillation:

The first step in matters of pure reason, which characterizes its childhood, is dogmatic. The . . . second step is skeptical, and gives evidence of the caution of the power of judgment sharpened by experience. Now, however, a third step is still necessary, which pertains only to the mature and adult power of judgment . . . which subjects to evaluation not

the *facta* of reason but reason itself, as concerns its entire capacity and suitability for pure *a priori* cognitions; this is not the censorship but the criticism of pure reason . . . (A761/B789; trans. mod.)

The censorship of reason is “a criticism of its own powers,” that puts it “into a condition of stability, both external and internal,” that is complete and exhaustive (20: 264). The status and the stakes of the idea of a development of metaphysics, however, remain ambiguous. Kant’s remark in *The Progress of Metaphysics* that “the temporal sequence is founded in the nature of man’s cognitive capacity” (20: 264) confirms the philosophical dimension of the historical stages, but sheds no light on the relation between the historical and the discursive. Although the Architectonic of Pure Reason in *KrV* provides some helpful indications about his view of how metaphysics had become what it was then, Kant did not develop an account of the historical mutations of reason. It is clear, however, that he ascribed both philosophical and historical significance to an event of his philosophical autobiography: he reports to have experienced something that he took to be representative of a historical-conceptual fact about human reason in its metaphysical activity. The coincidence between the two allowed him to diagnose the contemporary state of reason, wherefore the claims about “our age” being the age of criticism. The autobiographical integration of the historical also manifests itself in a systematic register, in which Kant gives the internal structure of his own metaphysics a similar triadic topography. This is particularly true of the version developed in *The Progress of Metaphysics in Germany*. In his Introduction to the Cambridge Edition translation, Henry Allison calls attention to the discussion as one of particular complexity, and distinguishes historical and systematic conceptions of metaphysics as “competing conceptions” with regard to which Kant vacillates. He warns of the confusion that can arise due to “Kant’s tendency to move from one to the other, combined with somewhat misleading similarities between them.”⁴¹ But in fact, these conceptions are not as rigidly separable as this assessment suggests, and there is value in considering their interrelations. The link between the two is the philosophical-autobiographical register that is no longer explicitly present in *Progress*. The arousal from dogmatic slumber is provided with a narrative background that can be canvassed in order to give content to the idea of dogmatism to which Kant attributed the palliation of his reason and, according to his history of metaphysics, reason itself.

One of the most generous fragments of the history of metaphysics that Kant provides is found in the *Prolegomena*, where he identifies its present condition as the point at which, like all “fake art” and “empty wisdom,” it

destroys itself after having lasted for its time, such that “the height of its cultivation is simultaneously the moment of its decline” (4: 367; trans. mod.). He identifies the present condition of reason, a transitional stage between the reign of dogmatism and a completed criticism, as a state of indifference, for all “transitions from one inclination to its opposite pass through a state of indifference” (4: 367). This is a moment that is “dangerous for an author,” but “favorable for the science,” insofar as the capacities of thought are “best disposed to hear out, bit by bit, proposals for an alliance according to another plan,” when “the partisan spirit has been extinguished through the complete severance of former ties” (4: 367). This resonates with the reference to “indifferentism” in the first edition Preface of *KrV*, where Kant claims that “complete indifferentism” controls reason now, after all apparent options for metaphysics are exhausted: it is both “the mother of chaos and night in the sciences,” and “the origin, or at least the prelude, of their incipient transformation and enlightenment, when through ill-applied effort they have become obscure, confused, and useless” (Ax).⁴² The theoretical disposition that Kant tags as indifferentism here is one that fails to recognize the interest humans have in metaphysics, as a matter of structural necessity, given the natural disposition of reason toward the unconditioned, thereby generating unavoidable transcendental illusions (see A307/B363 and A296/B353). In light of this natural propensity, laying pretense to remaining indifferent to the questions of metaphysics amounts to self-deception. Metaphysics is something about which it is not possible to be reflexively indifferent. In this respect, in terms of the terminological distribution proposed above, indifferentism can be understood as a use of the skeptical method that issues in Humean skepticism.

c) The Capacity to be Aroused

The central notion that this examination of the source of the arousal from dogmatic slumber brings into focus is the attribution of a pathological instability to the actions of reason, for which the practice of criticism is the first and only effective therapy. Of course, this image is anachronistic: Kant had a different conception of the pathological, and his metaphorical idiom in this context is that the battleground had been moved into the courtroom. But the recognition of the background of principled perpetual vacillation is crucial for a grasp of the specific historical-conceptual moment that preceded the emergence of criticism. Kant’s view is that the comfort and complacency of a dogmatic use of reason finds itself disrupted by the challenges of skepticism, and this moment was historically a necessary condition for the emergence of criticism. And it is by considering this fact that the question of how and

why the recollection of Hume can have interrupted Kant's dogmatic slumber can be addressed. It is remarkable that the language of Kant's description of this moment is vivid, at times verging on violent. Three elements call to be underscored.

It is significant, to begin, that Kant takes dogmatism to be a comfortable and comforting state of reason. He relates that his slumber was filled with "sweet dogmatic dreams" (A757/B785). Dogmatic metaphysics is successful in the constant confirmation it enjoys in the application of its principles to experience and it is useful in the sense of security it provides with respect to supersensible matters.⁴³ Furthermore, the effect of being presented with the fact of the antinomy of reason by the skeptical method is one of *shock*. It carries an element of compulsion, required to motivate reason to part with the comforts of its dogmatic state. This is evident in Kant's description of the skeptical manner of, as it were, backing out of a fight with reason: "If, however, one takes regard of the inexorable deception and bragging of the sophists [. . .] then there is really no other course but to set the boasting of one side against the other [. . .] in order at least *to shock reason* to leave just these doubts standing, and to set out to recommend the conviction and confession of its ignorance," which is "a means for *awaking it from its sweet dogmatic dreams* in order to undertake a more careful examination of its conditions" (my emphasis; A757/B785). In *KU*, Kant emphasizes how this effect compels one to relinquish its state of complacency, by proposing that the antinomies "*force* reason to give up the otherwise very natural presupposition that holds objects of the senses to be things in themselves, and rather to count them as appearances" (5: 344; my emp.). The effects on the dogmatist, which "are not merely dangerous but are even disastrous," make of the skeptic "the taskmaster of the dogmatic sophist for a healthy criticism of the understanding and of reason itself" (A769/B797). Skepticism, in the relevant sense—the encounter with the antinomy of reason—can be both a threat and a valuable proto-critical device: "it guards reason against the slumber of an imagined conviction, such as a merely one-sided illusion produces, but at the same time leads reason into the temptation either to surrender itself to a skeptical hopelessness or else to assume an attitude of dogmatic stubbornness, setting its mind rigidly to certain assertions without giving a fair hearing to the grounds for the opposite" (A407/B434). Finally, Kant frequently emphasizes that the value of the shock effect of the skeptical moment for metaphysics is strictly to motivate the move toward criticism, not as an end in itself. Hume, Kant is careful to remark, "brought no light to this kind of knowledge, but he certainly struck a spark from which a light could well have been kindled, if it had hit some welcoming tinder whose glow had then

been carefully kept going and made to grow” (4: 258). This limitation of the metaphysical value skepticism manifests itself in the fact that “skeptical polemicizing is properly directed only against the dogmatist, who continues gravely along his path without any mistrust” (A763–4/B791–2). It can provide no contribution to the problem of “what we can know and what by contrast we cannot know,” and as a result can “never bring to an end the controversy about what is lawful in human reason” (A764/B792). Kant suggests that while the skeptical procedure is not itself “*satisfying* for questions of reason,” it is nevertheless “*preparatory* for arousing its caution and showing it fundamental means for securing it in its rightful possessions” (A769/B797). This method aims to generate a temporary space of, to use Kantian imagery, peaceful equilibrium into which reason can retreat. Kant explains that the skeptical method provides “a *resting-place* for human reason,” a space in which it can “reflect upon its dogmatic peregrination and make a survey of the region in which it finds itself in order to be able to choose its path in the future with greater certainty,” as opposed to “a *dwelling-place for permanent residence*,” which is only to be found in “complete certainty” (my emphasis; A761/B789). Kant’s idea is that the use of the skeptical method momentarily halts the vacillation of reason between dogmatism and Humean skepticism in order to provide the occasion for criticism to be undertaken.⁴⁴

In sum, this second structural stage of Kant’s criticism unfolds in terms of a sequence of two moments: (i) the shocking, bewildering, “worrisome and depressing” (20: 327; see A740/B768) impression that reason unavoidably contradicts itself, experienced when presented with the juxtaposition of the antithetical propositions it generates (the apparent antithetic of reason), and (ii) the recognition that the consequence of such contradictions is the impossibility of cognition as such (Hume’s skeptical conclusion).⁴⁵ The shock that it produces in a complacently dogmatic reason is a necessary event in the development of reason, within the practice of criticism, in order to allow for the discovery of the standpoint of criticism, from which it subsequently becomes possible to dissolve the appearance of an antithetic by the diagnosis of confusion between appearances and things in themselves.

IV. THE CAPACITIES OF THOUGHT

In 1963, Gilles Deleuze, then a little known young philosopher who had published what would become an important book on Nietzsche, but was still six years from defending his *thèse d’état*, produced a short monograph on Kant’s criticism with the subtitle *A Doctrine of the Faculties*.⁴⁶ It is a comprehensive survey of Kant’s critical philosophy that preserves in the composition of its

chapters the general triadic form of Kant's critical philosophy, but introduces a more finely grained form within the basic apparatus around the concept of *faculties* or *capacities of thought*. The text functions genealogically, attributing to Kant's *doctrine* the role of organizing principle of the method of criticism, keeping in view that it can be defined in its broadest outlines as the conditions of a standpoint that validates nothing *as doctrine* but only *as cognition*. The reading of criticism it developed would become the hidden cornerstone of Deleuze's own philosophy and, more to the point, it stands as the fullest statement of a particular aspect of the second order attitude toward Kant, one shared by a number of Deleuze's contemporaries, including Foucault.

Deleuze's project of reconstructing Kant's conception of criticism around it begins by proposing what functions as the guiding thread of his exposition, clearly alluding to section III of *KU* (see 20: 206): "Every representation bears a relation to something else, either object or subject. One can distinguish as many *faculties of thought* as there are types of relation."⁴⁷ This, according to Deleuze, is the most basic Kantian sense of the term. It implies faculties or capacities are *types of relation*. It becomes clear quite quickly in the book that they are taken to be constitutively relations, as are all other levels of descriptions of the mental.⁴⁸ To be sure, this is an extremely anti-psychological interpretation of Kant, and it is perhaps extraordinarily informed by an order of ideological commitment that can be isolated from strictly historical-philosophical concerns. But considerations that will emerge in the course of the ensuing treatment of Foucault recommend taking it as the starting point of the discussion here nonetheless. In fact, within its otherwise very limited scope, a somewhat broader interest than the elaboration of a concept of faculties or capacities is involved. It is a proposal to understand the faculties in continuity with the whole array of mental functions that Kant postulates as the sources of the *a priori*, of the formal features of experience. It represents what can be thought of as one in a series of problems in relation to which Kant's criticism deploys a conception of the mind.⁴⁹

In the philosophical climate of post-war France, Deleuze's book stands as an anomaly. Allegiances, to the extent that they have left accessible traces, were cleanly divided between the Marxist orientations of Hegel filtered through Kojève, anti-humanist readings of Nietzsche, and minor involvement in the philosophy of science. With what was more or less generously considered to be the stale French Kantianism of Lachelier and Ravaisson that had dominated academic philosophy for more than a generation still lingering in the air, it is not surprising that Kant did not get much of a hearing. Moreover, given the proximity of this text to Deleuze's book on Nietzsche, one

that was generously hostile to Kant, may have given rise to suspicion about the motivations behind the Kant book for those not inclined to read it. Of course, there were exceptions, but young philosophers of Deleuze's ilk and those in affinity with the instincts very close to the surface of his *Nietzsche et la philosophie*—deep hostility not only to the rigidity of academia, but of all things conservative and institutional—would be much more likely if not to completely ignore Kant, to expedite his flight to the history of philosophy's regularly emptied trashcan.

This unceremonious dismissal often appears to be Foucault's attitude, but his relation to Kant is in fact at its most distinctive point formed by its attempts to formulate the problem of which the avoidance of Kant is a symptom. To be sure, in the context of his historical analyses of discursive practices, he rarely misses an opportunity to blame the anthropocentric poverty of the human sciences on Kant. But upon fuller investigation, however, one discovers that his position is more double-minded, structurally so, in fact. As described in the Introduction, on Foucault's reading, Kant's practice of criticism engenders two very different traditions of thought. Late in his life, Foucault gives them names: ontology of actuality, to which he attaches his own thinking, and analytics of truth, which he associates with the dominance of the subject in modern philosophy that appears to be showing signs of fatigue. He makes a theme of this opposition from a very early point in his work. His focus shifts from the *Anthropology* to popular essays such as "What is Enlightenment?" and "What is Revolution?" when isolating the textual foothold of the ontology of actuality, but the idea remains the same, namely, that Kant's speculative philosophy, the critical idealism on the basis of which he is philosophically canonized, is a decisive point of historical transition toward what he calls the "anthropological" bias in the human sciences. This proposal, which is discussed at length in a variety of registers in the course of the examination of Foucault in ensuing chapters, is introduced here only as an example of the attitude toward Kant in opposition to which the focus on the concept of mental faculties and capacities is responding.⁵⁰ Foucault certainly is not alone here, for there is a marked proclivity among plaintiffs in the case against the subject to impeach Kant in the same breath as Descartes. Perhaps there is something to this. After all, the deduction of transcendental unity of apperception as a condition of the possibility of the experience of objects is undeniably an important part of Kantian criticism. The related concept of autonomy at the heart of Kant's practical philosophy also lends credence to the impression. All of this deserves to be recalled, but there is another side to Kant's theoretical philosophy and one that is not as structurally tilted to

the side of the subject. One need not turn away from the main speculative writings to find it, for it is inscribed in the very logic of the mode of explanation that Kant calls his own when he appeals to the functioning of the capacities as postulates in an explanation of experience. But Deleuze's reorientation remains a fresh and potentially revitalizing point of focus.

While Deleuze's text is not discussed in detail, the standpoint on Kant that orients this study pursues this reorientation, to the extent that the primary Kantian sense of experience in question is experience conceived as the product of the exercise of a complex of functional relations. Kant most helpfully describes each of these functions as a *capacity* (*Vermögen*), to be understood more immediately in relation to the logic of the 18th century, rather than the psychology of the 20th. From this standpoint in Kant, capacities are subjective, but not in the sense of being the activities of a mind or a soul that would have some sort of ontological priority over the experience they form. Instead, experiences are what call for philosophical thought, and as what there is to think about. The idea is to arrive at conclusions about the only way to conceive of *thought*, the *world* and the way they are *related*, given that experience presents itself to us as it does.

The following presents a version of these conclusions, one whereby thought and its units, such as the mind, are names given to forms of relation that at the most indeterminate level of abstraction constitute an exercise of capacities (or faculties) that issue in experience. Thought, the mind, in this sense, is the complex of relations between the functions or capacities at which one arrives when abstracts the structure or the form from experience and establishes it as the network of *a priori* factors that condition it. Within this frame of reference, these capacities are constitutively abstractions: they have no existence outside of their exercise, independently of their use in the constitution of the experiences they form; they have no intelligibility outside the transcendental discourse within which they are deduced. Now, it is true that within Kant's criticism, the fact that capacities of thought primarily intervene as mere functions that account for the possibility of experience does not constitute an argument for this ontological deflation. It does not imply that the concept of an existing mind is impossible, *i.e.*, that there is no possible conception of the mental according to which the mind and its capacities can be ascribed a positive ontological status. It does, however, circumscribe a Kantian use of the concept of the mental that determines not only that the mind is an insubstantial complex of capacities, but also that these capacities only intervene in the sort of account being offered functionally, as theoretical entities which can only be accessed as conditions. As a part of Kant's project of determining the conditions of the possibility of

experience, the capacities that comprise the mind exist as the factors that—on the basis of their methodological indispensability—are said to regulate experience, and not as entities that have any other modality of existence (physical, psychological, or practical).

Kant makes the importance of the issue for criticism clear in a letter to Garve written between the editions of *KrV*. There, he describes the specificity of critical idealism and the perceived difficulties in understanding it properly by appeal to this concept: “Absolutely no other science attempts this, that is, to develop *a priori* out of the mere concept of a cognitive faculty (when that concept is precisely defined) all the objects, everything that can be known of them, yes, even what one is involuntarily but deceptively constrained to believe about them” (10: 340). In the *Prolegomena*, Kant explains that this characteristic gives metaphysics the added attraction of being completable, *i.e.*, since “reason has the sources of its cognition not in objects and their intuition [. . .], but in itself,” if it “has presented the fundamental laws of its faculty fully and determinately (against all misinterpretation), nothing else remains that pure reason could cognize *a priori*, or even about which it could have cause to ask” (4: 366). The task of criticism is exhausted by the comprehensive examination of the faculties of the mind. Given the textual indeterminacy that remains about the concept, it is crucial for the clarity of a view of Kant’s project to advance proposals concerning the obscure questions of the epistemological and ontological status of the idea of a mental faculty and its relation to subjectivity.

The “proper business of transcendental philosophy,” Kant tells us in the introductory remarks to the Analytic of Concepts of *KrV*, is “to research the possibility of *a priori* concepts by seeking them in the understanding as their birthplace and analyzing its pure use in general” (A66/B90). The Analytic of *KrV* undertakes to “pursue the pure concepts into their first seeds and predispositions in the human understanding, where they lie ready, until with the opportunity of experience they are finally developed and exhibited in their clarity by the very same understanding” (A66/B91). The Transcendental Logic had begun with the declaration: “Our cognition arises from two fundamental *sources in the mind*, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts)” (my emphasis; A50/B74). Kant calls the former sensibility: “the receptivity of the mind to receive representations” through which “an object is given to us”; the latter is understanding: “the spontaneity of cognition” through which the object is cognized. He provides no real account, however, of the concept of the mind to which he is appealing in this context, by contrast,

e.g., with his criticism of rational psychology and his account of transcendental apperception. His discussion proceeds by maintaining either that a faculty of a particular sort must be attributed to the mind if cognition is to be possible, or that certain faculties must be attributed to the mind as basis for an analysis of certain unproblematically actual mental operations. But for the practice of criticism, there can be no access to the mind as such. What it does permit, instead, is the reconstruction of its constitution in terms of faculties, of capacities whose actualization *is* the process of cognition. From this standpoint, the only access that one can have to one's mind is by way of the analysis of given cognition or of basic cognitive processes. Within these parameters, it would not be unjustified to suggest that the content of this concept of the mind is nothing other than a specified complex of capacities. A similar constitutively semantic or discursive ontological state holds at the level of the relation between sensibility and the forms of intuition, and between understanding and concepts: mental capacities are nothing other than a complex of practical functions. Kant's image that concepts "lie ready" in the understanding may be misleading in this regard. Within his conceptual practice, there is no structural allowance to attribute to these mental factors the kind of existence that is suggested by such characterizations. Cognitive capacities exist only in actual cases of cognition, where their actualization provides the *a priori* form. From an empirical standpoint, this sort of unity of subjectivity is loose and completely detached from inner sense. After all, it is predicated by what can be inferred from the unity of the object of cognition. Its necessity, in other words, is derived from the concrete, if apparently indispensable, characteristics of our cognitive experience.

One of the values of Deleuze's emphasis on *relations* as the elements of the mind is that it makes the ontological precariousness of the mind perspicuous. When the matter is posed in terms of relations, one can more readily understand how the ontological status of the mind can be described in exclusively normative terms: its role in criticism is determined on the basis of an examination of the objective structure of cognitive experience; it is the description of the functional relations deduced as the conditions of experience. This invites the further reflection that relations can change. If the mind is constitutively relational, far from being in principle connected to a transparent foundational subject, it is conceivable that the practice of Kantian criticism could itself be separated from the role attributed to the subject in Kant's own exercise of it, and transposed to analyze a sort of cognitive experience that is structured in a different manner, unlike our own. This entails that it would be necessary to conceive of a different constituting mind, but in light of Kant's conception of the mind as essentially a network of relations perhaps this should not be immediately dismissed as

a viable project. “Different mind” in this sense amounts to “different set of relations between mental capacities,” which is not implausible. In this sense, it is possible to maintain a Kantian conception of the mind, while admitting the possibility of historical mutation of the structure of experience, particularly in relation to the role of the subject in its constitution. This, in fact, is precisely the possibility that Foucault pursues. Of course, it should be said that, within Kant’s theoretical landscape, such a possibility is difficult to square with the importance for Kant of the unity of apperception and the act of judgment, which are both indispensable to the sort of deductive procedure undertaken by Kant to secure the legitimacy of the subjective cognitive use of concepts. Both of these commitments seem to imply structural dependence on a subject. And indeed, Foucault unambiguously rejects the possibility.⁵¹ However, the proposition to be entertained is not that the function of the subject would be entirely eliminated, but that from the Kant standpoint in Foucault and other similarly inclined hesitant Kantians, this function falls to the side of conceptual contingency and historico-cultural need. This would involve rejecting the preponderance of the subject in the structure of experience, without relinquishing subjective practices altogether. One can think of an experiential structure in terms of forms articulated by practical relations in which the subject does not generate the form of the object, and does not more broadly ascribe to the subject anything that approximates the theoretical weight ascribed to it in Modern philosophy. The form of such an experience would be provided by a different organization of mental relations. Extended diachronically in Foucault’s practice of criticism, this generates a series of, as it were, different cultural minds, forms of thought, understood as manifestations of shifts in relations, both among the capacities, and of the capacities themselves, through shifts in the exercise of the relations, that constitute a practice subordinate mental units (space, time, concepts, etc.). The exercise of certain arrangements of mental relations forms experience in a way that gives more prominence to the subject than others.

V. THE CONSTITUTION OF EXPERIENCE

The following analysis will treat only the elements of Kant’s concept of experience that will be directly involved in the subsequent discussion, and is for this reason thematically selective and methodologically single-minded in relation to textual complexities. It pursues the exercise of conceptual pruning required to clear the conceptual terrain by defining a unified standpoint in relation to moments of textual ambiguity and indeterminacy, by setting key concepts into relation explicitly, and by clearly fixing the use of key terms. The risks involved in such an undertaking—oversimplification, inadequate

textual consideration, and neglect of the true complexity and scope of the philosophical problems involved—seem worth assuming, in light of the considerable importance of the concepts involved.

a) Complexities of Kant's Concept of Experience

Given that the guiding aim of the practice of criticism involves the identification of the conditions under which experience is possible, the exposition of the concept in Kant at requisite level of abstraction is of considerable importance for the project.⁵² Naturally then, this exposition does not aspire to an exhaustive or even a balanced exposition of the concept in all its breadth in Kant's thought, but to a selective presentation of the aspects that will be most directly involved in what follows.⁵³ Reflection on Kant's terminology provides a helpful starting point for the discussion.

It is not surprising, given the nascent state of German as a language of technical philosophical discourse, that it was important to Kant to choose his words carefully. We know—from the section “On the Ideas in General,” for example—that the problems involved in the selection and use of technical terminology were of considerable importance to Kant. In the context of Plato's use of the term ‘idea’, he suggests in a letter to Garve, the use of existing terms is preferable to neologism, provided that the meaning of the term proper to its new context is carefully fixed and adhered to (see 10: 340). It goes without saying that this is a tremendously broad issue, both in Kant and in terms of its socio-political and historical functions, but the bearing of the relevant insight can be addressed succinctly. A remarkable point with which to begin is that Kant's use of the term “experience” is in tune with both elements of his general suggestion about philosophical language. In fact, in the case of the concept of experience, there is significant philosophical import to be attached to what appears to be a merely philological consideration: an important feature of Kant's strategy is to avail itself of the two-sided nature of the terminological prescription by drawing on the existing uses of the term—both in ordinary and in philosophical discourse—in the conception of the more specifically critical use of the term. Both uses are incorporated into the meaning of the term that can be ascribed to its use considered generally. Instead of simply taking note of the diversity of the roles given to the concept of experience by Kant, it is possible to specify these roles in terms of their functions within a complex concept of experience in general. In terms of the stakes of Kant's method, the movement can be expressed in terms of an argumentative progression from experience in the ordinary sense, to the uniquely Kantian sense of the concept.⁵⁴

The introductions to both editions of *KrV* begin with a general claim about the role of experience in the project the book undertakes. In the first edition, the first section opens with Kant's declaration that "Experience is without doubt the first product that our understanding brings forth as it works on the raw material of sensible sensations" (A1). In the second edition, this characterization of experience as the product of a subjective process is repeated, and counterbalanced by a second quite different characterization:

There is no doubt whatever that all our cognition *begins with experience*; for how else should the cognitive faculty be awakened into exercise if not through objects that stimulate our senses and in part themselves produce representations, in part bring the activity of our understanding into motion to compare these, to connect or separate them, and thus to work up the raw material of sensible impressions into a *cognition of objects that is called experience*? (B1; my emp.)

This is a striking and yet understated opening. Understated because without saying so, the passage distinguishes and connects two uses of "experience" in a way that defines a zone of tension that is basic to Kant's practice of criticism. According to this complex use, experience is both by definition inadequate as a source of cognition and the only possible field or locus of cognition.⁵⁵ This may seem to be a needless complication of a simple ambivalence in Kant's use of the term: here to designate unorganized sensible material, there empirical cognition. But it is significant that, philosophically speaking, both senses figure perspicuously in Kant's conceptual framework. While it is unlikely that "experience" can have been used in such different ways in Kant's discourse accidentally, if it was used in this way by design, the fact that the distinction was not terminologically marked in order to avoid the ambiguity becomes a mystery. The fact of the basic duality provokes the need for an account of the concept, it is not the account itself.

On the one hand, then, "experience" is used by Kant in a comparatively loose sense that is continuous with both non-philosophical language and the philosophical tradition (*e.g.*, Hume). In this broad sense, it signifies an aggregate of perceptions, given sensible material and what one can obtain from this material by abstraction or induction. It cannot serve, in this sense, as the grounds for strict universality or necessity.⁵⁶ But it must nevertheless serve in some sense as the basis for of cognition, which is not thereby derived completely from experience, but contains *a priori* elements

that are contributed by the cognizing subject. These *a priori* features are demonstrated to be the conditions of the possibility of experience in the second sense of the term.

On the other hand, experience is also conceived more narrowly, and in a way more directly tied to the conceptual frame of criticism. In this sense the term designates both the universally valid connection of the material that makes up experience in the broad sense, and the mechanism of its unification into objective form. Thus understood, experience indispensably has both empirical and *a priori* components. It is constituted by the faculty of understanding, and presupposes the validity of something that is confirmed by itself, without resting for that reason on perception or induction. It is not given, but the result of an *a priori* process of taking up and ordering what is given by experience (in the broad sense) by the functions of understanding.

In the context of Kant's criticism, the broad sense of experience has a largely negative role: it represents that which cannot provide the ground of cognition; consequently, the attempt to look for such a ground in it leads to skepticism about the possibility of metaphysical knowledge (synthetic *a priori* cognitions). Its primary function in the structure of this approach is to mark what would be an inadequate ground for cognition. It is experience in a more narrow sense, used as a technical concept, that plays a decisive role in the project of the criticism. The positive account also involves something similar to what is designated by the broad sense of experience, not as a concept of experience, but rather as the raw material or data of sensation (its content as opposed to its form, at the relevant level of abstraction). A survey of some of the relevant texts will help bring this relation to light.

When Kant notes that it is "especially remarkable" that "even among our experiences cognitions are mixed in that must have their origin *a priori*," and stipulates that their role may amount to nothing more than "to establish connections among our representations of the senses," (A2) he seems to be appealing to the broad sense of experience; the opaque image of cognitions *mixed in* with experiences suggests that these are to be understood as mere perceptions, as punctual states of sensory awareness (conscious sense impressions). But this may simply be due to an inapt metaphor, because it becomes clear in the very next sentence that a richer sense of experience is involved: "if one removes from our experiences everything that belongs to the senses, there still remain certain original concepts and the judgments generated from them, which must have arisen entirely *a priori*, independently of experience, because they make one able to say more about the objects that appear to the senses than mere experience would teach, or at least make one believe that one can say this" (A2/B5). This unambiguously fixes the primary Kantian

sense of experience: not merely what is sensed as given, but that element considered in combination with a fundamentally different element, something that belongs to experience constitutively (as a part of its structure), but that is distinct from experience in the broad sense of what is sensed as given. If the immediately sensible is abstracted from an experience, something remains, which can thus be inferred to be *a priori*. In other words, experience is not to be equated with perceptions, but rather with synthesized perceptions, perceptions that are connected in a way—with necessity and universality—that cannot be the work of the senses. As Kant puts it is the *Prolegomena*, “experience itself is nothing other than a continual conjoining (synthesis) of perceptions” (4: 275). In the *Mrongoivius metaphysics lectures*, the process from sensation to experience thus defined is detailed in three steps:

The whole of experience is nothing other than the synthesis of perceptions. Perception is consciousness of sensation. From sensations one cannot make any concepts or communicate them to others, for it is the manner in which one finds oneself with something. Someone else finds himself quite otherwise. But one can make concepts from the synthesis of perceptions. (29: 794)

The concept of synthesis is central in Kant’s criticism; it will be treated below in detail, but for the moment, suffice it to say that within the Kantian framework, it involves the regulated unification of a diversity of material that can only be the actualization of the capacity of understanding.⁵⁷ This strong (rule-guided) connection must be postulated in order to account for experience as we are immediately familiar with it:

. . . without that sort of unity, which has its rule *a priori*, and which subjects the appearances to itself, thoroughgoing and universal, hence necessary unity of consciousness would not be encountered in the manifold perceptions. But these would then belong to no experience, and would consequently be without an object, and would be nothing but a blind play of representations, *i.e.*, less than a dream. (A112)

In other words, in order for experience to be intelligible, in order for it to have the sense and significance that it does, one must suppose that it necessarily involves an element that the senses cannot provide. The functions that regulate this element are what Kant calls concepts: “all experience contains in addition to the intuition of the senses, through which something is given, a concept of an object that is given in intuition, or appears” (A93/B126).

Although the principle of the possibility of these concepts cannot be found in experience, “the occasional causes of their generation, where the impressions of the senses provide the first occasion for opening the entire power of cognition to them and for bringing about experience,” is a different matter (A86/B118).

This skirts too much rocky terrain much too quickly, and these indications are not meant to be an exposition of Kant's argument, but merely a clarification of the conception of experience involved. Experience understood in the rich sense specific to the framework of criticism can be elucidated in terms of the abstraction of the form from the content of experience. As noted above, Kant specifies that experience “contains two very heterogeneous elements”: “a matter for cognition from the senses and a certain form for ordering it from the inner source of pure intuiting and thinking, which, on the occasion of the former, are first brought into use and bring forth concepts” (A86/B118). The relation is similarly presented in the *Mrongovius* lectures:

Experience has matter, i.e., data (*data*), and form, i.e., the connection of the data (*datorum*). Perceptions constitute the matter. The unity of multiple perceptions is experience. The unity is the form of the perceptions. (29: 794–5)

These indications clearly show that the operative concept of experience in Kant's theoretical apparatus involves both sensible and rational components in its very structure, such that experience is the form of perceptions. This is also the only way to make sense of Kant's frequent equation of *experience* and empirical *cognition*. In the Preface to the second edition of *KrV*, for example, Kant writes that “experience itself is a kind of cognition requiring the understanding, whose rules I presuppose in myself before any object is given to me, hence *a priori*” (Bxviii); in the second edition Deduction, he specifies that “experience is cognition through connected perceptions”; and several pages later, he states simply that “[e]mpirical cognition, however, is experience” (B161; B166; see also B147). The main elements that have been flagged here are drawn into relation in the opening passage of the Analogies of Experience:

Experience is an empirical cognition, i.e., a cognition that determines itself through perceptions. It is therefore a synthesis of perceptions, which is not itself contained in perception but contains the synthetic unity of the manifold of perception in one consciousness, which constitutes what

is essential in a cognition of objects of the sense, i.e., of experience (not merely the intuition or sensation of the senses). (A176/B218–9)⁵⁸

In order to arrive at an understanding of the notion of a form of experience in light of this rich, properly Kantian conception of experience, it is necessary to examine Kant's model of the process of cognition. Before doing so, however, it will be exegetically expedient to articulate further features of the conceptual framework of Kantian criticism.

Specifically, it is instructive to appeal to a passage that sets the conception of experience into relation with a number of the important conceptually contiguous Kantian terms. In this case, his Inaugural Dissertation can be used as a terminological starting point for a study of central concepts whose complexity in *KrV* is forbidding:

But in the case of sensible things (*in sensualibus*) and phenomena, that which precedes the logical use of the understanding is called *appearance*, while the reflective cognition, which arises when several appearances are compared by the understanding, is called *experience*. Thus, there is no way from appearance to experience except by reflection in accordance with the logical use of the understanding. The common concepts of experience are called *empirical*, and the objects of experience are called *phenomena*, while the laws both of experience and generally of all sensitive cognition are called laws of phenomena. (2: 394)

There are two crucial features of Kant's concept of experience to be underscored in these definitions. The first concerns the contribution of the subject to the constitution of experience. The second, defined by the role of the notions of *appearance* and *phenomena*, concerns the cognitive content of experience, and is discussed at length below. At the beginning of the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, the first is defined as the "undetermined object of an empirical cognition" (A20/B34). In the *Transcendental Deduction*, another aspect of the concept is provided when, against the background of the general proposition that all "representations, as representations, have their object, and can themselves be objects of other representations in turn," he specifies that appearances are "the only objects that can be given to us immediately," and that intuition is "that in them which is immediately related to the object" (A109). Further helpful specifications are provided in the *The Progress of Metaphysics in Germany*, where Kant describes appearances (in the sense of "the physical appearance, and can be called *appearance*, or seeming") as "intuitions in so far as their *form* depends on the subjective consti-

tution of the senses; the knowledge of which, since it is formed on *a priori* principles of pure intuition, permits a certain and demonstrable science"; as opposed to the "subjective factors which concern the constitution of sense-intuition in regard to its matter, namely sensation, e.g., of bodies in light as color, in sound as tones, or in taste as sour, etc., remains merely subjective, and can provide no knowledge of the object, and thus no generally valid representation in empirical intuition" (20: 268–9). This concept of appearance in an empirical sense is distinguished from the concept of appearance with which Kant begins the Transcendental Dialectic, which can be thought of as appearance in a transcendental sense.⁵⁹ In the context of unmasking dialectical illusion, appearance in a transcendental sense is invoked as a counterpoint to illusion: unlike appearances, illusion is not to be found in the intuited object, but "in the judgment about it insofar as it is thought," *i.e.*, "only in the relation of the object to our understanding" (A293/B350). Appearance, by virtue of its sensible character, must be dissociated from the possibility of error, for "the senses do not err; yet not because they always judge correctly, but because they do not judge at all" (A294/B350). Error and illusion are rather the result of the misuse of the capacity of sensibility, of its employment in actions outside its proper function:

Sensibility, subordinated to the understanding, as the object to which the latter applies its function, is the source of real cognition. But this same sensibility, insofar as it influences the action of the understanding and determines it to judgments, is the ground of error. (A294/B351n)

This transposition of the knot of error in empirical cognition from sensible appearance to the capacity of judgment represents a considerable departure from the philosophical tradition. That Kant was aware of this is made abundantly clear in his published anthropology lectures. In fact, one of the very first topics treated in the text of this course is the relation between sensibility and understanding. As one would expect, it is presented quite differently than it is in the context of the Transcendental Analytic of *KrV*, for example, given the understated importance of discursive modalities in Kant's writings. But despite, indeed perhaps because of this divergence, his remarks from a pragmatic standpoint shed light on a somewhat obscure side of his speculative project. It is particularly important to appreciate the logic of Kant's rejection of the traditional philosophical devalorization of sensibility at the hands of understanding in the context of this reconstruction of Kant's conception of cognitive experience, in the development of which it had a decisive role.

One of the touchstones of Kant's case in defense of sensibility is the nature of appearance. He takes up the point made in *KrV* that appearance "is no judgment, but merely empirical intuition which, through reflection, becomes inner experience and consequently truth" (7: 142). It is the way our sensibility is affected by objects of experience prior to the unifying work of understanding in judging. Kant reasons that since sensibility is not in the business of making judgments, it should not be considered to be even a potential source of error and illusion. In his *Anthropology* lectures, Kant puts the point against a historical-philosophical background. He refers to the entrenched tradition of distinguishing understanding and sensibility as the higher and the lower cognitive faculties that goes back to Plato and continued to his day. As Kant sees it, whereas understanding is "highly esteemed by everyone," sensibility, aside from the praise of "poets and people of good taste," is "in bad repute" (7: 143). He presents his defense of sensibility in a juridical idiom, and justifies it against three indictments: "(1) that it confuses the power of the imagination; (2) that it boasts, and is like a sovereign mistress, stubborn and hard to subdue, whereas it ought to be only the handmaid of understanding; (3) that it is even deceptive, so that we cannot be sufficiently on our guard where it is concerned" (7: 143). The source of the accusations is the passivity of sensibility, which is taken as a fault. In fact, the appropriate attitude toward it is to ensure that "understanding should rule without weakening sensibility (which in itself is like a mob of people since it does not think)" (7: 144). This is the desideratum insofar as the use of understanding in cognition requires sensibility, "without which no materials would be provided" for it to regulate (7: 144).

It is remarkable that Kant singles out the Leibniz-Wolff school as the prominent incarnation of the Platonism responsible for the charges against the sensible. Its "great mistake" came as a result of the failure to draw a distinction between real and logical cognition, and thus to refer only to the form and not the content of thinking, in the assimilation of sensibility to "the obscurity of ideas" and of understanding to "distinctness" (7: 141). While sensibility was associated with indistinctness insofar as it was deemed deficient with respect to "clarity and constituent ideas," the intellect was taken to be a source of distinctness (7: 141). Leibniz is Kant's primary culprit:

As a Platonist, he posited innate, pure perceptions of understanding, called ideas, which are encountered, though only obscurely, in the human mind. By applying our intellectual awareness to the analysis and elucidation of Platonic ideas, we are said to arrive at the cognition of objects as they really are. (7: 141)

Kant presents this understanding of the relation between the intellect and the senses as symptomatic of the tradition. Now, the full degree of the antipathy between the Kantian understanding of the structure of cognitive experience and this Platonic elimination of sensibility as an indispensable source of cognition comes into view in light of the latter's rejection of sensibility not only as a necessary, but also as a possible source of cognition. Sensibility and understanding, according to this conventional conception, are fundamentally opposed factors in the process of cognition: it is sensibility that obscures the ideas that the intellect must analyze and elucidate in order to generate genuine cognition. Kant offers a detailed examination of this received view in opposition to which his own conception of experience is generated by distinguishing three forms of accusation against sensibility; the character of Kant's advocacy in each case illuminates an aspect of the need to which his conception of experience is attending, and thus is in this contest worth rehearsing in detail. To begin, the senses are accused of confusing the imagination. In their defense, Kant suggests that it is understanding that is at fault for a state of confusion, which can be produced by a rash judgment in its ordering of the manifold of sensibility. This is particularly prone to happen in the case of poetic and rhetorical discourse, which present a wealth of sensible material to understanding, and embarrass it "if it tries to clarify and explain all the acts of reflection which it performs, even obscurely, in such a process" (7: 145). From Kant's standpoint, far from being blameworthy for cognitive confusion, sensibility ought "to be esteemed for having presented abundant material to understanding, in comparison to which its abstract concepts are often very paltry indeed" (7: 145; trans.mod). Another indictment against which Kant defends sensibility is that it controls understanding, that "it boasts, and is like a sovereign mistress, stubborn and hard to subdue, whereas it ought to be only the handmaiden of the understanding" (7: 144). Kant submits that, in fact, sensibility gives itself to understanding "only for the sake of being put to work in its service" (7: 145). The "so-called mottoes or oracular outbursts" are not, Kant specifies "dictated directly by the senses" as they seem to be, but "proceed from real, though obscure, deliberations of the understanding" (7: 145). In this passage—one that it would certainly be fruitful to consider in juxtaposition with the discussions of the common understanding in the *KU*—in order to illustrate the relation between the two capacities, Kant likens the senses to "the common people"—distinguished from "the rabble (*ignobile vulgus*)"—who are "happily willing to subordinate themselves to their superior, the understanding, as long as they are listened to" (7: 145). Kant's final defense of sensibility responds to the imputation

of deception, for Kant both the most important and the most vacuous reproach. It is baseless not because our senses do not judge incorrectly, but because they do not judge at all. Since sensibility needs to turn to understanding for vindication, merely subjective appearance can be mistaken for objective experience; but this error is imputable to understanding, not to our senses.

This cognitive vindication of sensibility primarily concerns the sources and the structure of experience. The mistake of philosophically devalorizing sensibility and appearance is the result of a faulty comparison with the intellect, as though some vices of the latter or virtues of the former had been missed. The error is more fundamental. It is based on a misunderstanding of the capacities that issue in experience, which provides that backdrop for Kant's claim that "sensibility is something very positive and an indispensable ingredient of rational ideas for the process of producing cognition" (7: 140). He might have substituted the "and" with a "because": the source of the value of sensibility is the form of experience, in which it has an indispensable function. In its incarnations in the dogmatic rationalism of the 18th century, the Platonic model, one of the products of what Kant had discovered to be a hopeless approach to metaphysics, appearances were construed as imperfect replications of wholly rational ideas. They reflect the way things really are as they seem to us to be, namely, in a necessarily deficient manner, and the familiar Platonic set of oppositions applies here. A similarly misconstrued model informs Cartesian epistemology, namely, one that sets appearances as mental images of corresponding objects that really exist in the world. An important part of the originality of Kantian criticism lies in the insight that an appearance cannot be understood to be a deficient mental version of an ontologically distinct object that exists considered in itself behind or above it. In short, for Kant's practice of criticism, the view that sensibility is an impediment to rational thought is mistaken in principle, not merely due to some rectifiable and contingent error. His defense of sensibility has the effect of undoing the conceptual apparatus upon which the accusations brought against it are made, rather than showing it to be false or inaccurate. This shows them to be unintelligible, which is considerably richer in philosophical implications. Some of these affect Kant's conception of cognition.

b) Kant's Concept of Cognition

It is customary in the literature to appeal to the ordered list of types of representation that concludes a reflection on the need for rigor in the philosophical use of language at the beginning of the Transcendental Dialectic. It runs as follows:

The genus is representation in general (*repraesentatio*). Under it stands the representation with consciousness (*perceptio*). A perception that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is a sensation (*sensatio*); an objective perception is a cognition (*cognitio*). The latter is either an intuition or a concept (*intuitus vel conceptus*). The former is immediately related to the object and is singular; the latter is mediate, by means of a mark, which can be common to several things. A concept is either an empirical or a pure concept, and the pure concept, insofar as it has its origin solely in the understanding (not in a pure image of sensibility), is called *notio*. A concept made up of notions, which goes beyond the possibility of experience, is an idea or a concept of reason. (A320/B376–7)

The appeal to this schema is often a helpful interpretive device, given the complexity of the relation between technical terms in Kant's writings, and his notoriously inconsistent use of them. Indeed, it will be useful in this capacity below, but in the case of the concept of cognition, it raises more questions than it answers. Scrutiny of some of the problems it generates will help to specify the limitations of the classification grid by clarifying of the standpoint from which it is proposed.

To begin, the taxonomy specifies that cognition is objective perception, thus, objective conscious representation. The same division is made in the *Jäsche Logic* lectures, featured prominently at the opening of the Universal doctrine of elements:

All cognitions, that is, all representations related with consciousness to an object, are either *intuitions* or *concepts*. An intuition is a *singular* representation (*repraesentatio singularis*), a concept a universal (*repraesentatio per notas communes*) or *reflected* representation (*repraesentatio discursiva*). (16: 91)

The denomination of two species of cognition, intuition and concept, is confounding. After all, it appears to flatly belie Kant's frequent characterization of the structure of cognition, one identified above as crucial for the isolation of the conditions of the possibility of experience: a cognition is necessarily the product of an intuition and a concept. But everything indicates that Kant is marking the logical possibility of a sort of cognition that is impossible for the human understanding, a sensible, rather than a discursive form of cognition.⁶⁰ This would be a *real* impossibility for the capacities of thought, but one that can function *discursively*, in non-cognitive thought, as a limit case against which to bring the relevant possibilities into focus. In any case, there

does not seem to be another way to make sense of the idea of an intuition as an objective perception, specifically by contrast to a concept. The elaboration that it is singular and relates to an object immediately is of no help in trying to determine how a non-conceptual perception can be objective at all, but rather leaves open the possibility for an intellectual intuition. In addition, it leaves the *equation* of a cognition to either an intuition or to a concept mysterious: it is puzzling that the schema poses that a cognition *is* an intuition or a concept rather than denominating two possible types of cognition, *through* intuition or *through* concepts. After all, in the only sort of cognition of which we are capable, a given cognition is realized only in application to intuition. This may simply reflect the rigidity of the exercise of setting terms into relation formally, but the problem is made more acute if one considers that the definition cited from the *Jäsche Logic* concludes by specifying that “cognition through concepts is called *thought* (*cognitio discursiva*)” (16: 91). Kant makes the same claim is made in *KrV* (“Thinking is cognition through concepts”), followed by the qualification that concepts, “as predicates of possible judgments, are related to some representation of a still undetermined object” (A69/B94). Since *thought*, as discussed in detail below, is not in itself a determining capacity, by its own function it does not issue in the constitution of an object: as a discursive mechanism, thinking is not strictly *objective* cognition, and objective cognition is what is explicitly at stake in the table of types of representation. Ordinarily, one might speculate that Kant is simply using the term in a looser sense in this context. But in this case, such an interpretation is not sustainable: the hierarchy of representations specifies that cognition is objective perception. In any case, the crucial distinction is the terminologically unproblematic contrast between cognition as objective perception, and cognition that “refers to the subject as a modification of its state.”

According to the considered use of the term,⁶¹ cognition is a type of representation that requires the actualization of understanding, the source of spontaneous mental activity. The action of thought’s spontaneity is called *synthesis*, “the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition,” that is, the function through which the manifold given in the forms of intuition is “gone through, taken up, and combined in a certain way in order for a cognition to be made out of it” (A77/B102). Cognitions, properly speaking, are only produced when the understating brings the synthesis of the manifold to concepts (see A78/B103). Kant dissects this mechanism into three stages:

Different representations are brought under one concept analytically (a business treated by general logic). Transcendental logic, however, teaches

how to bring under concepts not the representations but the pure synthesis of representations. The first thing that must be given to us *a priori* for the cognition of all objects is the manifold of pure intuition; the synthesis of this manifold by means of the imagination is the second thing, but it still does not yield cognition. The concepts that give this pure synthesis unity, and that consist solely in the representation of this necessary synthetic unity, are the third thing necessary for cognition of an object that comes before us, and they depend on the understanding. (A78–9/B104)

Cognition is a process that issues in a unification of the synthesized manifold, that is, it requires the employment of the categories.⁶² This aspect of the concept comes into greater focus in light of the structural similarity that cognition bears to judgment in Kant's critical framework. In this respect, Kant retains the contours of a Wolffian conception of cognition, namely, as the agreement of the predicate and the subject of a judgment; this is one of the implications of Kant's familiar claim: "The same function that gives unity to the different representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations in an intuition, which, expressed generally, is called the pure concept of the understanding" (A79/B104–5). Understanding, in Kant's formulation, "by means of the very same actions," both brings the forms of judgments under concepts by analysis and brings the manifold of the forms of intuition ("transcendental content") under concepts ("its representations") by synthesis. This is part of what is involved in Kant's declaration that we can "trace all actions of the understanding back to judgments, so that the understanding in general can be represented as a faculty for judging" (A69/B94). It goes without saying that the role of judgment in critical idealism is far too complex to be adequately addressed in such a brief characterization. From what has been said, however, it will probably not come as a surprise that the account of the form of judgment provided by logicians is, from Kant's standpoint, vacuous if considered as a description of the form of real cognition; in defining it as "the relation between two concepts," such accounts give no indication of the type of relation involved. By contrast, Kant maintains that a judgment is "nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception" (B141), that is, that relates our representation to an object; the function of the copula in a judgment is to distinguish this objective unity from the subjective, which is dependent upon contingent association of representations. Thus, according to Kant, a judgment is "a relation that is objectively valid, and that is sufficiently distinguished from the relation of these same representations in

which there would be only subjective validity, e.g., in accordance with the law of association” (B142).⁶³ The former finds its source only in understanding.

The capacity to understand, for Kant, “can make no other use of [. . .] concepts than that of judging by means of them” (A68/B93). In conjunction with the fact that intuition is the only representation that pertains to the object, Kant reasons, it follows that “a concept is thus never immediately related to an object, but is always related to some other representation of it (whether that be an intuition or itself already a concept)” (A68/B93). He concludes that judgment is “the mediate cognition of an object, hence the representation of the representation of it” (A68/B93). Together, this sequence of marks outlines a standpoint from which experience, cognition and judgment not only have a common structure, but serve as descriptions, from different aspects, of a single process of constitution, namely, of objects. Another aspect of the description can be generated from the implications of Kant’s version of the opposition between form and matter.

c) Form and Matter

The distinction between form and matter is so closely tied to the structure of Kant’s criticism that it can be applied as an analytical frame at virtually every stage. Kant goes so far as to declare that:

These are two concepts that ground all other reflection, so inseparably are they bound up with every use of the understanding. The former signifies the determinable in general, the latter its determination (both in the transcendental sense, since one abstracts from all the differences in what is given and from the way in which that is determined). (A266/B322)

He details some of these uses of understanding. In judgments, the given concepts are “the logical matter (for judgment)” and “their relation (by means of the copula)” is the form. (A266/B322). In beings, the “components (*essentialia*) are the matter” and “the way that they are connected in a thing, the essential form” (A267/B323). In things in general, “unbounded reality” is “the matter of all possibility” and its limitation (negation) is the form “through which one thing is distinguished from another in accordance with transcendental concepts” (A267/B323).

Determination is the defining act of the capacity to judge, and thus of cognition and experience.⁶⁴ Examination of its function in Kant’s conception of cognition makes the implications of the relation between form and matter

clear. The capacity to understand, according to Kant, “demands first that something be given (at least in the concept) in order to be able to determine it in a certain way,” such that “in the concept of pure understanding matter precedes form” (A267/B323). However, unlike Leibniz, Kant holds that “it is only in sensible intuitions that we determine all objects merely as appearances,” and that “the form of intuition (as subjective constitution of sensibility), precedes all matter (the sensations),” consequently, for Kant, “space and time precede all appearances and all *data* of appearances, and instead first make the latter possible” (A267/B323 trans.mod). The Transcendental Aesthetic demonstrated that sensible intuition is “an entirely peculiar subjective condition” that “grounds all perception *a priori*” and since its form is original, it “is given for itself alone” (A268/B324). Although when one considers the question from the standpoint of mere concepts (purely logically), matter must serve as the ground of *a priori* perception, when considered objectively, “their possibility presupposes a formal intuition (of space and time) as given” (A268/B324).

With respect to the objects of experience or empirical cognition, the distinction between matter and form divides what is given by the affection of the senses from the contribution of the capacities of the mind. The structure is laid-out plainly in the *Inaugural Dissertation*:

In a representation of sense there is, first of all, something which you might call the *matter*, namely, the *sensation*, and there is also something which may be called the *form*, the *aspect* [*configuration*] namely of sensible things which arises according as the various things which affect the senses are coordinated by a certain natural law of the mind. (2: 392)

Consequently, on this model, experience consists of “two very heterogeneous elements,” namely, matter for cognition from the senses, and form for ordering it from the inner source or pure intuiting and thinking. In the order of the determination of cognition, the senses are used to “bring forth concepts” (A86/B118). This formal element of sensible experience is explored, of course, in the Transcendental Aesthetic of *KrV*. There Kant maintains that “that in the appearance which corresponds to sensation its matter, but that which allows the manifold of appearance to be ordered in certain relations I call the form of appearance” (A20/B34). He reasons that, since “that within which the sensations can alone be ordered and placed in a certain form cannot itself be in turn sensation,” it follows that “the matter of all appearance is only given to us *a posteriori*, but its form must all lie ready in the mind *a priori*, and cannot therefore be considered separately from all sensation”

(A20/B34). This form of intuition corresponds to “the subjective constitution of our mind” (A23/B38).⁶⁵ The task of the subject in the constitution of experience is to turn unorganized sensation into objective form.

In *KrV*, this basic pair of associations remains in place, but it is complicated by the introduction of a second dimension of formality. The concept of an intelligible form is introduced to accompany the concept of a sensible form analyzed in the *Inaugural Dissertation*. If, Kant writes, “I leave out all intuition, then there still remains the form of thinking, *i.e.*, the way of determining an object for the manifold of a possible intuition” (A354/B309). It follows that everything in intuitive cognition “contains nothing but mere relations” (A49/B66). Kant describes the function in terms of relations, explaining that “through mere relations”—that is, through the activities of the capacities of the mind considered in abstraction from what the activity acts upon—“no thing in itself is cognized,” and since nothing is given to us in intuition other than “representations of relation,” the forms of intuition can contain in their representations “only the relation of an object to a subject, and not that which is internal to the object in itself” (A49/B67). Consciousness of the sensible representations that comprise “the proper material with which we occupy the mind” is preceded in experience by the forms of intuition, which ground “the way in which we place them in mind as a formal condition” (A49/B67). But more than this is required for objective experience. This qualitatively different component, in Kant’s terms, “the combination (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general” (which can “never come to us through the senses, and therefore cannot already be contained in the pure form of sensible intuition,” because “it is an act of the spontaneity of the power of representation”) (B129–130). All combination is “an action of the understanding,” that Kant calls synthesis: “we can represent nothing as combined in the object without having previously combined it ourselves, and that among all representations *combination* is the only one that is not given through objects but can be executed only by the subject itself, since it is an act of its self-activity” (B129–130).

Within this frame of reference, the basic forms of intuition are space and time, and the basic forms of thinking are the categories, the pure concepts of understanding. As far as their origin is concerned, since the latter “are not grounded on sensibility,” like the former, they “seem to allow an application extended beyond all objects of the senses” (B305). Since, however, they are “nothing other than forms of thought, which contain merely the logical capacity for unifying the manifold given in intuition in a consciousness *a priori*,” so that if the only sensible intuition possible for us is removed, “they have even less significance than those pure sensible forms,

through which at least an object is given, whereas a kind of combination of the manifold that is proper to our understanding signifies nothing at all if that intuition in which alone the manifold can be given is not added to it" (B305–6). The two dimensions of the form of experience, the two types of mental capacities, are therefore both indispensable to its production.

It is a fundamental feature of Kant's criticism that both of these formal dimensions are necessary to the structure of all possible experience. Kant expresses this insight in terms of the sources of cognitive experience:

Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the capacity to cognize an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is given to us, through the latter it is thought in relation to that representation (as a mere determination of the mind). (A50/B74)

This duality of conceptual sources generates a complexity in the form of experience. The determination of the matter of human experience can only occur by the actualization of the two basic mental capacities, sensibility and understanding, that define this structure:

With us understanding and sensibility can determine an object only in combination. If we separate them, then we have intuitions without concepts, or concepts without intuitions, but in either case representations that we cannot relate to any determinate object. (A258/B313–4)

Intuition and concepts, in other words, "constitute the elements of all our cognition," such that "neither concepts without intuition corresponding to them in some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition" (A51/B75). Consequently, "there are two conditions under which alone the cognition of an object is possible: first, intuition, through which it is given, but only as appearance; second, concept, through which an object is thought that corresponds to this intuition" (A93/B125). This division of labor is a necessary condition for the constitution of all possible experience. Kant puts it in terms of unity:

Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. It is just as necessary to make the mind's concepts sensible (i.e., to add an object to them in intuition) as it is to make intuitions understandable (i.e., to

bring them under concepts). . . . Only from their unification can cognition arise. (A51/B75)

This represents a major shift in the history of metaphysics, particularly with respect to the nature of cognition and the relation between the mind—that is, the privileged unit of relations of thought—and the world it unifies. The contribution of the senses is now positive, thoroughly integrated into the structure of cognition as an indispensable formal dimension. This extension of the form from strictly understanding or the intellect to include sensibility as a full-fledged rational capacity of the mind generates a doubling of the form in Kant's conception of cognition, so that in any given intuition, it is possible to isolate not only the discursive form (schematized concepts), but also its sensible form (space and time). This corresponds to the tracing of cognition to two basic unifying capacities of thought that structure Kant's criticism of pure reason.

VI. ON WHAT IS REALLY POSSIBLE

This exposition of Kantian criticism began by presenting a way of understanding the motivation and development of a new sort of questioning: one not based on the issue of the how we know that objects exist independently of our mental representations of them, but on the problem of the conditions of our cognition of objects, of what our mental capacities must be in order for the experience of the real to be possible. This issues in a transposition of the question of the ground of the relation between an *object* and its *representation* from the problem of the existence of the object to the problem of the conditions of the subject's experience of the object. Within this framework, the present reconstruction of Kant's criticism has underscored the relation between capacities of thought and the experience they form, which poses the question of the character of the possibility of the real in this context.

A basic critical insight at work in Kant's writings from the time of some of his earliest publications is that Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics cannot account for the fact that we make principled judgments that are not based on the principle of contradiction. He accommodated this other form of judgment by introducing a distinction between the *logical* and the *real* grounds of judgments. Kant's own interest in the concept of the possible and its relation to the principle of non-contradiction proceeds in this direction; these concerns are present in Kant's thought from the time of *NE*, in which they played a prominent role. The essay undertakes to discover "the first principles of our cognition," in the process of which it throws into question "the supreme and undoubted primacy

of the principle of contradiction over all truths" (1: 387).⁶⁶ The sources of the conception of possibility that functions in Kant's critical work are most clearly present in *The Only Possible Argument*, in which Kant develops a conception of possibility whose elements remain important in the context of the framework of criticism. In this work, like in the Postulates of empirical thinking in *KrV*, Kant shows that an existing thing contains nothing more than a possible thing, when considered in relation to its objective content. When the thing is possible, this objective content is posed only relatively, while it is posed absolutely when the thing is actual. In the general context of criticizing ontological proofs for the existence of God, Kant argues that possibility presupposes existence.⁶⁷ In the course of doing so, he introduces the crucial distinction between real and logical (or external and internal) possibility:

Anything which is self-contradictory is internally impossible. . . . [T]he impossible always contains the combination of something posited with something that also cancels it. I call this repugnancy the formal element in inconceivability or impossibility. The material element which is given here as standing in such a conflict is itself something and can be thought. . . . The impossibility based simply on the logical relations that exist between one thinkable thing and another, where one cannot be a characteristic mark of the other. Likewise, in every possibility we must first distinguish the agreement of what is thought in it with the law of contradiction. . . . The agreement, however, of the one with the other, in accordance with the law of contradiction, is the formal element in possibility, for the comparison of the predicates with their subjects, according to the rule of truth, is nothing other than a logical relation. The something, or that which stands in this agreement, is sometimes called the real element of possibility. (2: 77)

The impossibility that nothing exists is not based on the principle of contradiction, but on the denial of all thinkable objective content. Thus, for Kant, what "has to be shown of all possibility in general and of each possibility in particular is that it presupposes something real" (2: 79). He develops the point in terms of a distinction between a formal element and a material element: "possibility disappears not only when an internal contradiction, as the logical element of impossibility, is present, but also where there exists no material element, no *datum*, to be thought," in which case "nothing is given which can be thought," and "everything possible is something which can be thought" (2: 77). From the point of this distinction, Kant argues that "the means by which the material element, the data, of all that is possible is

cancelled, is also the means by which all possibility is negated,” since this is effected by the cancellation of all existence, Kant concludes that “when all existence is denied, then all possibility is cancelled as well,” and consequently, “it is absolutely impossible that nothing at all should exist” (2: 79).

Largely in continuity with this earlier treatment, Kant’s critical framework implies a conception of possibility that is not exhausted by that of the negation of contradiction. In *KrV*, possibility is a category of modality, and its empirical application is discussed in the Postulates of Empirical Thinking. It is defined as that which agrees with “the formal conditions of experience (in accordance with intuition and concepts)” (A218/B265). In his copy of the first edition of *KrV*, Kant notes that its concept “can be given in a corresponding intuition.”⁶⁸ As a category of modality, it does not “augment the concept” to which it is applied, but merely designates “the relation to the faculty of cognition” (A219/B266). It is “a positing of a thing in relation to the understanding” in its empirical use (A234–5\B287n).

These textual elements give some indication of the complexity of Kant’s reflection on the modality of possibility, and of the implications of its distinction from the principle of contradiction. Whereas a *concept*, Kant writes, “is always possible if it does not contradict itself,” this is “the logical mark of its possibility,” the fact that a concept is non-contradictory “falls short of proving the possibility of its object” (A597/B625n, A597/B625).⁶⁹ Indeed, according to Kant, “the possibility of a thing can never be proved merely through the non-contradictoriness of a concept of it,” for “even if there is no contradiction within our judgment, it can nevertheless combine concepts in a way not entailed by the object,” so that “it can still be either false or groundless” (A252/B308; A150/B189–190). The possibility of an object can only be established “by vouching for it with an intuition corresponding to this concept” (A252/B308). This is the surplus of the possibility of an object (real possibility) in relation to the possibility of a concept (logical possibility).⁷⁰ Now, to say that the relevant sense of possibility is to be guaranteed by “vouching for it” with a corresponding intuition, amounts to affirming that what is possible coincides with what can be cognitively experienced.⁷¹ In other words, the form of experience or cognition, at the level of both the sensible and the discursive, dictates what is really possible (*i.e.*, what is possible as an empirical object). To be sure, the non-contradiction is a necessary, negative condition of all judgment, otherwise, Kant reasons, “these judgments in themselves (even without regard to the object) are nothing” (A150/B189). However, the absence of contradiction is not sufficient to guarantee cognition: “even if there is no contradiction within our judgment, it can nevertheless combine concepts in a way not

entailed by the object, or even without any ground being given to us either *a priori* or *a posteriori* that would justify such a judgment, and thus, for all that a judgment may be free of any internal contradiction, it can still be either false or groundless" (A150/B189–190).

From whence will one derive the character of the possibility of an object that is thought by means of a synthetic *a priori* concept, if not from the synthesis that constitutes the form of the empirical cognition of objects? That in such a concept no contradiction must be contained is, to be sure, a necessary logical condition; but it is far from sufficient for the objective reality of the concept, i.e., for the possibility of such an object as is thought through a concept. (A221/B268)

Thus, "a pure use of the category is possible," in the sense that it does not necessarily contradict itself, but as such "it has no objective validity," in as much as "it pertains to no intuition that would thereby acquire unity of the object"; categories are merely functions of thinking "through which no object is given to me, but rather only that through which what may be given in intuition is thought" (A253). Kant offers the example of the concept of a figure enclosed between two straight lines. Here although there is no contradiction, "the concepts of two straight lines and their intersection contain no negation of a figure," the figure is impossible nonetheless: its impossibility "rests not on the concept in itself, but on its construction in space, i.e., on the conditions of space and its determinations" (A221/B268). These have objective reality, "they pertain to possible things, because they contain in themselves *a priori* the form of experience in general" (A221/B268).

In his *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, Kant provides another example of the necessity and insufficiency of non-contradiction in the proof of real possibility:

Yet the fact that there is nothing contradictory in my concept of God only proves the *logical possibility* of the concept, that is, the possibility of forming the concept in my understanding. For a self-contradictory concept is no concept at all. But if I am to give objective reality to my concept and prove that there actually exists an object corresponding to my concept—more is surely required than the fact that there is nothing in my concept that contradicts itself. For how can a concept which is logically possible, merely in its logical possibility, constitute at the same time the real possibility of an object? For this, not only an analytic judgment is required, but also a synthetic one.⁷²

Non-contradiction is an analytic principle of possibility, which establishes whether a concept is possible or impossible, as Kant puts it, “with apodictic certainty,” but it is not synthetic, and “by means of it we cannot prove at all whether or not the predicates of a thing would cancel each other in the thing itself” (p. 56). The synthesis of predicates in an object cannot be cognized through the principle contradiction, which comes only “from an insight into the constitution and range of each predicate as regards its operations” (p. 56). Kant applies this implication of the concept of possibility as of a synthetic judgment as follows:

That is, *I must be able to know that the effects of the realities do not cancel one another.* For instance, decisiveness and caution are both realities, but their effects are often of such a kind that one cancels the other. Now I have no capacity to judge a priori whether the realities combined in the concept of God cancel each other in their effects, and hence I cannot establish the possibility of my concept directly. But on the other hand, I may also be sure that no human being could ever prove its impossibility. (p. 47; my emp.)

In order to explore the content of this claim, it is worth noting the structural parallel between the analytic—synthetic *a priori* contrast of types of judgments, the distinction between general and transcendental logic, and the one between logical and real possibility as modal functions. These associations become especially perspicuous in the *Analytic of Principles*. In the section “On the supreme principle of all synthetic judgments,” for example, Kant emphasizes that while general logic is in no way concerned with the problem of synthetic *a priori* judgments, “in a transcendental logic it is the most important business of all” (A154/B193). In fact, Kant reasons, since it is by establishing their possibility—“the conditions and the domain of their validity”—that transcendental logic “can fully satisfy its goal of determining the domain and boundaries of pure understanding,” one can conclude that the examination of such judgment is its “only business” (A154/B193). Unlike analytic judgments where one remains within the concept, when making a synthetic judgment, one must “go beyond the given concept in order to compare it with something entirely different from what is thought in relation to it” (A154–5/B193–4). Thus this relation is “never one of either identity, or contradiction,” nor one that contains the truth or the error of the judgment.

According to Kant, a relation of “sense and significance in regard to that object” is a condition of the objective reality of its cognition (A155/

B195). A condition of being related to an object and to have empirical content is that “the object must be able to be given in some way,” otherwise, “the concepts are empty,” and through them one has “thought but not in fact cognized anything through this thinking, but rather merely played with representations” (A155/B195). For Kant, an object is given, in the sense of being “exhibited immediately in intuition,” when its representation is related to a possible experience; it is the latter, therefore, “that gives all our cognitions *a priori* objective reality” (A156/B195). Possible experience is grounded on, Kant specifies, “the general rules of unity in the synthesis of appearances,” and as such, since it is “the only kind of cognition that gives all other synthesis reality” (A157/B196). He concludes by formulating the supreme principle of all synthetic judgments as: “Every object stands under the necessary conditions of the synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition in a possible experience” (A158/B197). The same thought can be expressed, when these necessary conditions are laid out either as, in terms of “the formal conditions of *a priori* intuition, the synthesis of the imagination, and its necessary unity in a transcendental apperception,” or in term of “[t]he conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of the objects of experience, and on this account have objective validity in a synthetic judgment *a priori*” (A158/B197). The implication for the concept of possibility at hand is that what is really—as opposed to merely logically—possible, is determined by the form that regulates possible experience. What is possible is not only that which does not contradict itself, but that which is determined by the necessary conditions of the synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition. Unless, in other words, a representation is regulated by the forms of intuition, the pure concepts of understanding, and their unity in apperception, it is really impossible, it is not a real possibility, that is, it is nothing as *nihil privatum*, part of a “rhapsody of perceptions,” an “occupation with a mere figment of the brain” (A156–7/B195–6). As noted above, Kant associates the objective *reality* of cognitions with their availability to be cognized, as opposed to being merely thought by us. A helpful way to explore the particularity of the concept of *real* possibility and its relation to logical possibility is through the distinction often drawn by Kant between *thought* and *cognition*.

Important elements of the contrast are provided in the Preface to the second edition of *KrV*. In order to clarify his claim that although we can *cognize* things as objects of appearance, we can *think* them as they are in themselves, Kant offers the following note:

To cognize an object, it is required that I be able to prove its possibility (whether by the testimony of experience from its actuality or *a priori* through reason). But I can *think* whatever I like, as long as I do no contradict myself, *i.e.*, as long as my concept is a possible thought, even if I cannot give any assurance whether or not there is a corresponding object somewhere within the sum total of all possibilities. But in order to ascribe objective validity to such a concept (real possibility, for the first sort of possibility was merely logical) something more is required. (Bxxvi n.)

Given this correlation between cognition and establishment of real possibility, on the one hand, and thought and logical possibility, on the other, the examination of Kant's accounts of the contrast between the former of both, in order to grasp the stakes and the functioning of the "something more required"—the objective content, or the sense and significance of the experience—will help to bring the import of the distinction between logical and real possibility into focus.

The description of the framework involved recorded in the *Vigilantius* metaphysics lectures is exceedingly clear and worth reproducing at length:

All of our cognition consists of concepts, and of intuition. Intuition *gives* objective reality to the concept, *i.e.*, without intuition each concept falls under the suspicion that it is empty. Therefore if it is indeed a thought, but the object cannot be given for it in intuition, then one says of it: it lacks objective reality: here however it does not necessarily matter that the object is sensibly exhibited, but rather only that its exhibition is possible. Intuition allows the object to be cognized, and underlying it is immediate representation of this object; the features which are abstracted by intuition give the representation mediately which the concept includes and through which the object is cognized.

Though the concept the object is *thought*: now if I could not impute any object to the concept, then I can still think the concept, but this thinking itself does not yet give any cognition, because it lacks objective reality, it must have intuition added to it, and only then does it have objective reality and can be cognized. Cognition is thus as little possible without intuition as it is acquired through intuition alone (29: 967).

It will prove apt to juxtapose these markers with a passage from the second edition *Deduction of KrV*, in which Kant draws the distinction in question in reference to the structure of cognition:

To *think* of an object and to *cognize* an object are thus not the same. For two components belong to cognition: first, the concept, through which an object is thought at all (the category), and second, the intuition, through which it is given; for if an intuition corresponding to the concept could not be given at all, then it would be a thought as far as its form is concerned, but without any object, and by its means no cognition of anything at all would be possible, since, as far as I would know, nothing would be given nor could be given to which my thought could be applied. (B146)

Kant thinks of the activity of thinking both as a stage in the activity of cognition, namely, the one whereby concepts take in objects from the forms of intuition, and as an autonomous activity of subjective discursive judgment.⁷³

In short, although the actualization of both capacities is indispensable for the production of cognition, the two are not perfectly balanced in the form they comprise. With respect to the possible usefulness for us of one without the other, and the possibility of so much as being usable independently of the other, thought without intuition has clear advantages over intuition without thought. The latter, merely a theoretical supposition, Kant describes in detail:

Unity of synthesis in accordance with empirical concepts would be entirely contingent, and, were it not grounded on a transcendental ground of unity, it would be possible for a swarm of appearances to fill up our soul without experience ever being able to arise from it. But in that case all relation of cognition to objects would also disappear, since the appearances would lack connection in accordance with universal and necessary laws, and would thus be intuition without thought, but never cognition, and would therefore be as good as nothing for us. (A111)

This passage calls attention to an area of indeterminacy concerning the conditions of the possibility of thought, between the merely logical functions of judgment and the categories (*i.e.*, concerning what constitutes a “possible thought”). It is difficult to determine whether there is a relevant Kantian distinction to be drawn between: the principle of non-contradiction, the basic logical functions, and the pure concepts of understanding (*i.e.*, the minimal conditions of real possibility, and whether it is categories or merely logical functions that are used in thinking, if and when

thought is regulated only by the principle of non-contradiction (logical possibility)). This indeterminacy can be sharpened by comparing Kant's marginal note at A235/B294—"We can only think *noumena*, not cognize them"⁷⁴—with the following passage from the *Prolegomena*:

. . . even the pure concepts of the understanding have no significance at all if they depart from objects of experience and want to be referred to things in themselves (*noumena*). They serve as it were only to spell out appearances, so that they can be read as experience; the principles that arise from their relation to the sensible world serve our understanding for use in experience only; beyond this there are arbitrary connections without objective reality whose possibility cannot be cognized *a priori* and whose relation to objects cannot, through any example, be confirmed or even made intelligible . . . (4: 313)

This description of the character of non-sensible thought, of thought beyond experience, suggests not only that cognition of the non-sensible is structurally impossible, but also that objective thinking is possible only in the context of sensible experience, and thus that thought not conditioned by subjective formal factors is void of rational content: it consists of "arbitrary connections" whose relation to objects cannot be "confirmed or even made intelligible." This, of course, appears to be in tension with the possibility of moral objects and of contentful thought about the non-sensible to which Kant's practical philosophy is committed, and indeed that must be admitted in order to make sense of one of the very general aims of criticism, namely, to secure a space of reasoning for practical matters outside the realm of cognition.

However indeterminate, his examination of the distinction between real and logical possibility can be exploited to draw attention to two aspects of the conception of the form of experience that was discussed in the previous section. On the one hand, the constitutive unity of the form: just as experience necessarily is a cooperation of form (subjective activity) and matter (given sense stuff), the form of experience is itself necessarily a cooperation of form (spontaneity in understanding) and matter (intuition in receptivity); what we have direct access to is always a compound of this heterogeneity, we can get at its part for theoretical purposes only by abstracting from what is a unit and is separable only as part of a methodological process of postulation that aims to establish something indirectly, on the basis that something else, which is available directly, depends upon it. On the other hand, Kant is careful to point out that the capacities of thought that generate the form of experience cannot be used to any other purpose, this exhausts their function,

they cannot be used in the formation of anything else. This is significant in considering the ontological status of the formal (or the subjective, the *a priori*, etc.) in the practice of criticism. The feature of the discursive and sensible capacities that issues in the structure of experience that has just been underscored, the exclusivity of the employment in the formation of our experience, lends credence and adds a further dimension to a functional understanding of Kant's conception of the mind as a complex of capacities: their only mode of existence is to function as actual forms that define possible experience; there are no functions of the mind, in other words, outside their actualizations in experience; their only reality is always already bound up in their forming activities.

VII. CONCLUSION

These five regulating segments of Kant's practice of criticism coalesce around the aim of determining the possibilities of objective experience and cognition. Once thought is shaken into the recognition of the need for criticism, it undertakes a movement of thought that proceeds from what is given in experience to the dimension of thought that Kant describes in terms of a complex of capacities and the units of its exercise: sensibility, understanding, imagination, reason, and principles, laws, rules, concepts and forms of intuition. Through the exercise of these functions in a simultaneously spontaneous and receptive activity, this dimension is responsible for forming objects in experience and cognition by taking up and organizing the empirical matter of reality to which we would otherwise have no access. Thus, the topography of this dimension defines what is possible in objective experience, it determines what can and what cannot appear and be known as an object. In his analysis of discursive practices, Foucault revives this movement of reasoning, and integrates it into a historical frame of reference, not in relation to objective experience as such, but in relation to historically and culturally local practices and the forms of experience they deploy. The following exposition of Foucault's conceptual practice shows how this transposition of Kantian criticism allows his studies to determine forms of experience in history, and their respective possible objects, the field of statements that appear as candidates for truth-or-falsity.

Nietzsche and the Critical Need to Wake Up

I. DRAMATIZATION

Sparce as it is, Kant's recollection of his thought's rude awakening from the dreams of metaphysics remains one of our few buoyant philosophical myths.¹ The story of his encounter with Hume's skepticism serves as the guiding image of the need for skeptical arousal in Kant's practice of criticism. While he does not theorize it as such, on at least one occasion Foucault presented an adaptation of this Kantian myth. In many ways, like Kant's recollection, his story is merely a threadbare dramatization of the event in thought that indispensably inaugurates practicing criticism. Partly for this reason, however, it serves as a helpful figure. It provides a configuration of images with which to schematize the critical function of skepticism in Foucault, and serves as a guiding thread for the assessment of Kant's distinctive mark on this aspect of his way of thinking.

Foucault tells the story in the course of a 1965 interview with Alain Badiou, one in a series of radio and television programs on pedagogy. The series focused on the relation between philosophy and psychology, and was followed by an extraordinarily illuminating round-table discussion that in addition to Foucault featured three giants of post-war French philosophy: Paul Ricœur, Georges Canguilhem, and Jean Hyppolite.² When asked what he would teach philosophy students about psychology in the one-on-one interview, Foucault narrates the steps of an imagined pedagogical technique—a reprise of Kant's Hume myth.

Suspending the primacy of the aural implied by the metaphorical space of Kant's recollection, our raconteur professor privileges the visual, telling us that he would begin by finding a mask, the mask that would transform his ordinary physiognomy as much as possible. This way, his students would not recognize him on the basis of what he looked like (although they would

surely know that he was *masked*, whoever he was). Then, with the stagy camp of, as he puts it, “Anthony Perkins in Psycho” (presumably when Perkins is doing Norman being Mrs. Bates), the masked pedagogue speaks in an affected voice, so that none of the vocal distinctiveness of his form of expression would be conveyed (although it would be clear that the voice was a *fake*, whoever was faking it). In this disguise, he introduces the students to the techniques of contemporary psychology: laboratory, social psychological, and psychoanalytic methods. In the second half of the class, he explains that he would remove the mask, recover his own voice, and assume a philosophical standpoint. From this standpoint, the students would encounter psychology, in Foucault’s formulation, “as a sort of absolutely inevitable and absolutely fatal impasse in which Western thought found itself in the 19th century.” In Foucault’s story, this fact would not function as a criticism of psychology as a science, but rather as an indication of a broad historical-conceptual transformation in Western thought. Thus he proposes that there had been “a sort of anthropological slumber in which philosophy and the sciences of man, as it were, fascinated and lulled each other to sleep, and that one must *wake up* from this anthropological slumber, like in the past one woke up from dogmatic slumber.”³ In Foucault’s classroom scenario, this arousal is provoked by the unmasking of a discourse, not to denounce it as illusory or deceptive, but to juxtapose it with a discourse of a different form. The story shows how experiencing an unmasking can function as the schema for the experience of shock that may be produced on contact with the sort of formal, conceptual, structural difference that in the context of Kant’s criticism generated the need to distinguish the standpoint that considers what appears as it appears from the one that considers what appears in abstraction from its appearing.

Much like the parallel moment in Kant, Foucault’s story illustrates the process of occasioning or attending to the sort of dispute that can only be resolved by dissolving what seems to be in contention. For Foucault, this occurs through a recognition made possible from the new standpoint opened by the disrupting shock. In this case, Foucault occasions a contest between two apparently inconsistent historical forms of experience (psychology and philosophy), only to resolve it by dissolving their object of dispute (*i.e.*, the category of man and the hypostasis of the relation of subjectivity in the formation of experience), in order to arouse our awareness of the conceptual (historical, cultural) contingency of our experience. Like the Kantian myth, Foucault’s imaginative projection provides both an image in relation to which to grasp the significance of this form of skepticism for criticism and an orientation for a more comprehensive treatment of this aspect of the form of thought. Foucault’s strategy of unmasking himself as he takes up his own

voice to carry the critical historical discourse displays the grip of psychology in so far as it aims to generate the sort of shock recalled by Kant at the point of contact of his metaphysics with Hume's skepticism. What Foucault calls an anthropological slumber is a contemporary actualisation of the dogmatic standpoint in Kant: the mark of the failure to exercise criticism.

This illustrates Foucault's tendency to express his diagnosis of the epistemological predicament of contemporary culture in general in terms of the dominance of the anthropological. Throughout his writings, the category serves as the organizing principle of the contemporary and the most immediate source of the methodological need for a device of skeptical shock. Foucault uses the term "anthropology" technically, to denote a particular form of thought and a particular moment in the history of discursive practices. In the 1965 interview with Badiou, he specifies that his use of the term "anthropology" does not designate "the particular science that is called anthropology and that is the study of cultures outside our own," but rather "the properly philosophical structure that makes it such that the problems of philosophy are all brought into the domain that can be called human finitude."⁴ The historical fact of the aporetic situation of psychology that Foucault refers to in his pedagogical narrative is symptomatic of this state of contemporary thought, one that Foucault describes as a conceptual configuration that has been regulating discursive practices since the end of the 18th century. For Foucault, the aim of seeing and thinking things anew by considering them in relation to their form in its contingency is ultimately tied to understanding subjectivity as a type of relation that is determined by fluctuating historically determined factors. This is a goal that defines the skeptical aspect of the form of Foucault's thinking at every stage of his work, within each of the fields of analysis he occupies. A moment of transparent simplicity on Foucault's part is captured in an American campus journal (*The Campus Report*) a decade and a half after the pedagogy interview that was omitted from the subsequent English version:

It is dangerous, in my view, to consider identity and subjectivity as deep and natural components that are not determined by political and social factors. We must liberate ourselves from the type of subjectivity that psychoanalysts deal with, that is, psychological subjectivity. We are prisoners of certain conceptions of ourselves and of our conduct. We must liberate our subjectivity, our relation to ourselves.⁵

Talk of liberation seems only a slight declination away from talk of freedom, which when considered in relation to Foucault's analysis of relations of power and discourse, generates intractable difficulties for even some of the most

capable and imaginative of Foucault's critics.⁶ In fact, Foucault's use of the term "freedom" is indistinguishable from the term "liberate" (*libérer*), his technical use of *dégager* in the military sense of the word ("to relieve," as in "relieve the troops" or "relieve an on-duty officer who is suspended for misconduct"). The matter is undoubtedly too complex to be adequately treated here, but if the question of the character of the liberation involved in 'the liberation of our relation to ourselves' is suspended momentarily, Foucault's warning here can be translated into the stipulation of a condition of possibility of such liberating. Indeed, the identification of our pre-reflective sense of the inevitable primacy of subjectivity in experience as the manifestation of a historically and culturally specific conception of subjectivity (psychological subjectivity), which belongs to a local conceptual configuration (the anthropological), for Foucault, conditions the aims of preserving an indeterminacy in the relation of subjectivity that leaves it open for alternative conceptions, when subjectivity is understood as the name for a type of relation, namely, the order of relations one bears to oneself. The masking of a discourse in order to unmask it as anthropological, that in Foucault's story is performed prior to locating it diachronically, can be understood as part of a strategy to generate the distance from oneself required to recognize the possibility that what is perceived as the universal and absolute necessities of thought is in fact a more or less proximate need. This need is generated in the form of conceptual configurations that condition a historically and culturally limited sphere of experience: a particular form of thought that in the present privileges psychological subjectivity and human finitude.

The question is addressed in detail below, but provisionally speaking, Foucault accounts for the need for violence and shock in the disruption of thought by appeal to consideration of a method concerning the historical proximity of the forms of experience under description. In an interview for publication in the French weekly literary journal *Les Lettres françaises* in 1966, for example, Foucault captures the relevant distinction by contrasting "old latent configurations" that can be discovered "in a gentle movement," with what he calls "the system of discourse on which we still live"; from the standpoint of criticism, this method must "operate with a hammer" like, he specifies, "the Nietzschean philosopher."⁷ This association of the indispensability of a violent skeptical exercise with Nietzsche marks an extension the practice of criticism that is pursued by Foucault. In Kant, the violence of the skeptical procedure falls largely on the silent side of the limit of criticism, leaving only bashful traces, *e.g.*, in the possible source of the arousal in the myth, and in form of the antinomical procedure. In Foucault, however, marked most directly in this regard by Nietzsche, a relation of violence becomes formally indispensable for the exercise of critical skepticism.

II. NIETZSCHE AND CRITICAL SKEPTICISM

Since the primary aim of the present chapter is to provide an exposition of this skeptical dimension of Foucault's critical practice, the interposition of a distinctly Nietzschean accent to what one can consider to be Foucault's exercise of the Kantian skeptical procedure discussed above recommends an exegetical detour by way of Nietzsche's work that extends beyond what is available in Foucault's own discussions. This reconstruction casts the source of the need for shock in terms of an epistemological valorization of violence. The skeptical moment of Foucault's criticism takes the form of an unexpected, jarring experience of befuddlement in the face of an antinomy, and it aims to arouse oneself or others from a state of epistemologically perilous self-complacency. While recognition of the structure of antinomy shocks dogmatic thought from its soporific self-satisfaction in Kant, the moment of shock in Foucault functions in relation to the capacity to break a habit of thought. The dynamic functions by provoking estrangement in a situation in which the perception of what is real is obstructed by a mode of complacency rooted in the functioning of our capacities of thought themselves. This aspect of Foucault's practice involves a variant of the skeptical procedure that stages a contest between dogmatically generated, structurally irreconcilable standpoints. It aims not to arbitrate the dispute, but to provoke the realization of the second order implications of maintaining a standpoint uncritically, namely, exposure to the danger of making empty claims and of falling into dispute over what is in fact less than a mirage. Foucault conveys the peril of making claims without criticism (*i.e.*, structurally hopeless conflict) theatrically, by rehearsing examples of this sort of conflict. This serves both as a kind of cautionary account that aims to discourage dogmatic confidence, and, by dissolving the otherwise intractable conflict, as an occasion to display the value of the critical insight that the form or the structure of a standpoint saddles it with determinate possibilities outside of which its claims are groundless. Whereas for Kant, this insight issues in a distinction between two fields of investigation by appeal to two levels of consideration (the one that considers the world as it appears to us, as opposed to the one that considers the world abstracted from its relation of appearing to us), in Foucault, it organizes the terrain of the historical investigation by fixing unified practices—kinds of things that people can do in general, described as structures of thought or forms of experience—as its unit, and thus forestalling antinomical conflicts generated by failing to tie claims to the forms of thought that regulates them.

In the examination of this order of proximity to Kant, it is instructive to set Foucault's variety of skepticism into relation with a disparately pervasive theme that can be loosely configured around the idea of the experience of self-estrangement. While the family of concepts that includes estrangement, alienation, and moral shock can be traced to Antiquity, it has figured particularly prominently in the past century and a half. It marks an extraordinarily rich and diverse series of themes, among which many would benefit from careful conceptual attention. One particularly pervasive conceptual motif can be distinguished in relation to the potential for personal transformation through theoretical work. With varying degrees of emphasis and in vastly different fields, by way of an inversion of values implicit in Hegel's dialectic and already present at the heart of the figure of Socrates, this conceptual dynamic renews the second order significance of alienation, of the state of being strange to oneself and to one's environment, and of the shock and disaffection required to achieve this distance. This valuation integrates and overcomes the traumatic paralysis associated with estrangement in psychological and political registers. From this standpoint, estrangement is not only valuable: it is indispensable to the practice of criticism that conditions self-transformation. There is a critical *need* for estrangement.⁸

This order of description marks the distinctive feature of what might be called *discourses of estrangement*. Their common thread involves the idea that our ordinary experience is structurally self-centered and conservative. This epistemological narcissism is considered to be so firmly entrenched that, in order to acquire the desired capacity to truly perceive, to be receptive to difference and novelty—itself a condition of seeing oneself as strange and of genuine personal transformation—our present state requires an affectively sharp, even violent moment of recognition. The resonance among these discourses is diffuse. The definition of estrangement as a literary ideal is often attributed to the Russian Formalists: Victor Shklovsky developed a theory of art around the device of 'defamiliarization,' from which Brecht, for example, found inspiration for his concept of *Verfremdungseffekt* in theatre. As a broader socio-cultural need, however, estrangement had already been identified by Baudelaire, in the context of the radical transformations of urban life in Hausmann's Paris of the mid-nineteenth century, particularly in relation to the form of life of the flâneur and the importance of novelty in his conception of modernity. Appeal to some form of estrangement is standard in descriptions of the aims of avant-guard art, in film as well as in music, painting and photography. It is easily identified in the usual Modernist suspects: Joyce's manipulation of language, Kafka's use of the enigma as a narrative form, and Proust's analysis of the vicissitudes of memory, just to mention a

few of the more notorious. Under different guises, dynamics of estrangement have also figured in theoretical and philosophical discourses. One thinks of the experience of the uncanny in Heidegger and the function of anxieties in Freud, but estrangement has a role in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, Ricoeur's hermeneutics, before figuring in Foucault's practice of historical analysis.⁹ But the insight concerning estrangement captured by these discourses belongs to a tradition that extends to the ethical and spiritual exercises prominently featured in Neo-Platonist and Early-Christian practices.¹⁰ This is certainly a diverse, even irreconcilable family of practices, but at a certain level of abstraction, squarely under the vigilant watch of the ubiquitous practices of economic rationality, today all of them function as refractions of Marx's schema of alienation.

This discussion does not aim to recast these discourses as a tradition or a typological inventory, or to define its principle of organization. Instead, it undertakes the preliminary critical task of articulating the conception of the mind with which these discourses operate, in order ultimately to isolate the origin of the value of estrangement. It aims, in other words, to account for the *need* for estrangement in this type of context. This is an exercise of Kantian criticism that intervenes at a second order of consideration: the source of the need for estrangement will be described in terms of the formal factors that condition the form of experiences in which estrangement is needed. The analysis appeals to the writings of Nietzsche, which are an unparalleled source of insight in this regard. Nietzsche understands the need for estrangement against the background of a broadly Kantian account of the conditions of cognitive experience in general, according to which the capacities of understanding and sensibility cooperatively organize experience through a capacity to synthesize, to identify unity within diversity. The following analysis assembles elements of Foucault's theoretical self-characterizations in order to bring the epistemological antecedents of the skeptical segment of Foucault's criticism into focus, by making explicit what in Foucault's discourse, as in many other discourses of estrangement, remains an unspoken but indispensable commitment. It undertakes to do so in reference to Nietzsche, who is for Foucault the most visible, and indeed the primary source of insight in this regard. The singularity of his contribution is not merely one of degree, but of kind: his analyses of the capacities of thought provide material to account for the need for estrangement in the exercise of our most primitive subjective capacities.

More clearly and directly than anywhere else in his published work, Foucault makes the guiding principle of the Nietzschean extension of critical skepticism explicit in the series of methodological remarks that open his review of Francis Jacob's masterful history of heredity, *La Logique du vivant*.¹¹

After explaining how well the book shows that the emergence of genetics as a form of thought happens “suddenly, with a great crash, by stripping us today of our most ordinary familiarities,” Foucault makes a general claim the assessment of which allows a certain number of disparate elements in his work to fall into place. “Knowledge,” he submits, “is not made to console: it deceives, it worries, it bites, and it hurts.”¹²

This modality of consideration of the sources of knowledge is based on Nietzsche’s discussion of the second order implications of knowledge and the other activities of our cognitive capacities. In this Nietzschean register, Foucault’s practice of criticism also describes the origins of ordinary experience and knowledge at a second order of description, in a form of reflection driven by insight into the exoteric factors that determine and reinforce the narcissistic disposition of the unexamined operation of our capacities of thought. Nietzsche describes these in terms of the needs in response to which we learn our cognitive capacities. He describes their complacent self-fixating tendency to impose sameness as a means to avoid disturbing the comfort of the familiar, the force of habit, and the dangers of otherness. This attitude has the form of dogmatism Kant perceived, but it is reflected at a second order. This recognition leads it to prescribe a more aggressive brand of skeptical estrangement. In other words, from this standpoint, when in *KrV* Kant traces knowledge to “two fundamental sources in the mind” (“the reception of representations” and “the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations”) (A50/B74), the object of his practice of criticism cannot pose the second order problem.

The methodological frame of reference Foucault provides in the first of the series of lectures he gave at the Pontifical Catholic University, Rio de Janeiro, in 1974 entitled “La vérité et les formes juridiques,” is illuminating in this respect. Foucault appeals to Nietzsche as a model in the ensuing lectures, and these opening analyses represent Foucault’s most extensive and developed account of Nietzsche’s criticism of knowledge and its second order implications. Here Foucault finds in Nietzsche “elements that provide a model for a historical analysis” of what he calls “the politics of truth.”¹³ The model is constructed around an alternative to the conventional understanding of the sort of process that gives rise to knowledge, and of its significance or value. Like the analysis of Foucault’s earlier piece “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire” (1971), the outlook takes shape around the contrast between *Ursprung* and *Erfindung*. On Foucault’s reading of Nietzsche, knowledge can be traced back to an invention, rather than to an origin. He outlines two senses in which knowledge can have been invented, under which it can be considered to be an invention.¹⁴ Knowledge, first, is “absolutely not

inscribed in human nature,” but is “simply the result of the play, of the confrontation, of the juncture, of the battle and the compromise between the instincts” (pp. 544–5). Essentially paraphrasing a passage from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* discussed below, Foucault explains that knowledge is merely the surface effect of a confrontation of instincts, that it is “like a flash, like a light that spreads,” but that is produced by instinctive “mechanisms or realities that are by nature totally diverse” (p. 545). Extending the imaginary terrain, Foucault introduces the element of risk and chance that this sort of invention implies, and declares that knowledge “is like a stroke of luck, or like the result of a long compromise” (p. 545). Knowledge, according to this model, is not the sort of thing that one can “deduce [. . .] analytically, according to a kind of natural derivation” (p. 545). Rather, it “compresses, translates a certain state of tension or of appeasement between the instincts” (p. 545). Foucault learns from Nietzsche that the unity that for Kant is the distinctive mark of knowledge is in fact the instantaneous and unpredictable surface result of a multiplicity of disparate and heterogeneous instincts. This instinctive dimension is, for Nietzsche and for Foucault, one that can only be defined at a second order of consideration. Furthermore, from this standpoint, knowledge is an invention in the strong sense—it is in no way merely a discovery, but a creation, a production. Knowledge, according to Foucault, is not “related, by a relation of right, to the world to be known,” and thus there is “no resemblance, no prior affinity between knowledge and things” (pp. 545–6). Foucault proposes that this antinomy can be transposed into Kantian terms as the situation in which “the conditions of experience and the conditions of the object of experience are totally heterogeneous” (p. 546). Here the proximity between Kant and Foucault is at its most intense yet most precarious point, framing the Nietzschean proposal for a displacement of the locus of the real and of the relation between knowledge and what it is knowledge of in terms much closer to Kant’s conceptual apparatus than one finds in Nietzsche’s own texts. On Foucault’s formulation, the basic insight in this regard is that “it is not natural for nature to be known” (p. 546). The world, he writes, “absolutely does not seek to imitate man, it ignores all law,” such that “there is nothing in knowledge that habitates it, by some right, to know the world” (p. 546). Just as there is no predetermined relation between knowledge and human nature, there is no relation of natural continuity between knowledge and the things one knows; between these, there is “a relation of violence, of domination, of power and of force, of violation” (p. 546). Knowledge, Foucault concludes, at a level generality only receivable as provisional and to be explored in depth in the Nietzschean text, “can only be a *violation* of the thing to be known, and not a perception,

a recognition, and identification of or with it" (p. 546; ital. added).¹⁵ The following section of the present chapter aims to describe the precise relation between the functions of the cognitive capacities at the source of knowledge and the violence their exercise produces.

Despite their schematic quality, however, the aspects of Foucault's Nietzschean model of knowledge as invention already discussed present a conception of knowledge that seems in stark contrast with the significance that is ordinarily attributed to it. They introduce a rupture in the continuity between the value of knowledge as a result and its real sources. There is a gap, in this schema, between *how knowledge comes about* and *why we ascribe importance* to it: what counts as genuine knowledge on the basis of its conformity to a set of formal criteria has been emptied of the network of significances that have previously, throughout the tradition, made knowledge valuable. In a series of provocative, frustratingly terse speculations about the implications of recognizing that knowledge is invented, Foucault associates the abeyance of God and of the subject of knowledge by hanging both on the conception of knowledge that is discarded when it is recognized as invention. Since Foucault supposes that the concepts of God and the subject are introduced and sustained as an essentially methodological requirement, one implication of the perception of invention at the source of knowledge is that these concepts should be discarded as empty, useless hypotheses. But it must be said that the dismissal is based on the tenuous and textually unjustified suggestion of a relation of dependence between God and the subject, and the constitutive interrelation of knowledge and the objects of knowledge. Foucault is content to assert that the philosophical tradition has postulated God and the subject in order to justify the affinity between knowledge and the objects of knowledge in the world, then prescribes that they be left behind as outdated on the basis of the realization that this harmony is illusory, at which one arrives by tracing the genesis of knowledge to invention. In this context, Foucault provides no further elaboration of these unqualifiedly crucial implications, and one is left to accept or reject them on the strength of his exegetical declaration concerning the nature of the relation between God and the subject, and knowledge and its objects in modern philosophy. Further elaboration is certainly needed in order to make the stakes of seeing knowledge as invention perspicuous and theoretically compelling. Foucault's outline of the "curious mechanism" through which the instinct can "simply through their play, produce, fabricate, invent knowledge that has nothing to do with them" moves in this direction (p. 548). According to Foucault's reconstruction of this aspect of the Nietzschean standpoint, based largely on § 333

of *FW*: “we only understand because behind all this is the play of the three instincts, of the three mechanisms, or of the three passions that are laughter, plaintiveness, and hatred (p. 548). They produce knowledge not by placating or reconciling themselves, but through confrontation, through war in the midst of which they arrive at “a momentary stabilization,” at “a sort of state of rupture wherein knowledge will finally be able to arise as the ‘spark between two swords’” (p. 549). On this model, in knowledge, there is no conformity to an object, no assimilation of content to form, but “a relation of distance and of domination,” there is nothing like “wellbeing and love, but hatred and hostility” (p. 549). This stakes a position at odds with a strand of thought that has enjoyed prominence throughout Western philosophy from Plato on: the characteristics of knowledge have always included logocentrism, resemblance, conformity, beatitude, and unity. Nietzsche replaces these with hatred, combativeness, and relations of power (see p. 549).

This, Foucault’s most fully realized account of Nietzsche’s conception of knowledge, is a penetrating reconstructive analysis that undeniably captures and makes accessible the sources of a prominent but hidden Nietzschean theme. And yet, the reconstruction remains fragmentary, and is only suggestive of the sort of account referred to above. In broad terms, Foucault defines the kind of explanation Nietzsche’s writings put one into a position to provide (*i.e.*, the field of investigation opened by these sorts of insight), without actually carrying the reconstruction to the point of a specific stipulation about the structure and the source of knowledge. It seems likely that Foucault’s concern in these lectures to present a Nietzschean model with the generality required of it as a methodological framework for his ensuing analysis of the relations of power that determine juridical forms, prohibits him from providing a more detailed picture of the process of the invention of the knowledge, of the sort of instinct involved, and of how these marshal the cognitive capacities themselves for their own purposes. In any case, given the importance of the details of Nietzsche’s analysis, it will considerably enhance an understanding of the moment of skepticism in Foucault’s writings to undertake a close study of Nietzsche’s conception of the structure of knowledge. This comprehensive reconstruction is not only suggested by Foucault’s own reconstruction, but that—as a structural configuration of his discursive practice—tacitly informs the apparatus of his historical studies. An extensive exegetical detour through the sources of what functions as the skeptical segment of Foucault’s practice of Kantian criticism in Nietzsche’s texts will prove indispensable for a comprehensive grasp of this aspect of Foucault’s work.

III. ESTRANGEMENT AS SKEPTICAL METHOD IN NIETZSCHE

Foucault and Deleuze were early enthusiasts of Nietzsche's *Nachlaß*, the unpublished notebooks that had previously been only very partially available in *Die Wille zu Macht*. In more recent years, it has been well publicized that this selection is partial not only as a part, and not a whole, exhaustive and complete version of Nietzsche's notes (it is in fact materially a very small selection), but also in the political sense that it is disproportionately inclined to favor a particular party: it is a misleading selection that was chosen for publication posthumously by his sister Elisabeth, and her openly anti-Semitic husband Bernhard Förster. Independently of the question of the extent to which the effect of the editorial distortion on the modalities of cultural and conceptual reception of the figure of Nietzsche can be measured (consider the question of whether it is possible to read Nietzsche as an anti-Semite proto-Nazi: after all, it seems unlikely that a whole series of diverse factors would have to be considered, such as the effect of by no means necessarily false myths that still circulate about the matter *e.g.*, the notion that *Also sprach Zarathustra* was standard-issued backpack-gear for WWII German soldiers in lieu of the *New Testament* their American homologues carried, would have nothing to do with the color of Nietzsche's reception), it is certain that the publication of a more representative edition of the *Nachlaß* signals a total transformation of our understanding of his thought. Both Foucault and Deleuze were in a privileged position to realize this earlier on (in terms of the French context), by virtue of their editorial functions in their collaboration on the French edition of a volume of the Colli-Montinari critical edition of Nietzsche's philosophical works published in 1967, and both made extraordinarily inventive and effective use of this material. Each volume of the French edition couples the publication of the published works with the roughly contemporaneous notes, and Foucault's reading of Nietzsche often privileges the notes as the most immediate site on which to exercise the standpoints acquired as the theoretical resources of the published works. The notes included in the volume edited by Foucault (written from 1881–2), and the notes from the 1880's more generally, proved to be particularly valuable for Foucault.

One of the most perplexing themes in Nietzsche's writings of the period centers on the relation between *need* and *knowledge*. While the very expression of the relation appears to involve the category mistake of relating a psycho-biological factor with a conceptual one, analysis of the underlying conceptual dynamic brings a Nietzschean standpoint to the surface that directly conditions Foucault's work until the end of his life. Two aphorisms

provide a guiding thread for the reconstruction of this standpoint. The first is *FW* §205: “*Need*.—Need counts as the reason something came to be: in reality, it is often merely an effect of what has come to be.” (*FW* §205/143) The other, from the *Nachlaß*, written between 1885–6: “Our concepts are inspired by our *need*.” (*N* 2[77]/73) The analysis of the reversal implied by these connections will provide the tools to assess the conditions of the need for estrangement. This reversal of the order of explanation between the biological dimension of need and the conceptual dimension of knowledge can be examined in light of Nietzsche’s conception of the structure and the effects of sensation and knowledge and his historical-conceptual interpretation of the second order implications of these mental activities. Nietzsche frames these implications with a fragmentary metaphysical fiction that provides a schema for the concept of estrangement as a form of experience not only desirable, but indispensable for the practice of criticism. The present exercise of textual reconstruction exploits these dimensions of Nietzsche’s writings in order to configure the elements of a critical standpoint from which the need for the destructive and violent moment of thought in Foucault’s conception of criticism can be understood, and to do so with as much textual responsiveness as possible to the material in Nietzsche that left the most distinctive marks on this aspect of Foucault’s work (primarily *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, and the *Nachlaß* from the corresponding period of time). The exposition begins by nesting (B) a sketch of Nietzsche’s reframed version of the Kantian structure of cognitive processes into (A) a chain of thought that progresses from the nature of philosophical activity to the ideal of living philosophically. This account of the processes of sensation and knowledge issues in (C) an examination of the moral and the metaphysical aspects of Nietzsche’s account of the origin of knowledge.

a) Philosophy as a Form of Life

In a passage that Foucault paraphrases on more than one occasion, the momentum of the early pages of Nietzsche’s *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* culminates with an insight that arrests, by its characteristic audacity no less, paradoxically, than by its uncharacteristic generality:

I have gradually come to realize what every great philosophy so far has been: a confession of faith on the part of its author, and a type of involuntary and unconscious memoir; in short, that the moral (or immoral) intention in every philosophy constitutes the true living seed from which the whole plant grows. In fact, to explain how the strangest metaphysical claims of a philosopher really come about, it is always good

(and wise) to begin by asking: what morality is it (is *he* -) getting at?
(*JGB* §6/8)

While the idea that there is an irreducibly personal dimension to philosophical positions is by no means a Nietzschean invention, the hyperbolic style of its expression is exceptional. Indeed, while the object of the insight is an understanding of the genesis of philosophies and the claims of philosophers, its form diverges from the prudential tone of a hermeneutics or the diagnostic tone of a genealogy. When Nietzsche makes claims about *every* great philosopher, about the intentions in *every* philosophy, about the *strangest* metaphysical claims, about it being *always* good, when he writes, a few lines below the passage cited, that “there is *absolutely nothing* impersonal about the philosopher,” the tone precisely suits that which is considered in the absolute. The form of Nietzsche’s claim is that of a moral law or a priestly prescription.¹⁶ Perhaps this is why his description of this personal dimension retains its pugnacious effect despite the familiarity of the idea. Regardless, the consideration adds another dimension to Nietzsche’s subsequent ambivalent characterization of the philosopher’s “conviction.” He associates the endorsement of the personal dimension of philosophy with the very possibility of doing philosophy. He considers it to be hermeneutically indispensable to attend to the conviction embodied in a philosophical text, and implies that it would be misguided and unphilosophical to ignore it. But he also describes the conviction that in every philosophy inevitably “steps onto the stage” as a beautiful and strong ass. In § 231 of *JGB*, these convictions are described as “a brick wall of spiritual fate, of predetermined decisions and answers to selected predetermined questions,” the “immutable ‘that is me’” that speaks in every decisive problem (*JGB* § 231/123). This element of conviction is what in the morals of a philosopher bears, Nietzsche writes, “decided and decisive witness to *who he is*—which means, in what order of rank the innermost drives of his nature stand with respect to each other” (*JGB* §6/9). Nietzsche goes as far as to characterize this “who he is,” the fated brick wall that will not learn, as “stupidity itself.”¹⁷ If this ambivalence is provisionally preserved and maintained as such, it provides an example of the object of Nietzsche’s interpretive guideline in relation to its aim of generating a problematic but productive resonance between the personal and moral convictions of a philosopher and the significance of philosophical discourse. Indeed, consideration of the object of a discourse in abstraction of its form can only take one so far. While it is not insignificant that Nietzsche’s interpretive directive is expressed with tremendous evocative force—marshaled through not only through striking hyperbole, but also lively, suggestive imagery—it can only

be attributed conceptual significance in relation to other aspects of the form of his insight. He presents his personal report with the scope of a general interpretive guideline: the protocol for an orientation to philosophical texts. And in fact, the form of expression of this guideline is remarkable beyond its breadth and its tone, for there is an aspect of its structure that aligns with the content of the claim it advances¹⁸, and provides an indication of the concept of morality with which it is concerned.

Consider that the insight into how to gain access to a given philosophical standpoint is not presented as the conclusion of an argument, but, paradoxically (given the pejorative side of his ambivalent characterization of conviction), as a conviction into which one grows over time, one might say through a process of bovine intellectual gestation. In this respect, Nietzsche's protocol for access to particular philosophical standpoints reflects the arduous character of the transition from the quotidian to the philosophical in the very form of its expression.¹⁹ The way the process is presented suggests that it is a transformation that demands a *sacrifice*: it issues from an endeavor that involves struggle and a particular kind of suffering. This formal aspect of the proposal to address philosophies as confessions or memoirs reinforces its content, namely, the stipulation of the need for a hermeneutic detour through the personal dimensions of a philosophy, figure of its philosopher, in order to gain access to the philosophical. Moreover, by offering itself as a materialization of what it is proposing, the form of Nietzsche's declamation intimates the character of the moral factor involved. The circularity of the relation between its form and its content is, in other words, not without design: Nietzsche's insight is presented as an example of itself.²⁰ It is a conviction that can be associated with the sort of moral considerations that are putatively efficacious in the formation of a metaphysical standpoint, in this case, his strange diagnosis that "the strangest of metaphysical claims" can be traced back to moral intentions. Both the intellectual development that Nietzsche presents as a condition for understanding how to address philosophical positions, and the interpretive activity that he prescribes in light of this understanding as the first task of philosophical interpretation (*i.e.*, the identification of the moral conviction that grows organically into a metaphysical framework) involve a specific kind of pain. These may involve the ultimately comforting kind of pain that is a reliable companion of work to which one voluntarily subjects oneself: the athletic pain of an algophiliac. From a Nietzschean standpoint, however, it is even more daunting that genuine philosophical engagement with a text also unavoidably involves pain in the register of the 'bodily' or the 'organic,' a kind of pain that is absolutely given: an ungiving pre-perceptive suffering that is not merely compelling,

but imperially unquestionable. It can be wildly urgent, pressing and immediate, and only ever comes to awareness as already there, with is no distance to be taken from it. Whereas athletic pain exists largely within a context that is under one's *control*, this brute, unspiritual pain never even feigns to accommodate such an impression. Whereas the former is fundamentally familiar—as a palatable extension of oneself, it is essentially the same—the later is the experience of something unambiguously other: resiliently foreign, inassimilable and indigestible, it is irreconcilably strange.

This Nietzschean valorization of discursive pain aims to undermine what Nietzsche addresses as a *moral ideal*, one that he takes to be solidly entrenched in his contemporary culture, not only as a moral category, but in the very functioning of the mental capacities that organize cognitive experience (perception, theoretical knowledge). The notion of a moral ideal in this context marks out a set of second order values that regulate one's needs and desires, and the ideal in question is *self-control*. Nietzsche's approach to the question is diagnostic, and his imagery medical: self-control is a diseased ideal. He describes its prevalent symptom as "a constant irritability at all natural strivings and inclinations and as it were a kind of itch" (*FW* §305/174). Although Nietzsche does not make the connection explicit, the structure of his description indicates that a healthy form of this ideal is precisely a state of fluid continuity between the philosophical and the personal. The relation between self-control and philosophical commitment—a relation between sickness and health—makes Nietzsche's description of the symptoms potentially misleading. It is built around an implied distinction between opposing varieties of the state of being irritated that correspond to two aspects of Nietzsche's account of the illness of the need for self-control: (i) the moral implications of the ideal of self-control, and (ii) the moral significance of the state of comfort in relation to the association of familiarity and fear. The first situates itself within the diseased state, and represents irritation pejoratively, the second gives irritation a positive significance as a condition of recognizing this illness.

There is a vivid description of the moral implications of the ideal of self-control in §305 of *FW*:

Whatever may henceforth push, pull, beckon, impel him from within or without will always strike this irritable one as endangering his self-control: no longer may he entrust himself to any instinct or free wing-beat; instead he stands there rigidly with a defensive posture, armed against himself, with sharp and suspicious eyes, the eternal guardian of his fortress, since he has turned himself into a fortress. Indeed, he can

become great that way! But how insufferable he has become to others; how impoverished and cut off from the most beautiful fortuities of the soul! And indeed from all further *instruction!* For one must be able at times to lose oneself if one wants to learn something from things that we ourselves are not. (*FW* §305, 174)

While it is true that this sort of conceptual density and stylistic mastery inspires expressive insouciance, what emerges most forcefully is the conceptual nerve of the diseased ideal of self-control. Its primary symptom is itchiness. Now, it is significant that this irritation is not itself the sickness, Nietzsche's diagnosis certainly does not aim to disparage the capacity to be affected by the world; but rather a perverse reaction to life and experience that is produced by the diseased condition: a cultivated posture of self-fortification. In this state of illness, the only way of being affected by what is new and different is to be annoyed by it. The ideal of self-control generates a defensive, reactive, essentially weak and unproductive relation to the world, one that impedes action and creativity. It provokes nothing and goes nowhere. The passivity of this static state, moreover, has active implications: it conspires in self-stultification by consolidating narrow, flat and anodyne forms of experience. Thus, the need to maintain control of oneself surfaces as a spontaneous, involuntary and artificial irritation at the contact of anything foreign; it is an excessive, misguided, and cowardly reaction to what is perceived as a threatening and intrusive introduction of difference, novelty and change into the ease and security of the self-transparent familiarity bought by well-worn habituation.

As indicated above, there is a need to distinguish, in the context of Nietzsche's interpretation of the ideal of self-control, opposed varieties of the state of irritation. In the context of an ethics of self-control, irritation is a manifestation of a weak and debased desire to preserve oneself comfortably. From the standpoint of a resistance to this ideal, however, irritation takes on a wholly different value. It intervenes in Nietzsche's account of the moral significance of being comfortable and the relation between fear and familiarity as a condition of recognizing one's own illness. This positive evaluation of irritation surfaces most perspicuously in Nietzsche's account of the philosophical way of life.

Nietzsche's notebooks from the spring of 1885 sketch the implications of this insight about the meaning of the genesis of philosophy for life, for living. The speculations open on a note of considerable pathos, by unabashedly posing one of the West's most venerable Holy Grail-questions: "what does it mean to *live* philosophically, to be wise?" (*N* 34[24]/20) Nietzsche

begins by isolating the received view. Popular wisdom tells us that philosophical wisdom is essentially cowardly, that it is a form of flight. According to Nietzsche's representation of this conventional understanding, philosophical activity is "a way of *extracting* oneself cleverly from an ugly game," in order to live in a "remote and simple way" (*N* 34[24]/20). This figure of the philosopher as a social recluse is inadequate to the task of philosophy that Nietzsche advocates. It embodies, he writes, "timid virtuousness" that makes it impossible for the philosopher to make judgments about "the great problems of his own *experience*" (*N* 34[24]/20). Indeed, if self-exile from one's community is a mark of wisdom, if it is part of what it means in our culture to live philosophically, from a Nietzschean standpoint, "a man must have lived absolutely 'unphilosophically'" in order to live a philosophical life properly (*i.e.*, philosophically) understood.²¹ A philosopher, Nietzsche maintains, ought to have "tried out life personally in a hundred ways, so as to have something to say about its value" (*N* 34[24]/20). And this is possible only by being, or at least having been,²² unphilosophical according to the conventional sense of the term.²³

Nietzsche also addresses the theme in autobiographical terms. He describes it as the fact of the antinomy of his existence: the objects of his "radical *need*" as "a radical philosopher" are the very objects he feels to be privations as "a living creature," and when what he needs as a living creature is withheld, he becomes "a mere apparatus of abstraction," incapable of genuine philosophy (*N* 5[38]/111). These questionable needs—Nietzsche mentions "freedom from profession, wife, child, friends, society, fatherland, home country, faith, freedom from love and hate" (*N* 5[38]/111)—give content to the traditional figure of the philosopher as a coward. From the standpoint of a Nietzschean conception of life, the needs are questionable structurally. The complexity is heightened if one considers oneself to be a poet as well as a philosopher, as Nietzsche did. As a poet, one is subject to a set of decidedly 'unphilosophical' needs, such as "sympathy, excellent housekeeping, fame and so on" (*N* 5[38]/111). For a philosopher, these needs are deeply intrusive; Nietzsche complains that they make his life into "a dog-kennel existence" (*N* 5[38]/111). The humor here might be thought to signal conceptual discomfort. The striking oversimplicity of the self-description, plainly a caricature, initially veils the problematic status of the terms of the description itself. As a model to understand his existence, Nietzsche's personal antinomy, in turn, displays a further antinomy.

Although these notebook entries do provide a number of theoretical buoys, the question of the figure of thought appropriate to the nature of philosophical life remains an open question. *JGB* contains a fuller statement.

In this work, one in which types are prominently in question, Nietzsche integrates the distinction between the inadequate conventional figure of the philosopher, and his personal conception of a philosopher, into a cultural framework. The theme surfaces in several contexts. In a genealogical frame of reference, it is involved in an account of the origin of the practice of philosophy (in the form of the distinction between philosophy as a secondary, derivative *labor* from his conception of philosophy as personal and biological). For the practice of criticism, it serves as the basis for Nietzsche's resistance to and defiance of the 'academization' of philosophy through a dissociation of his own practice of philosophy from scholarly philosophy.

Nietzsche insists on the need to observe the distinction between genuine, 'living' philosophers, on the one hand, and "philosophical laborers and scientific men in general," on the other (*JGB* §211/105). He insists that the time the philosopher-as-laborer has past. It belongs to a previous philosophical generation, to Kant and Hegel particularly, described by Nietzsche as mere researchers. This figure of the idealist philosopher can be recognized as a primitive form of what had become the popular and received conception of the philosopher type. The philosophical researcher's basic task would be "to establish some large class of given values (which is to say: values that were once *posited* and created but have come to dominate and have been called "truths" for a long time) and press it into formulas," in order to "make everything that has happened or been valued so far look clear, obvious, comprehensible, and manageable, to abbreviate everything long, even "time" itself, and to *overwhelm* the entire past."²⁴ The moments of the task grow progressively wilder; the last, without further elaboration, is very difficult to penetrate with any confidence. Since these implicate some of the densest aspects of Nietzsche's revision of the structure of knowledge in light of its moral origins, a detailed analysis will have to be postponed until more of the elements of the framework of the analysis are in place.

To begin, the dual understanding of philosophical life informs the distinction between philosophy as an academic and scholarly discipline, and Nietzsche's practice of philosophy. For Nietzsche, the academic philosopher worries that *she knows too little*. Her concern is to keep up with the growth and accumulation of knowledge. The Nietzschean philosopher worries that *she knows too much*. Her concern is with the nefarious implications of the activity of knowledge. Nietzsche accounts for the distinction in terms of different needs, different processes of growth, and different ways of digesting. Of philosophers who are more than just scholars, he says that "we need more; we also need less."²⁵ And he elaborates on their different digestions by signaling the moral and conceptual relevance of the physiological process of nourishment. In an unsettling idiom, he describes the structure of nourishment in

terms of a mental or spiritual process. After the critical concession that there is “no formula for how much a spirit needs for its nourishment,” he suggests that the sort of person suited to a genuinely philosophical life—those who have “a taste for independence, for quick coming and going, for wandering, perhaps for adventures of which only the swiftest are capable”—would prefer to “live free with little food than unfree and stuffed,” for it is “not fat but the greatest possible suppleness and strength that a good dancer wants from his nourishment” (*FW* §281/274). Thus the philosophical value of this strength and suppleness is captured in the figure of the philosopher as a *dancer*: “the dance is his ideal, also his art, and finally also his only piety, his ‘service to God.’” (*FW* §381/246). Nietzsche carefully integrates these elements of the nature of philosophical life into a sketch that resists commentary:

A philosopher: this is a person who constantly experiences, sees, hears, suspects, hopes, and dreams extraordinary things; who is struck by his own thoughts as if from the outside, from above and below, as if by *his* type of events and lightning bolts; who is perhaps a storm himself, pregnant with new lightning; a fatal person in whose vicinity things are always rumbling, growling, gaping, and acting in uncanny ways. A philosopher: oh, a being who is frequently running away from himself,—but too curious not to always come back to himself . . . (*JGB* §296/174)

By contrast to the type of person who remains content with the ordinary course of experience, the philosopher strives to be polyvalently extraordinary. By contrast to a Cartesian thinker who admits as legitimate and valuable only the thoughts that have acquired unimpugnable certainty at the cost of being constructed on and within self-evidence, the philosopher values above all thoughts that strike from beyond oneself. By contrast to the purely theoretical, ineffectual scholar, the esoteric who lives in a meticulously manufactured frame of reference, eventless and of absolutely no exoteric consequence, the philosopher lives to shake things up around her. By contrast to the fortified thinker who has constructed an unthreatening environment around herself, the philosopher lives dangerously. She scares herself away, but is too curious to stay away.

This typological sketch of the philosopher is expanded and integrated in an account of the need to know, within an ethics of self-control, in terms of a certain kind of familiarity, and then as an experience of fear. The category of fear in the constitution of experience is primitive for Nietzsche, it precedes the conscious, phenomenological manifestations of fear as well as

its social, ideological ones. Its analysis intervenes at the level of the results of Kant's criticism of theoretical knowledge: the capacities of the mind whose exercise is supposed to have structured cognitive experience.

Before considering Nietzsche's diagnostic of the point of arrival of Kant's theoretical criticism, it will be helpful to consider where it begins. Kant integrates an experience of discursive estrangement into the practice of critical philosophy, in the form of the moment of skepticism that is needed to arouse us from, as he puts it, our dogmatic slumber. For Kant, the need for estrangement is attached to philosophical activity; it exists as a result of our habit of undertaking theoretical investigation and making claims to knowledge without reflecting on the conditions under which this sort of knowledge is possible, thus without considering whether these conditions fall within the limitations of our capacities. The source of the need for estrangement is in this context a scientific and epistemological standard that requires philosophy to discipline itself to address problems of knowledge only in light of the limitations of the capacities involved. Foucault's Nietzschean model presented below radicalizes and inflects this critical insight by locating the source of the need for estrangement in the disposition of the functions of our cognitive capacities themselves. It provides materials for a Kantian description of the cognitive capacities and their interaction at a second order, in terms of ethical and aesthetic categories that make the conceptual problems perspicuous. According to this model, we slumber in dogmatism prior to undertaking philosophical investigation: we are already dogmatic in our sensation, perception and first order cognition, *i.e.*, in our ordinary experience of the world.

To be sure, there are elements for instructive historical and psychological accounts of the origins of the skeptical moment in Kant's own writings. However, the type of explanation of why dogmatism leads to the death of metaphysics, the problem for which Kant's framework provides the basis, in his own discourse stops short of the insight that the source of the risk of failing to exercise a critical attitude is part of the form of knowledge itself. Nietzsche, however, recognizes a conceptual affinity between the dogmatic arrogance that gives up no resistance to the tendency to overreach and the Kantian understanding of how it is possible to perceive and know. This face Nietzsche's thinking functions as a description of the sources of the cognition sources. It provides a basis to undermine Kantian claims to unqualified universality and necessity, without for that reason discarding the practice of criticism itself. The project of immersing of the apparatus of knowledge into a diachronic framework, such as one finds in Hegel, Foucault, and dozens in between is far from. But the motivation for the initial moment of skepticism

in Kant's criticism is most usefully recast onto a background generated by Nietzsche's treatment of the Kantian conception of knowledge and cognitive experience.²⁶ In this context, Nietzsche provides a penetrating idiom with which to address this particular aspect of the practice of Kantian criticism.²⁷

The broad direction of the discussion is provided by Kant, as part of his insight into the historical transformations of pre-critical metaphysics, *i.e.*, into the sort of conceptual insatiability that had previously afflicted the practice and endangered its future as a legitimate form of inquiry. In this connection, the point of focus of Kant's account is the mechanism through which objective experience is understood; it is designed, among other concerns, as a way of responding to Hume's rejection of the possibility of metaphysical knowledge. Kant locates the source of the objectivity of appearances, of the form of cognitive experience, in the configuration of the functions of the mind, thereby providing a more satisfactory account of what makes experience possible than Hume's process of habituation. Kant reconceives the form of experience in terms of universality and necessity that is receptive to empirical content. Stable and sustainable knowledge as possible is inoculated against skeptical challenge.

Nietzsche's standpoint incorporates Kant's practice of criticism, by providing an account of the logic of the structure of cognition that is determined by attending to the initial second order needs that provided the impulse for, and gave direction to, its development. The question arises in Nietzsche as a social and a cultural problem, as a second order interrogation of the types of individuals in relation to their possible social interactions. More specifically, it comes up as a problem that concerns scholars, scientists, and philosophers. In Nietzsche, the integration of the Kantian reconstruction of the concept of appearances is tempered by radical questioning of Kant's way of addressing appearances thus understood. From Nietzsche's standpoint, the basic Kantian framework of cognition, *i.e.*, the idealist account of the sources of appearances as a configuration of mental capacities whose activities form sensible material, is a contemporary genealogically necessary fiction. But instead of considering this to have explanatory value in itself, Nietzsche takes it to be the manifestation of a problem that needs to be diagnosed at a second order. Attention to the structural implications of this model (that the synthetic nature of the cognitive capacities are constitutively self-reductive) indicates why it initially misrepresented itself as driven by the search for the truth, when in fact it is motivated by a conservative drive.

This sort of account involves a practice of criticism of appearances that incorporates a diachronic mode of description into an account of the sources of cognition, thereby undercutting the process of cognition itself

with another, more primary process, through which the idea of knowledge as an apparently basic value is accounted for. This value is shown to be the result of a past arbitrary evaluation that progressively became necessary, and for Nietzsche, effective. Just as the skeptical implications of the self-satisfaction of dogmatism in Kant provided conditions for disruption of dogmatism (required for a conceptual moment of recognition), so the implications of Kant's own critical account of the functioning of thought in experience provide the conditions for disruption of Kantian criticism. The practice of criticism, from this standpoint, self-diagnoses dogmatism. The Kantian practice of setting up a classificatory continuity between abstracted theoretical and practical registers of experience and knowledge—and thereby of attributing priority to the former—reflects a cultural predicament in which knowledge has been so intensely valued that the very possibility of achieving distance from the frame of reference fixed by this need to know requires an agency of disruption, of shock, of achieving any distance: the outlook of dogmatic criticism being described does not even distinguish itself as a standpoint independently of the will to knowledge and truth. This distance is a condition of recognizing the love of knowledge for what it is: the contingent result of a particular concrete network of multiple instable ascriptions of value.

From a Nietzschean standpoint, the dogmatism of criticism was assimilated into the very structure of cognitive experience, by way of the hyperbolic application of the theoretical model based on a principle of unification and driven by the fear of the foreign that flows from its need to preserve. This suggests that knowledge or language serves a tyrannical and a vampirizing function, for by framing the reality of experience by the structure of knowledge Kant's framework as it were internalizes a dogmatic attitude toward the locus of the real. As a result, the content, the truth, the value or the reality of experience cannot be concerned necessarily merely the product of acts of cognition. Other forms might as well serve as mechanisms of determination of real appearances. The Nietzschean strategy is to stage the escape from this dialectical implication by examining the cultural-historical sources of the concepts in question. This strategy aims to display the independence of the authority the values involved. The felt authority of a value is not value itself, but the manifestation of value within a field of cultural transformation whose origin can be described as a mendacious and structurally deceptive type of action. In other words, Nietzsche's approach rediagnoses the internal of what is conceptually problematic incoherence of the philosophically dogmatic. As an account of the nature of the mistake involved in being dogmatic and in the idea of dogmatic knowledge, Nietzsche deploys a second order analysis of the factors involved in the activity of knowing and of experience more

generally. This accounts for the source of the need, from a critical standpoint, for a skeptical moment. Awakening as a formal requirement of the practice of criticism can only be justified by appealing to a level of analysis that precedes the practice of criticism. This is the discursive practice that Nietzsche typically calls genealogy. In this case, it generates a form of mythical narrative to perspicuously describe, to make effective, the conditions that form or structure the point of departure, the beginning as a type of situation, of criticism. This concrete formal analysis describes its tasks in terms of the recuperation of the origins or sources of the conditioned theoretical item in question. In the case of a Nietzschean account of knowledge, this is a second order factor, ultimately the instinct—the need or the felt necessity—to establish the conditions of the possibility of knowledge and experience, *i.e.*, to undertake criticism. These considerations make it reasonable to conceive of Nietzsche's account of the form of sources of cognition that takes the form of an exposition of the second order sources of the sources of cognition.

b) Enigmas of the Sources of Cognition

Nietzsche's fragmentary second order description of the sources of cognition follows the Kantian distinction between sensibility and understanding as the basic capacities of theoretical cognition. His insights thread a sort of conceptual audit of Kant's account of their sources, of the mental capacities that structure experience. As such they take shape around sensibility and understanding, the capacities that in Kant's are the basic sources of cognition. To access this dimension, it will be instructive to tarry with the problematic relation Nietzsche's discourse bears to the tradition from which it draws its concepts.

For this, however, a strategy will be required; reflective application of Nietzsche's insights concerning the irregular origins of concepts disqualifies a direct approach to the traditional philosophical concepts that intervene in his discourse. This is particularly true of the question of knowledge and the senses. Nietzsche himself often addresses the issue askance by investigating their role in the individual histories of specific sciences, but the method is evasive: while the procedure is noted at the beginning of Nietzsche's treatment of knowledge and the senses in §192 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, it is not carried out in the text. Instead, only the result of the study of specific examples is recorded, namely, that in the historical-conceptual development of individual sciences there is, echoing Kant's discovery of metaphysics, a clue to the enigma of "the oldest and most secret processes of 'knowledge and cognition'": that "rash hypotheses, fictions, the dumb good will to 'believe,' and a lack of mistrust and patience develop first," and the senses "learn late

and never fully learn to be refined, trusty, careful organs of knowledge” (*JGB*, §192/81). This is a puzzling statement and a puzzling sort of clue. It has the structure of a diachronic progression that culminates with an element of a different type than the one with which it began: on the one hand, a heteroclit list of epistemological factors, and on the other, the sense organs. The formal heterogeneity is striking, particularly in light of the gap generated by the immediately failed expectation of tangible, detailed empirical investigation. These factors reinforce each other, and generate a climate of suggestive obscurity in the passage: by the force of contrast, it throws what the clue to the enigma of knowledge and the senses does clearly indicate into greater relief, namely, that the senses are *youthful*: in the process of the development of knowledge at its current stage, the senses are sketchy, unrefined, and careless.

This clue is the subject of the contemplation that appends §192. It is composed in a parabolic style that anticipates Kafka²⁸:

In the middle of a lively conversation I will often see the other person's face expressing his thoughts (or the thoughts I attribute to him) with a degree of clarity and detail that far exceeds the power of my visual ability:—such subtlety of muscle movement and ocular expression *must* have come from my own imagination. In all likelihood the person has an entirely different expression or none at all. (*JGB* §192/82)

The development of the section suggests that the parable is presented as an illustration of the insight that we are and have always been “used to lying,” that we are “more artistic” than we realize. The objects and the events that we perceive are formed by imaginative approximations, and not by an immediate determination of the matter of sensibility received by the capacity to understand. Nietzsche is presenting our doubtful imaginative approximations such as the one described in the anecdote as symptoms of the senses' youth, *i.e.*, that they have only learned to be “subtle, faithful and prudent” recently and incompletely. But there is considerable indeterminacy in this presentation of the idea. While the description of the process of imaginative perceptual approximation is pejorative in tone, there is an element of nostalgia for this spiritual youth perceptible in the conception of knowledge in question, one according to which knowledge is more subtle, faithful and prudent than our senses. Nietzsche's identification of a second order factor involved in the form of sensation provides a more determinate picture of this attitude.

A sequence of remarks about the senses in this same section of *JGB* begins with the juxtaposition of an apparently factual characterization with

a second order consideration: “our eyes find it more *convenient* to reproduce an image that they have often produced before,”²⁹ apposed to “the latter requires more strength, more ‘morality’”(JGB §192/81). The inclination toward facility that determines the functioning of the senses in perceptual experience is characterized by contrast to *strength* and “morality.” The text specifies the relevant concept of *convenience* by opposing it to *strength* in a morally relevant sense: even the most basic, apparently simple operations of sensibility involve “affects like fear, love, and hate, as well as passive affects of laziness”(JGB §192/82). It is worth noting that Nietzsche characterizes the moral dimension that conditions sensibility both as essentially *passive* (weak, lazy and guided by expediency), and as marked by intense and *violent* affection (love, hate and fear).

Several otherwise obscure descriptions of relations between knowledge, cognition, judgment, and sensation or perception in Nietzsche’s notebooks are instructive in this connection. These perspicuously show that, sensations are not understood to be as mere impressions: the unformed, brute material of cognition. They involve a form of unconscious intellectual activity defined by the function of providing for the needs of conscious sense impressions. This describes the relation in a way that revives and extends Kant’s rejection of the disjunction between thought and the senses (see “On Logic In General,” *KrV*, A50/B74-A52-B76), which is reflected in the promotion of sensibility to the status of a fundamental rational capacity of the mind that is for empirical cognition just as indispensable as understanding (A51/B75). In these passages, the senses are addressed not only as a type of mental capacity, but an essentially active, rational one, and one whose activity can be determinately characterized. The capacity to receive cognitive material from the senses is presented as a basic or primary form of subjective intellectual activity. Even as an original act, however, for Nietzsche, the actualization of sensibility is not insignificant in a second order of consideration: it is a unilateral and compulsive ordering, a kind of imperative. Nietzsche maintains not only that it is “the most original appropriation,” but that it is also “an imposition of shapes upon things,” where it is understood that the relation between the two excludes the possibility of a impartial imposition, so that the imposition of the one onto the other results in a loss of depth and diversity (*N* 38[10]/37). On this account, sensation is one manifestation of the general human force of *resisting* and *determining*; from the standpoint of the experience of sensation, this is an activity of “rejecting, selecting, shaping to fit, slotting into his schemata” (*N* 38[10]/38). The result is “a kind of leveling” within sensations that arises from “a process of assimilation” without which there could be no judgment or knowledge (*N* 40[15]/43). In the nature of

sensation, Nietzsche specifies “not only to posit shapes, rhythms and successions of shapes, but also to appraise the formation it has created with an eye to incorporation of rejection” (*N* 40[15]/43).

A distinctive attitude toward what is new and unfamiliar emerges from this identification of the second order significance of sensation. Even our senses, according to the Nietzschean diagnostic, “greet everything novel with reluctance and hostility. And this type of intellectual activity is at the heart of our form of experience, through it “arises from our world, our whole world . . .” (*N* 38[10]/37). To convey a sense of the scope and of the structural opacity of this second order selectiveness, Nietzsche appeals to a case in which the point is readily accessible, one where the process that in sensory activity occurs entirely prior to conscious thought can be identified more immediately, namely, in the image of a poor reader, who instead of reading every word and syllable, “catches maybe five out of twenty words” on a page, and “guesses” their possible meaning (*JGB* §192/82). This process of textual approximation, arbitrary in what it retains of the full stock of available material, is analogous to the perception of empirical objects; as perceivers, we treat the leaves and branches on a tree in the same way as the weak reader treats the words and the syllables on the pages of a book. Instead of perceiving it completely and with precision, it is easier for us to imagine “an approximate tree” (p. 82).

As suggested above, Nietzsche’s characterization of the moral aspect of the functions of sensibility can be understood as part of an extension of the Kantian account of the sources of our cognitive capacities. Sensibility in this context is presented not only as a form of activity, but as a creative, inventive form of learning. The exposition of sensibility as the paradoxical form of activity that is *artistic learning*, indicates the structure of the human practice of practicing itself. “Man,” Nietzsche declares, “is a creature that makes shapes and rhythms; he is practiced at nothing better and it seems that he takes pleasure in nothing *more* than in *inventing* figures” (*JGB* §192/82). This “transformation of the world into figures and rhythms” is an unavoidable condition of there being anything that is ‘the same’ for us at all; without it, there would be “nothing recurrent, and thus no possibility of experiencing and appropriating, of *feeding*” (*N* 38[10]/37). This generates structurally inescapable distortion: the invention of feckless approximation masquerading as a primarily passive and neutral sensible mental process. “We tell ourselves,” Nietzsche reports, “that in the middle of the strangest experiences we do the same thing; we invent most of the experience and can barely be made *not* to regard ourselves as the ‘inventor’ of some process” (*N* 38[10]/37). This may recall the naturalism of Hume or Shaftsbury, but the distinctive feature of the Nietzschean account is the integration of a second order factor into the cognitive processes. His remarks

gesture toward the moral aspect of the form of sensibility by blurring the distinction between the cognitive process that issues in empirical knowledge and the one that generates the creative artistic experience that for Nietzsche defines the second order of consideration in question. This standpoint considers these forms of activity to be homologous to the activity of creating a work of art.

The translation of poetry provides another concrete situation in which one can appreciate the structure of the process of sensation. The relation between the *material* of sensation and the *possible material* of sensation resembles the relation between a translation that does not rhyme and the original poem that does, where it is “as if rhymes from one language were lost in translation into another, while the *belief* was evoked *that* the poem did rhyme in the original language.”³⁰ Thus, as a leveling reconstructive activity, sensation “arouses the belief in a kind of ‘coherence’ *beyond* the fluctuation we see” (*N* 5[13], 108). This generates the sort of youthful mistake that is illustrated in Nietzsche’s parable of the lively conversation.

But this type of sensory illusion is only an initial stage of oversimplification. It is the initial, earliest layer of the sedimentation that constitutes the form of cognitive experience. The structure is duplicated and intensified at the level of the constitution of knowledge. Whereas “the cruder organ *sees* much illusory sameness, the mind *wills* sameness, *i.e.*, the subsumption of a sensory impression into an existing series [. . .] just as the body *assimilates* inorganic matter into itself.”³¹ The stultification is only fully carried out at the level of thought, in a cognitive context in judgment and knowledge. Thoughts, for Nietzsche, are ghost-like, they are “the shadows of our sensations,” always “darker, emptier, simpler” (*FW* §179/137). An account of this effect is provided in the form of a genealogy of “our concept of ‘knowledge’” in §355 of the *Gay Science*³², which contains the rudiments of the conceptual architecture in question.

I take this explanation from the street; I heard one of the common people say ‘he knew me right away’—and I asked myself: what do people actually take knowledge to be? what do they want when they want ‘knowledge’?

Nothing more than this: something unfamiliar is to be traced back to something familiar.

And we philosophers—have we really meant anything more by knowledge? (*GS* §355/214)

Nietzsche uses the figure of the familiar to mark out what is no longer new, what has become secure and comfortable, what, as he writes, “we are used to, so that we no longer marvel at it; the commonplace; some rule in which we

are stuck; each and everything that makes us feel at home” (FW §355/214). The dynamic character of this conception of familiarity is remarkable: according to Nietzsche, an integral part of what it means to be familiar is to *have become* habitual, to *no longer* be a source of wonder, to *come to be* considered common. This empiricist gesture is subverted, however, by the description of the form of the movement involved. The concepts and values that regularize our experience and the features of the environment in which we dwell issue from a diachronic process that Nietzsche describes in an epistemological idiom as the perpetuation of the same, and in a psychological idiom as an inclination to ease and self-preservation. Knowledge is the most striking manifestation of this familiarizing progression. Nietzsche notes that what we know is in fact “something alien” that we have traced back to something with which we are acquainted and to which we are accustomed (N 5[10]/107) It is “what we have *gotten used to*” so that “we no longer consider it *a riddle, a problem.*” In the familiar, the feeling of “the new,” of “the discomforting” is dulled and flattened, so that “everything that happens *regularly* no longer seems *questionable* to us.”³³ The process of cognition itself, the regulated unification of diversity according to general distinctive marks, can be understood at a second order, in terms of psychological, ethical, or aesthetic categories. According to the alignment of Kant and Nietzsche being proposed, this description introduces an order of regulating factors that itself conditions the Kantian order of the conceptual factors that condition experience. Nietzsche’s second order of description in this sense provides the sources of the sources of cognition. He adopts a standpoint for these descriptions of the relation between knowledge and habituation that accepts Kant’s account that cognitive knowledge is conditioned by a regulated collaborative act of sensibility and understanding, the latter receives intuitive content from the former, and cognition is generated by conceptual synthesis, and extends it by providing a conceptual account of the formation of the function of these cognitive capacities.

Within this frame of reference, familiarization generates a state that corresponds to the diseased ideal of self-control discussed above. Expressed in terms of its sources, Nietzsche’s suggestion is that our *need* for knowledge might be nothing other than this *need* for the familiar. The cause of the sickly irritability is diagnosed as “the will to uncover among everything strange, unusual, and doubtful something that no longer unsettles us” (FW §355/214). As he puts it in his notebooks, “the *essential* thing” in cognitive thinking is “the fitting of the new material into the old schemata,” *making* it similar, like itself, literally disarming it by brutally forcing it into a Procrustean bed (N 2[91]/77). When one is surprised and unsettled, “one wants

something familiar to hold on to,” and “as soon as we are shown something old in the new, we are reassured” (*N* 14[93]/250). This diagnosis parallels the one offered for the senses: both the senses and the intellect function as “a *simplifying* apparatus” that makes of life an “*erroneous*, miniaturized, *logi-cised* world of causes” (*N* 34[46]/2). The activities of the mind in general, “thinking, judging, perceiving,” are mechanisms of “*likening*”: they involve not only “a ‘*posing as alike*,” but “a ‘*making alike*” that precedes it and is “the same thing as the amoeba’s incorporation of appropriated material” (*N* 34[46]/2). Thus, the moral component in knowing manifests itself as a “*filial respect*” for “*what is to be found in us*” (*N* 34[195]/13). The idea of filial respect brings the second order of analysis of the capacities of thought into focus.

For Nietzsche, the structure of knowledge is informed at this second degree by the irreducibly psychological and moral factors involved in the subjective disposition, by a primitive form of egoism that is suggested to be base and reprehensible. The guiding principle of this form is *consciousness*, the apparently self-transparent and tightly unified subject of knowledge: “in our conscious mind there must be *above all* a drive *to exclude, to chase away*, a selecting drive—which allows only *certain* facts to be presented to it,” such that consciousness can be considered to be “the hand with which the organism reaches out the furthest”: it is our most able mechanism of selection for grasping things.³⁴ According to this hypothesis, what presents itself consciously to a subject as a search for knowledge is, as a matter of structure, a search for what is familiar driven by the fear of what is different.³⁵ From this standpoint, “the *instinct of fear* that bids us to know” and “the rejoicing of the person who *attains knowledge*” is a way of “rejoicing from a regained *sense of security*” (*FW* §355/214: *emph. added*). The discrepancy between unquestioned official conceptions of knowledge and the effective motivation toward it is thrown into relief nicely by Nietzsche’s suggestion that one is “immediately reassured” when in relation to something new one “does *not* take pains to understand how the match causes the fire” (*FW* §355/214). Causality, in this case representative of cognitive activity generally, is “a *capacity to effect*” that it is more useful to consider as “invented onto what happens,” than as determining what happens. What we take to be the form of knowledge is in fact “the *fear of what one isn’t used to* and the attempt to discover something *familiar* in it” (*N* 14[93]/250). When the need in question is isolated in this way as a fear of the new, of the strange and the disturbing, a *knower* can be identified as the type of person who is *capable of satisfying her need*. Such people live in a “strange simplification and falsification” in which everything has been made “bright and easy and free and simple” (*JGB* §24/25). The form

of their experience is primarily aesthetic: they constitute for themselves an “utterly artificial, well-invented, well-falsified world” (*JGB* §24/26). Knowledge is according to this account a specific type of artistry: as knowers, just as novelists or musicians, we are constitutively artistic.

It is worth calling attention to the resonance between *the form of knowledge* as it is reconstructed by Nietzsche’s genealogical style of analysis and *the conventional figure of the philosopher* as cowardly. Nietzsche adapts the image of the bodily assimilation of nourishment both to the self-deceptive tendencies and inclinations of the hermetic, self-sufficient philosopher and to the most basic, constitutive capacities of the cognitive exercise of the mind: both are structured by the logic of digestion. The image is pervasive in the fragments of Nietzsche’s description of the latter. In fact, he specifies that the general tendency of spirit-as-knower is “a suddenly emerging resolution in favor of ignorance and arbitrary termination, a closing of its windows, an inner nay-saying to something or other, a come-no-closer, a defensive state against many knowable things, a contentment with darkness, with closing horizons, a yea-saying and approval of ignorance,” whose organizing principle is modeled on the process of digestion³⁶: the will to know is necessary “in proportion to the degree of its appropriating force” schematized as ‘digestive force’ and ‘spirit’, from this standpoint, “resembles a stomach more than anything” (*JGB* §230/122). In this respect, knowledge is essentially “a means of *feeding*.”³⁷ The Nietzschean philosopher-dancer’s aversion to lipids acquires a further dimension with this connection. The philosopher needs to stay snakelike, nimble, poised and polyvalent. Taking the time to digest is a soporific luxury.

The origin of the need to know can instructively be addressed from this vantage point. Nietzsche describes the Kantian idealist insight that one “finds nothing in things but what one has put into them oneself” as “a children’s game.”³⁸ And yet, he does not hesitate to concede that it can be quite a useful one, within its limits. This is certainly the case for what Nietzsche sees as one of its actual forms: the natural sciences. As Nietzsche puts it, the “finding of the things” is called science, “the putting in: art, religion, love, pride” (*N* 2[174], p. 94). The operative model of science in this context is a loosely Cartesian foundationalism.³⁹

Nietzsche’s initial diagnostic insight is that precision in science first became possible in relation to the most superficial phenomena, items and the itemized, elements of experience that “can be counted, calculated, touched, seen,” in order to develop the capacity to *ascertain* quantity (*N* 5[16]/109). As a result, from a historical standpoint, Nietzsche isolates science among “the most impoverished fields of existence” and suggests

that the failure to recognize this genetic pattern has resulted in an attitude of naivety that manifests itself as an imperative of method: that everything must be logically and mechanistically explained (*N* 5[16]/109). This requirement is misguided by the instinct that “the most valuable and fundamental insights are *first* reached,” one that for Nietzsche reverses the fact that “nothing that can be counted and grasped is worth much to us: what we *cannot* reach without ‘grasp’ is what we consider ‘higher’” (*N* 5[16]/109). In this respect, logic, mechanistic and cognitive sciences generally only “do what is *most superficial*”; as ways of reducing the world to its surface, they are both “an art of schematizing and abbreviating, a coping with multiplicity through an art of expression,” in short of making the world into something one can grasp comfortably (*N* 5[16]/109).

The conventional figure of the philosopher is also attuned to the Kantian image that one finds in the world only what one puts into it. According to this version of it, the philosopher imagines “the world to be ‘known’ when he had reduced it to the ‘idea’” (*FW* §355/214). Nietzsche suggests that this assimilation might precisely be due to the fact that “the ‘idea’ was so familiar to him” and that he was “so used to it,” that, in other words, “he no longer feared the ‘idea’” (*FW* §355/214). Such philosophers, from this standpoint, are distinguished by their need to be easily satiated and Nietzsche exclaims of them: “How little these men of knowledge demand!” The quality surfaces in the Kantian and post-Kantian idealist ways of resolving “the world riddle” by rebuilding nature in view of the forming capacities of the mind (*FW* §355/214). From a Nietzschean standpoint, when these philosophasters find something in, under, or behind things which unfortunately happen to have become very familiar to us, such as our multiplication table or our logic or our willing and desiring, when this occurs—Nietzsche’s belittling demeanor demands to be reproduced directly—“how happy they are right away!” (*FW* §355/214) They assume that the familiar cleanly aligns with the known, or more cautiously, that it is “*more easily known* than the strange.”⁴⁰ But this, for Nietzsche, is an epistemologically devastating assumption—“Error of errors!” he declares—in that the familiar is just we have become used to, and “what we are used to is the most difficult to ‘know,’” where knowing something requires us to view it “as a problem,” to see it “as strange, as distant, as ‘outside us.’”⁴¹ And yet, the suggestiveness of this imagery begs a more substantive account of how the fear that putatively motivates knowledge is reflected in cognitive processes. Nietzsche’s indications in this regard are slight. He provides generous diagnostic description of the effect, of the illness, but no account of its origin. From a number of textual traces, however, such an account can be reconstructed.

c) *The Beginning of Knowledge*

The following reconstruction will be organized into two parts: (i) an interpretation of the activity of knowing undertaken at a level of abstraction below conscious individuation, below the threshold of subjectivity, and (ii) a description of the postulated theoretical disposition that generates ontological suppositions about the nature of the world and of human existence. The former takes the form of a genealogical analysis (what Nietzsche calls “an interpretation” in his own technical sense) of the moral origins of knowledge. The latter is required in order to make palatable the interpretation that the selective aspect of cognitive thinking is necessarily, in principle, falsifying (that our ordinary concept of knowledge is internally instable, structurally unsustainable). These factors can be respectively described as the first and the second order aspects of Nietzsche’s analysis of the origin of the received view of knowledge. A pair of familiar Nietzschean insights are worth considering here, namely that “the *world’s value* lies in our interpretation,” and that “previous interpretations have been perspectival appraisals by means of which we preserve ourselves in life” (*N* 2[108]/80). On the one hand, there is a first order aspect. It claims something about the world that matters to *us* becomes apparent; namely, that it is *false*, it “is not a fact but a fictional elaboration and filling out of a meager store of observations,” and it is “‘in flux,’ as something becoming, as a constantly shifting falsity that never gets any nearer to truth” (*N* 2[108]/80). On the other hand, a second order factor is immediately involved in the force of the diagnosis that life as such is conditioned by error. This second order of analysis comes into view more clearly when one considers that the scope of the issue is by no means restricted to philosophers. It concerns the organizing principle of life as everyone experiences it. The association between knowledge and the need for the familiar provides a manageable context in which to address a particularly opaque theme in Nietzsche, the question of ‘the conditions of life.’

In §121 of the *Gay Science*, one finds what is perhaps its most striking statement of this idea:

We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we are able to live—by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith no one could endure living! But that does not prove them. Life is not an argument; the conditions of life might include error. (*FW* §121/117)

In fact, the logic of Nietzsche’s analysis implies more than what is made explicit in this understated passage, namely, that the condition of life includes

error as a matter of form. The idea of arranging a world for ourselves can be understood quite loosely, *e.g.*, as a psychological response mechanism to a threatening situation, as a ‘defense mechanism’ that aims to make life psychologically bearable. But in this context, the depth to which the nature of the drive of the activity has to be traced is made explicit. The proposal that we arrange a livable world for ourselves by means of a practice that has the form of artistic creation—it involves acts of posing physical aspects of the world that are felt to carry necessity, contingently, artfully if not arbitrarily—suggests that the comforting arranging in question is inscribed into the very structure of the activities of thinking and of knowing, and the process of perception. Nietzsche’s insight is that this activity of mistaking—the kind of error that gives knowledge and the cognitive functions of the mind their first form, and the resulting falsification that presents itself as knowledge—represents an inescapable condition of life. “*Honesty*,” he flairs, “would lead to nausea and suicide” *FW*§107/104). If nausea and suicide are being used as figures to mark the conditions of the impossibility of life, Nietzsche’s association amounts to an incorporation of dishonesty—lying, illusion, error—into the constitutive capacities of life. It suggests that the appropriate if counter-intuitive attitude to adopt toward knowledge once its stultifying effects and its mendacious origin have been recognized, is not to endeavor to liberate oneself from the factors responsible for the trickery on the basis of the illumination of the illusion, but an attitude of restraint⁴² in the face of a structural and genealogical fact: that what was initially straightforward deception has grown to become a genuine, effective, formal, and thus inescapable feature of life. We have become used to lying in the strong sense, in the sense that the exercise of the capacity to lie is indispensable for life, for having experience at all.

There can be no mistaking this for more than a description of the relations that constitute *a particular aspect* of the form of life. The theoretical value of Nietzsche’s rich and unsettling expository forays would be considerably enhanced by a well-articulated background against which to situate it.⁴³ While the material for an account is available in his notebooks, a fertile receptacle of second order speculations, the description of the process of falsifying spiritualization (*i.e.*, of the normalizing of rules, concepts and ideals) is specifically presented as a historically observable type of phenomenon. And it is worth considering it as such prior to attempting to reconstruct an explanatory framework from the fragmented reflections.

The insight Nietzsche derives from the historical description is complex. While it reinforces the Kantian theme that living would not be possible if “our intellect did not have some *fixed* forms,” it also makes it unmistakable that this directive gives no indication of the truth of these appropriated

forms (*N* 34[46]/3). Nietzsche maintains, to wit, that the illusory “belongs to reality” in a structural capacity: “it is a form of reality’s being.” The matter of its truth must be addressed from a different angle. According to Nietzsche, the falsified world, the “trimmed and simplified world” that is arranged by our practical instincts, “suits *us* perfectly: we *live* in it, we can live in it,” and this is “*proof* of its truth for us” (*N* 14[93]/250). As a result of the historical-conceptual integration of a past error into the form of life, into the disposition of the capacities that determine experience, present reality is structured by illusion.⁴⁴ This standpoint throws the immediate correlation between the normative factors that form experience and their value into question. The concepts that actually bind thought are indeed values (they are operative, effective in forming experience), but they did not begin that way, they were not originally straightforwardly valuable. Their source is in fiat; their actual value is the product of a historical-cultural process of normative habituation that Nietzsche calls *spiritualization*. And this is the dynamic to which he constantly alludes with the mention of “falsification”: an initially positive, arbitrary act that has the form of a decree, gradually comes to be believed, mistakenly. As a result, the present norm instinctively comes to be valued inescapably. Nietzsche maintains that the concepts we need as indispensable aspects of the form of our experience, the ones without which no thought for us would be possible, were at a second order originally deceitfully posed as such, for determinable mendacious motivations, but come to be effective, true, valued, needed. Our concepts grow into the values they deserve. Like the force of the dialectical illusions of *KrV*, from this Nietzschean standpoint, the recognition of this paradoxical historical-conceptual process of falsification, one that compels thought from a lie to its truth, is impotent, it can do nothing to break the spell of falsification: knowing the occulted provenance of our forms of experience is not sufficient to dispense with them. Indeed, it is not even the type of factor that could do so. The result is a situation in which the philosopher is compelled by concepts known to be valued not as those concepts, but as the product of a progressive coming to believe a lie, and to *need* to continue to do so.⁴⁵ Nietzsche illustrates this problematic diachronic and normative complexity by posing the question in terms of the figure of the mind-body relation. He conceives of a person’s organism as a presence in the world prior to and considered aside from the perception and knowledge of it. For Nietzsche, the organic is the non-epistemological in a strict sense; he maintains that “we simply have no organ for *knowing*, for ‘truth’: we ‘know’ (or believe, or imagine) exactly as much as is *useful* to the human herd, to the species.”⁴⁶ Thus the organic functions in Nietzsche as a foil to the form of error that is indissociable from knowledge.

The metaphysical backdrop of this historical axis and of Nietzsche's views about the second order sources of cognition can be reconstructed from a cluster of speculations about being, becoming and the nature of the world and the mind. These speculations about the ontological modality of our world complement the historico-conceptual diagnosis of the self-preserving fear of the new and unfamiliar as the source of the need to know. They sketch an instructive fiction as a way of thinking about the world independently of the way we relate to it in knowing.⁴⁷ This theme, one manifestation of a general resistance to the preponderance of the permanent and the fixed in the history of metaphysics, can be framed by Nietzsche's brazen refusal of the dichotomy between the same and the other as the possible objects of knowledge. He presents the insight as the solution to an antinomy:

'Like can only be known by like' and 'Like can only be known by unlike': against both assertions, over which centuries of struggle were fought even in antiquity, the following objection can be made today, on the basis of a strict and cautious concept of knowledge: *nothing can be known at all*—and this for the very reason that neither can like know like, nor can like be known by unlike. (*N* 2[140]/88)

The concept of knowledge according to which nothing can be known at all is a strict and cautious one, to the extent that it is defined by rigorously drawing the implications of Nietzsche's metaphysical commitments to a conception of life according to which the world is constitutively fluctuating, and thus inadequate to the static relation of knowing. The organizing principle of this framework is tied to Nietzsche's form of criticism. His basic stipulation in this regard is that the world is not, but is becoming; it is essentially in a state of fluctuation, constantly structurally shifting. As a result of this instability, an aspect of life and the world is inevitably lost in ordinary perception and knowledge. These activities of identification determine experience of the world by organizing it regularly on the basis of fixed forms, which cannot capture the ephemeral, perpetually renewed quality of newness of a becoming world.

Nietzsche arrives at this characterization of the world *via negativa*: being itself is a creation of cognitive thought, so that it is illegitimate to attribute anything to it considered independently of its relation to the mind. The default, as it were, is becoming, not being, which is only a characteristic of the world as it is viewed from an immobilizing standpoint.⁴⁸ It is on the assumption that "everything is becoming"—and unfazed by the risk of self-referentially undermining the suggestion—that Nietzsche proposes

that “*knowledge is only possible on the basis of belief in being*” (N 34[81]/6). Since the conditions of knowledge inevitably include the mistaken belief that things *are*, that their ontological modality, structured by the relation of sameness and identity, is to be fixed, casted, it is formally unequipped to register the aspects of life that constitutively involve change. “In a world,” Nietzsche declares, “where there is no being, a certain calculable world of *identical* cases must first be created by *illusion*” (N 14[93]/250). He describes the process of the illusory creation of this ontological stability in musical terms, as a specific sort of *tempo* in which “observation and comparison are possible” (N 14[93]/250). This particular tempo is fixed by the process of falsification that is integrated into Nietzsche’s version of Kantian criticism outlined above. The “world of becoming” could not “in the strict sense, be ‘grasped,’ be ‘known’” (N 36[23]/26). What appears as knowledge can only take that form “inasmuch as the ‘grasping’ and ‘knowing’ intellect finds an already created, crude world, cobbled together out of deceptions but having become solid, inasmuch as this kind of illusion has preserved life,” that is, “only to the extent that there is such a thing as knowledge: i.e., a measuring of earlier and more recent errors against one another” (N 36[23]/26). Thus, given that “knowledge as such is impossible within becoming,” Nietzsche maintains that an irreducible feature of the form of possible knowledge is “error about itself” (N 7[54]/138). The stakes of this structural reduction are effectively conveyed by Nietzsche’s characterization of becoming as essentially “inventing, willing, self-negating, self-overcoming,” and as involving “no subject, but a doing, positing, creative, no ‘causes and effects’” (N 7[54]/138). This dissection of becoming as a form of activity is particularly significant in its implied alignment of the subject with the ossifying standpoint of being and knowledge. In its untrammelled state of becoming, life is not lived by a subject, and experience is not a subjective constitution of objects through an imposition of identity in the recognition of unity within material diversity; it is rather the creative endeavor of negating and overcoming the subject. Engagement with the world under this aspect, with this the *presque rien* of life, requires experience in a different tempo.⁴⁹

A distinct series of reflections on language gives further relief to the Nietzschean analysis of knowledge and cognitive. In this register, the need for the reassuring comfort of the same is described as a need for communication. On this analysis, language does not amount to “an ‘understanding,’” but to “a designating in order to *make oneself understood*” (JGB §24/25). When one attends to the fundamentally social nature of language, the historical-conceptual affinities between the structure of knowledge and the unification of consciousness come into view.⁵⁰ One way to bring Nietzsche’s notion

that the consciousness belongs “not to a man’s existence as an individual” but to “the community” aspects of his nature into focus, is by attending to the homology between knowledge and language identified by Herder and German Romantic writers of the previous generation.⁵¹ Since “the world of which we can become conscious is merely a surface-and sign-world, a world turned into generalities and thereby debased to its lowest common denominator,” Nietzsche reasons, “everything which enters consciousness thereby *becomes* shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, a sign, a herd-mark,” and “all becoming conscious involves a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization” (*FW* §354/213–4). Within this “invented and rigid world of concepts and numbers, man gains a means of seizing signs as it were, huge quantities of facts and inscribing them in his memory” (*N* 34[131]/10). This “apparatus of signs” is “man’s superiority,” according to Nietzsche, “because it is at the furthest possible distance from the individual facts” (*N* 34[131]/10). More specifically, “[the] reduction of experience to *signs*, and the ever greater quantity of things which can thus be grasped,” is on Nietzsche’s bitter, ironic assessment “man’s *highest strength*” (*N* 34[131]/10). The process of putting the world into words follows the same tempo as the cognitive processes of sensation and knowledge.

Many of the formulations of the manifestation of this tempo in Nietzsche’s notebooks respond directly to the emphases and values of Kant’s critical idealism. Nietzsche endorses the project of criticism, but in a subversive mode. In working through his ideas about the second order stakes of knowledge and knowing, one can sense Nietzsche’s thought grappling with the ideas of Kantian criticism at a fairly close level of conceptual interaction, if not with the difficulties of the textual details of *KrV*. One of the roles Kant is given is that of the grandmother of all *schematic minds*. This type of person “hold[s] a complex of thought to be *truer* if it can be inscribed into schemata or tables of categories drawn up beforehand” (*N* 40[9]/42). This modality of philosophical self-deception by fixation is pervasive in the tradition, to the point that Nietzsche declares: “almost all great ‘systems’ are among them” (*N* 40[9]/42). Perspicuous description shows that these ways of thinking share the basic moral premise—a “*fundamental prejudice*”—that the relation between the knower and the known is essentially a relation of domination. Knowers exercise relations of power, capacities, that have the effect of subjecting objects—putative objects in the world—to itself, its morality: to its personality, its habits, its values, its whims; they are generals; some are tyrants.⁵² The contingency of the ethics of a culture, of its character, is in Nietzsche’s schema over time progressively made instinctive so that they ultimately impose themselves as our “logic, our sense of time,

sense of space,” our “need for ‘justification’ and these are not products of the capacities of the mind to neutrally, necessarily form the material of the world through an antiseptic synthetic activity (*N* 34[131]/10). They are, rather, merely the “best-established movements of our mind, our regulated gymnastics” that represent the “*philosophical habitus* of the human mind” (*N* 34[131]/10). Rather than provide us with access to the world and reality, these well-worn gymnastics are in fact “prodigious capacities to abbreviate, for the purpose of commanding” (*N* 34[131]/10). They are not just the most general concepts and epistemological capacities and powers, but include the second order factors that condition them and are, for Nietzsche, “our real potency” (*N* 34[89]/6–7). From this standpoint, a *concept*, far from the disinterested, merely theoretical unifying isolation of a distinctive mark, is a *practice*, “an invention which nothing corresponds to *wholly* but many things *slightly*” that is predicated by the attitude of domination provoked by the need to preserve oneself and its attending fear of difference (*N* 34[131]/10). The necessity of this conceptual configuration, the fact that, as a result of the diachronic process of falsification, “in many matters of the mind *we can no longer do otherwise*,” is not the proper object of a deduction, but of a genealogical isolation of its origin, and subsequent redescription in those terms. For Nietzsche, this characteristic is implied by the critical insight that we experience in nature only what we put into it: “it is downright childish to believe that *our* spaces, our time, our instinct for causality are something that could have meaning even apart from man” (*N* 34[89]/6–7). Thus, the great philosophical systems are based on the gratuitous metaphysical assumption that “it is inherent to the *true being* of things to be ordered, easy to survey, systematic,” while “disorder, chaos, the unpredictable can only make its appearance in a world that is false or incompletely known” (*N* 40[9]/42). In short, according to the present analysis of Nietzsche, the true being of things is an error that has the form of a second order prejudice, drawn from, as he puts it, “the fact that the truthful, reliable human being is a man of order, of maxims, and all in all tends to be something predictable and pedantic” (*N* 40[9]/42). But the hypothesis that “the in-themselves of things follows this recipe for the model civil servant” is entirely unwarranted (*N* 40[9]/42). As soon as this moral assumption, this prejudice, is brought to articulation in a genealogical diagnosis, its essential instability surfaces, and its internal incoherence betrays itself. Once it is relinquished as an unavoidable certainty, a much different sense of the world emerges.

For Nietzsche, this capacity to sense the world anew aims to the functioning of the capacities of empirical cognition. It is an indispensable capacity, given the schematic quality of the regularity of the succession

of things in experience, and that empirical regularity is “only a figurative expression,” that it is “*as if* here a rule was being obeyed, but it is not a fact” (N 2[142]/89). Thus, although the first instinct of the knower is “to *look for the rule*,” from Nietzsche’s standpoint, “finding the rule doesn’t yet mean anything at all is ‘known’!” (N 5[10]/107) There are immediate second order implications to be drawn from this assessment. According to this account, regularity itself “lulls to sleep the questioning (i.e., fearing) instinct: to ‘explain’ is to show a rule in what happens,” and consequently, given the sources of the rules that effectively form our self, unreflective belief in the law amounts to belief in “the dangerousness of the arbitrary” (N 5[10]/107). This expression of the problem, the activity of knowing, and the motive of fear sheds a peculiar light on the question from Nietzsche’s notes: “is the ‘philosopher’ still *possible* today?” (N 35[24]/19) The scope and implications of the problem come into view with some distance from the stakes of this reconstruction of Nietzsche’s critical standpoint. The questionable space of his discourse that has been explored represents the gap between *the form of actual experience* (into the form of which fear is inscribed) and *another possible form of experience* that would be more adequate to the unknown, fluctuating reality of the world, and the corresponding irregular, implacable aspects of life. The diagnosis of and the resistance to the need for the kind of comfort that is secured by knowing in Nietzsche can be coupled with his sketch of an alternative orientation to knowledge. These take the form of descriptions of conceivable alternative values to knowledge and truth, which suggest his sympathy for them without expressly endorsing them. Some of these have already been encountered above. He pits, for example, “the value of the shortest and most fleeting, the seductive flash of gold on the belly of the snake *vita*” against “the *value* of what remains eternally the same,” in relation to “the naivety” of Spinoza and of Descartes (N 9[26]/145).

This value would be the organizing principle of an attitude in which one has a “deep disinclination to settle comfortable once and for all in any single overall view of the world,” where one is susceptible to the “charm of the opposite way of thinking” and one refuses “to be robbed of the attraction of the *enigmatic*” (N 2[155]/91; my emp.). This tactical option mirrors Nietzsche’s philosopher type, defined in contrast to the conventional image of the philosopher as a hermit. The direct expression of non-conventional philosophical dispositions does not find its way into published texts, in which Nietzsche restricts his engagement with the question of the nature of the philosophical life that can be negatively valued. Now, there is something structurally problematic but conceptually instructive about the preponderance of the negative in this reticence. Indeed, reflection on the

conditions of this sort of positive characterization of the philosophical ideal, one that makes the resistance to the received view problematic, is helpful in achieving an understanding of the nature of the ideal itself, and of the values—the morality or the personality—that drive Nietzsche's discourse. It is significant that the question is not raised in the context of a proposal for another way of thinking, but as a way to provoke the recognition that there may be other possible ways of thinking, *i.e.*, that value measures of security include the appearance both "of emptiness and fullness, of tautness and slackness, of resting and moving, of like and unlike" (*N* 2[77]/73).

The structural hesitancy in Nietzsche's discourse, with respect to positive characterizations of activities of knowing and of accounting for knowledge that are not manifestations of fear, mirrors its perspicacity with respect to the structure of ones that are. These opposed tendencies are precisely what makes the standpoint suited to the purpose of articulating the presupposed background understanding of discourses of estrangement. With the connections between the configuration of the cognitive and the fear of the unfamiliar in view, the task of critically reexamining the creative wealth of positive strategies and devices proposed in these various discourses, of examining them in light of the origin of the need to which there are responding, can be undertaken. Among these, the most immediately relevant for the examination of the proximity between Kant and Foucault is the question of the actual possibility of philosophy as a form of life. In Foucault's work, the most distinct mark of this Nietzschean theme emerges in the redescription of the relation between the figure of the philosopher and the figure of the public intellectual.

IV. THE INTELLECTUAL AS EXPERIMENTER

Throughout his career, dogged with what he insisted were fundamentally misled characterizations of his thought as structuralist, Foucault was careful to emphasize that even the most obscure of his historical studies were motivated by a personal, present problem. This emphasis on the indispensable personal dimension in philosophical discourse can be traced to the Nietzschean isolation of a second order commitment at the root of all philosophical positions. It first intervenes in Foucault's work as a reaction to the intellectual climate in Paris during Foucault's formative years. Perhaps as a way of circumventing the problem of the relation between theory and practice that had fruitlessly oriented philosophical and political debate in the Marxist atmosphere that dominated the French academy during his student days, Foucault attempted to integrate the relation directly into his

own practice. Thus, paying tribute to Nietzsche's hermeneutic and genealogical key from *JGB* discussed above, in a 1981 interview with his eventual biographer Didier Eribon for *Libération*, he makes it very clear that his studies were undertaken for personal reasons, prior to theoretical interests:

Every time I undertook theoretical work, it was on the basis of elements of my own experience, and always in relation to the processes I was seeing unfold around me. Indeed, if I have undertaken work, a few autobiographical fragments, it is because I thought I recognized cracks, muffled shocks, and dysfunctions in the things that I saw, in the institutions with which I dealt, and in my relations to others.⁵³

In a frequently cited interview for *La revue nouvelle* that took place earlier the later same year, one of the very last interviews he gave in France, Foucault reiterates that all of his books are "autobiographical fragments," generated by his "personal problems" with madness, prison, sexuality, etc.⁵⁴ According to Foucault's own assessments, then, the problems that guided his works were experienced as problems personally, prior to taking on conceptual significance. He claims to be thoroughly conscious of "always moving around" with respect to the things that interest him and work already carried out, and that this mobility is voluntary and theoretically justifiable, even indispensable. Indeed, in a 1978 interview Foucault conducted for an Italian journal, he makes the theoretical motivation for the attitude explicit. He explains that his studies are 'expériences' in a weighty sense of the term, a sense more yet substantive than the thick sense of experience in Kant outlined in Chapter One above:

Une expérience is something from which one leaves transformed. . . . [Each of my] books transforms me and transforms what I think. Each one transforms what I thought when I was finishing the preceding one. I am an experimenter and not a theorist. I call a theorist one who builds a general system either around a deduction or an analysis, and applies it uniformly to different fields. This is not what I do. I am an experimenter, in the sense that I work in order to change myself, so that I longer think the same way as I did before.⁵⁵

As a result of a problem of translation—namely, that *une expérience* in French can be used to designate both "an experience" and "an experiment"—a dimension of Foucault's meaning is bound to be lost should one think only of the English term. More specifically, Foucault's semantic coupling of the concept of *expérience* of the object of research and the

researcher as experimenter leaves no trace in English. In fact, an important part of Foucault's point is that the personal dimension of his work is tied to an experimental approach. One that aims to preserve, in any case, a balance between the immobile solidity of a theoretical apparatus and the polyvalent plasticity of an experimental attitude, as a way of enhancing the possibility that the specificity of the individual practices be preserved through the process of incorporation into a general theoretical framework. In short, the personal aspect of philosophy for Foucault belongs to a knot of concerns about the possibility of a non-reductive theoretical approach. This issue is an epistemological manifestation of the relation of the philosopher to the public. For Foucault's criticism, there is no prescriptive or predictive component to philosophical writing, as he emphasizes in the methodologically illuminating Introduction to *UP*: "There is always something derisory in philosophical discourse when it aims, from the outside, to impose the law on others, to tell them where their truth is, and how to find it, or when it takes it upon itself to instruct their procedures with naïve positivity; but it is its right to explore what, in its own thought, can be changed through the exercise of a knowledge that it strange to it" (*UP*, 15). The relation between the philosopher's position and public opinion mirrors the one between the rigid system and the historical material that it orders.

Foucault links two of these concerns—the experimental-theoretical balance and a further distinct issue—in the ultimately discarded first version of the preface to the *History of Sexuality*:

But I had told myself that after all it would be better to sacrifice a definite program to general line of a procedure; I also told myself that it would not make sense to go to the trouble of writing books if they did not teach the one who wrote them something they did not know, lead them to where they had not planed to go, and allow them to establish a strange and new relation to oneself.⁵⁶

This speaks directly to the matter of the goal and the stakes of his studies and, by metonymy, of his conception of intellectual work more generally, even of his conception of life. In a late interview, he describes these goals in irreducibly personal terms: "The main interest of life and work is to become someone that you were not in the beginning."⁵⁷ For Foucault, thought and life aim to establish a strange and new relation to oneself; he submits that "as boring, as erudite as my books may be, I have always conceived of them as direct experiences that aim to tear myself from myself, to stop myself from being the same."⁵⁸ These

considerations bring into view what is perhaps the primitive motivating factor of the skeptical segment of Foucault's criticism: the value of personal change. The sort of research in which Foucault is engaged aims to generate *transformation*; through the study of a determinate historical content, his studies strive to make possible "*une expérience* of who we are, of what is not only our past but also our present, *une expérience* of our modernity such that we come out of it transformed" (p. 44). The transformation in question must be understood in a broad sense: it is a transformation not only of historical relations, but of theoretical and practical relations as well. Foucault emphasizes the possibility that "at the end of the book we can establish new relations with what is in question," *i.e.*, that a different personal relation can emerge between the author or the reader and the practices analyzed in the work. From the standpoint of Foucault's criticism, the aim of research is an experience of shock and self-estrangement, and pieces of work are experiments constructed in order to effect a transformation of the experimenter, in order to alter one's relation to the truth.

The dimension of Foucault's studies that relates to the present represents an important part of his general outlook that is treated extensively below (see Chapter Three) as a central factor in Foucault's version of criticism.⁵⁹ In the 1981 *La revue nouvelle* interview, Foucault presents the significance of the directedness toward the present in his historical or other work in the form of an autobiographical paradox:

I have always demanded that there be a sort of give and take, of inter-ference, of interconnection between practical activities and the theoretical work or the historical work that I was doing. It seemed to me that I was all the more free to go back long and far in history to the extent that I grounded the questions I posed in an immediate and contemporary relation to practice.⁶⁰

Although his research is primarily directed toward phenomena of the past, his reason for being interested in these historical practices and for undertaking their analysis is invariably contemporary. As he suggests in a 1971 interview for the *Partisan Review*, by studying the constitution and historical formation of human practices of the past, one can perceive in them "ways of thinking and behaving that are still our own," and "systems that are still ours today, and inside of which we are trapped."⁶¹ By structuring a discursive experience around the practices in question, an issue presents itself, and the possibility of transformation comes into view.

These personal and contemporary dimensions of his own studies serve as the basis for a thematic distinction between academic philosophy

and philosophy as a personal experience, in which there is a ringing endorsement of Nietzsche's identification of an element of autobiography as a formal feature of philosophical discourse. The theme emerges most fully in the 1970s, when—one might speculate, as a result of being asked about his apparently incongruous involvement in social causes such as the G.I.P.⁶²—Foucault marshals a series of factors that variously define the relation between his historical studies and his political acts with a regularity and consistency that makes it legitimate to think of this self-characterization as a cohesive model, one treated by Foucault in terms of a new figure of the intellectual. An intellectual in the sense that Foucault took on the term for his own part—that he often qualifies as a 'specific intellectual'—corresponds to the modality of philosophical reflection that serves as an alternative to the conventional model of the institutional philosopher.

The most prominent version of conservative academic philosophy in the context in which Foucault was working in the 1970's was phenomenology. The sort of experience with which the phenomenologist is concerned is, he says in 1978, "a certain way of posing a reflective gaze on a particular lived object, on the everyday in its transitory form in order to grasp its significations," in the goal of "deploying the entire field of possibilities connected to everyday experience."⁶³ Phenomenology here is a manifestation of what Foucault's own studies aim to avoid in academic philosophy: the stasis and the intense theoretical reflectivity that generates preoccupation with methodological problems and the proclivity toward the construction of systems. It embodies the conservative concentration on the ordinary 'everyday': "phenomenology seeks to grasp the signification of everyday experience in order to find the basis upon which the subject that I am is effectively the foundation, in its transcendental functions, of this experience and of these significations" (p. 43).

Foucault contrasts this conception of and approach to experience with the ones involved in the works of non-academic writers that influenced him, figures such as Nietzsche, Blanchot, and Bataille. Experience for them, according to Foucault, "has the function of tearing the subject away from himself, of making it so that he is no longer himself, or that he is carried to his annihilation or his dissolution" (p. 43).⁶⁴ The option being considered here is the former (the question of the dissolution of the subject itself is addressed in Chapter Five); Foucault is suggesting that the philosopher as intellectual aims to create experiences that tear a subject away from himself, so that he emerges from it transformed. The intellectual aims to make what ties us to our modernity appear perspicuously, while making it appear "as our alterity" (p. 46). From this standpoint, "the experience through which we

come to intelligibly grasp certain mechanisms,” and “the manner in which we manage to detach ourselves from them by perceiving them otherwise” amount to the same thing under different descriptions (p. 46). The work of the intellectual attempts to bring about “the transformation of contemporary man in relation to the idea he has of himself” (p. 46). Thus, on Foucault’s model of the intellectual, a text is most primitively an instrument and an agent of self-transformation and transformation.

Four moments of the reversal are worth distinguishing, and each can be anchored in one of Foucault’s own formulations. As experimenter, the work of an intellectual is first to isolate and detach the practice in question from the mass of what has the familiarity of second nature, and, as Foucault explains in the revised French text of the study sessions with Dreyfus and Rabinow at Berkley in 1983, this is undertaken through (i) the “attempt to relieve (*dégager*) the systems of thought that have become familiar to us, that seem obvious and that are incorporated into our perceptions, our attitudes, our behaviors, in their capacity for constraint but also in the contingency of their historical formation.”⁶⁵ In order to generate the possibility to perceive things differently, as experimenter, the philosopher’s role is not like science to “make known what we do not see,” as Foucault explains in a lecture delivered in Japan in 1978, but (ii) “to make visible what precisely is visible, that is, to make appear what is so close, what is so immediate, what is so intimately tied to ourselves that because of that we do not perceive it.”⁶⁶ This process of making visible takes place in the medium of linguistic expression: the intellectual’s task, for Foucault, is essentially an activity of making explicit, *i.e.*, (iii) “to say what is by making it appear as able to not be, or of being able not to be as it is.”⁶⁷ But work, from this standpoint, is driven by a need not only to recognize and describe if and what sort of difference and otherness is possible, but also by (iv) the need to actually undergo transformation in the course of undertaking the work, and to be the agent of such change in others, and in this sense, as Foucault anonymously makes explicit in the 1980 interview with Christian Delacampagne for *Le monde*, as an intellectual and experimental practice, philosophy is “a way of reflecting less on what is true and what is false, but on our relation to the truth.”⁶⁸ This makes for philosophy as a form of action, specifically, as “the movement through which, not without efforts and false starts and dreams and illusions, one detaches oneself from what is given as true and seeks other game-rules” (p. 110).

In the *Magazine littéraire* interview with François Ewald, Foucault describes the integration of this practice into an attitude as an *ethics of the intellectual*, based on the ideal of making oneself “permanently capable of undoing oneself from oneself.”⁶⁹ He presents this ethics as the “the contrary

of the attitude of conversion,” alluding to a triad of characteristics: (a) that it is a capacity, something for which one makes oneself capable through cultivation, (b) that it is a learned practice, not an event that happens once but a constant disposition, and (c) that it is a movement away from and not into oneself. Given the Catholic background, and his pathological hostility to the idea of Christianity, it is not surprising that, for Foucault, the ethics of the intellectual lies in diametrical opposition to a Christian attitude of conversion on all three scores. However, suffice it in this context to note that a more balanced figure of Christian conversion—either in Biblical terms or in the analysis of Early Christian spiritual practices—would in fact prove to mesh with Foucault’s ethics of the intellectual.

When, like in Foucault’s case, one is both an academic philosopher and an intellectual experimenter, this ethical disposition is constrained to the strategic approach of manipulating “a type of knowledge and of analysis that is taught and accepted in the university in order to modify one’s own thought as well as that of others” (p. 675). Ultimately, this technique works to achieve a “modification of one’s own thought and of the thought of others,” which, on this model, is “the reason for being of intellectuals” (p. 675).

In the context of the assessment of the question of the aim of maintaining equilibrium between theory and experimentation, Foucault is careful to emphasize that the sort of modification of others involved in this sort of work is indirect, provocative rather than prescriptive. Making this distinction perspicuous is one of the main factors that motivates the invention of a technical notion as a characterization of the basic theoretical act of the intellectual as experimenter, such as he discusses *e.g.* in the late interview with François Ewald:

The role of an intellectual is not to tell others what to do. By what right would they do so? Remember all the prophesies, promises, injunctions, and programs that intellectuals have formed over the past two centuries and of which we have now seen the effects. The work of an intellectual is not to model the political will of others. Rather, through the analyses that he conducts in the domains that are his own, it is to re-interrogate what is self-evident and what is postulated, to shake up habits, ways of doing things and of thinking, to dissipate accepted familiarities, to take back the measure of the rules and the institutions and, on the basis of this *problematization* (where he plays his role of specific intellectual) to participate in the formation of a public will (where he has his role of citizen in the play).⁷⁰

Here the notion of ‘problematization’ refers specifically to the non-prescriptive work of transformation that is the work of the intellectual. It is one of

the concepts that Foucault introduces retrospectively, in the effort to bring theoretical clarity to aspects of his work that had until then been functioning more obscurely, below the threshold of the theoretical apparatus developed expressly. He uses it regularly in the last two years of his life, typically accompanied by an explanation of how it is being used, but with the inconsistency of a concept that is still in the process of becoming a term of art. However, one of its primary functions is to underscore a methodological distinction between thought, on the one hand, and ideas and mentalities, on the other. Consider his remarks from a 1984 interview with Paul Rabinow:

Thought is not what inhabits a behavior and gives it meaning; it is rather what makes it possible to achieve distance from one's way of doing things or of reacting, to give it to oneself as an object of thought and to interrogate its meaning, its conditions and its ends. Thought is the liberation from what one does, the movement through which one detaches oneself from it, one constitutes it as an object and one reflects on it as a problem.⁷¹

In the Berkeley sessions with Dreyfus and Rabinow some months earlier, Foucault had specified that his work aimed not “to denounce the evil that would secretly inhabit all that exists,” but rather to sense “the danger that threatens in all that is habitual, and to make all that is solid problematic.”⁷² This definition of the field implies that, as a frame of reference for the analysis of thought, the category of *problems* must be distinguished from both (i) *mentalities*, understood as the sets of attitudes that determine forms of conduct, and (ii) *ideas*, understood as the systems of representations that underlie them. The history of ideas and the history of mentalities study what inhabits thought, what regulates the habits of thought. The form of the ‘problematization,’—further and paradoxically isolated by Foucault in his essay on Kant and the Enlightenment as “neither anthropological constant, nor chronological variation”—defines a field of inquiry for conceptual analysis. It is populated by practices that have been made uncertain and that have lost their familiarity. Its description aims to make their habitualness a problem, and makes it possible, Foucault specifies, “to analyze, in their historically singular form, questions that have a general scope.”⁷³ In other words, the problem functions as the unit of the Foucault’s modality of historical analysis, which he generalizes as ‘a history of truth’: “to analyze neither behaviors or ideas, neither societies or their ‘ideologies,’ but the *problematizations* through which being gives itself as being able to and having to be thought and the *practices* from which they are formed.”⁷⁴ The intellectual as experimenter brings

a type of practice into view as an object by making a particular historical practice problematic. On this score the figure of the intellectual is for Foucault in direct contrast with the prescription of a definitive and permanent solution on two different axes: it aims to provoke questioning, not to put an end to it, and it resigns itself to the need to adopt this as a permanent attitude, not something that can be expedited once and for all.⁷⁵ Now, in the Ewald interview cited above, Foucault explains that what he calls an act of problematisation does not involve “the representation of a preexisting object, or the creation by a discourse of an object that does not exist,” but “the set of discursive or non-discursive practices that makes something enter into the game of the true and the false and constitutes it as an object for thought (whether it be in the form of moral reflection, of scientific cognition, of political analysis, etc.).”⁷⁶ In a roughly contemporaneous discussion about the actual problems surrounding prisons, he more succinctly defines problematisation as an effort to make troubling and doubtful what is obvious: “the practices, the rules, the institutions and the habits and had been sedimented for decades and decades.”⁷⁷ This involves an act of thought that rejects the complacent comforting sense of safety in this familiar bedrock and opens itself, Foucault explains during the Berkeley sessions, “to sense the danger that threatens in everything that is habitual, and so makes everything that is solid problematic.”⁷⁸ As such it defines the space of the inaugural task of Foucault’s Kantian criticism.

The motivating factor that drives Foucault’s conception of work of problematisation and of the practice of historical criticism it organizes is captured in his figure of curiosity, strikingly expressed in the Introduction to *UP*:

As for the motivation that guided me, it was quite simple. In the eyes of some, I hope that it might be sufficient by itself. It is curiosity,—the only kind of curiosity, in any case, that is worth practicing with any obstinacy: not one that sets out to become assimilated to what it is advisable to know, but one that allows one to undo oneself from oneself. (*UP*, p. 14)

The point of contrast with Foucault’s curiosity, compliant self-assimilation through the object of knowledge, is precisely the mechanism the product of which Nietzsche describes as fear of difference and chance masquerading as knowledge. Foucault resists a tradition, shared by Christianity, conventional academic Western philosophy, and the attitude of reverence toward science, to stigmatize curiosity as the vice of indolence and futility.

Part of this resistance takes the form of a valorization of curiosity by placing emphasis on its associations with care, as Foucault endeavors to do in “Le philosophe masqué”:

[Curiosity] evokes the care (*soin*) that we take of what exists and what could exist; a sharpened sense of the real, but one that is never immobilized before it; a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and singular; a certain relentlessness in the effort to undo ourselves from what is familiar to us and to look at the same things in a different way; a fervor for seizing what is happening and what passes; an aloofness in regard to the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental.⁷⁹

These six factors present a highly articulated figure of curiosity: attunement to the world, acuteness and polyvalence of perception, fortitude in the face of the new and unknown, determination in the work of separation from the familiar, and insolent dissent. However, in Foucault the emphasis remains on the value of self-transformation: "What would being determined to know be worth," Foucault asks in the Introduction to *UP*, "if it were to guarantee only the acquisition of knowledge, and not [. . .] the distraction (*égarement*) of the one who knows?" (*UP*, 14) *Égarement* carries both the sense of aberration, and the sense of being lost, disoriented, but also, more diffusely, of movement and mobility that is a driving force in the practice of problematisation. In Foucault, this curious task has recourse to a methodological orientation, guided by the ideal of a balanced adjustment of theory to *expérience*. It is in this context that Foucault's description of his approach as experimental can be fully examined. In order to bring this experimental attitude into focus and to outline the strategy it wields, an examination of the relevant concept of *expérience* in Foucault will be required.

V. PAST AND PRESENT EXPERIENCES

From the time of his earliest publications, *une expérience* functioned as the synchronic unit of Foucault's historical analyses. These historical accounts are punctuated by types of experimented experiences, such as the experience of dreaming, or of the clinical, of madness, of literature, of incarceration, or of sexuality. They outline diachronically successive practices in relation to these structurally differentiated forms of experiences. These are experiences to which one gains access by way of the analysis of discourses that are recorded in archived texts. In his research on the history of medical practices, for example, Foucault described the clinical experience and of the anatomical experience, and of the oneiric experience in his extensive introduction to psycho-existentialist Ludwig Binswanger's *Dream and Existence*.⁸⁰ Within the theoretical apparatus of Foucault's writings, these experiences are structurally analogous to practices: an experience is not constituted by the subject's

private and immediate access to the world, but rather as a unit of intelligibility, structured around subjective and objective poles whose modalities are fixed by the specific conceptual configuration of the experience (its form). The form of an experience is articulated in terms of its rules and its site (the form of its generality and the form of its specificity). In a late text, Foucault extended the parallel to include the three fields of investigation in which he exercised his practice of criticism (relations of knowledge, power, and ethics) by describing the structure of an experience as “the correlation, in a culture, between domains of knowledge, types of normativity and forms of subjectivity” (*UP*, 10).

Foucault is describing experiences in this sense when in the 1983 Berkeley session he maintains that, concealed among the cultural inventions of humanity, there is “a whole treasure of procedures, of techniques, of ideas, of mechanisms that cannot really be reactivated, but that help to constitute a sort of standpoint, which can be very useful to analyze and to transform what is happening around us today.”⁸¹ The various points of view that are constituted in Foucault’s historical analyses are a form of *expérience*. It is tempting to take the introduction of a distinction between an experience as a standpoint and an experience as something that could be reactivated to be a concession on Foucault’s part to the voice of the imperative of the logic of the self-referential, but it is in fact more straightforwardly a way of conveying one of the distinctive features of his historical analysis. The most basic aim of this conceptual practice concerns the present, not the past. This is reflected in his descriptions of his type of research as history of the present, or as ontology of actuality.⁸² The preponderance of the present in this approach is a consequence of its aim, which is, as addressed above, at the base a matter of transformation, and particularly of self-transformation. In the extraordinarily illuminating 1978 interview for the Italian journal *Il Contributo*, Foucault explains that his fundamental problem is to undertake, by analysis of a determinate historical content, “an experience of what we are, not only of our past but also of our present, an experience of our modernity such that we come out it transformed.”⁸³ It allows one, by the end of the trajectory of the analysis, to “establish new relations with what is in question”—to transform the relation between author or reader and “madness, with its contemporary status and its history in the modern world” (p. 44). The process through which this transformation is enabled in Foucault’s work comes into view by reflecting on the sense in which he prescribes to undertake an experience, that is, to have a certain kind of experience that is also thereby to conduct a kind of experiment (*faire une expérience*), both of the past and of the present.

This is an area of Foucault's theoretical apparatus about which he says almost nothing. However, a confluence of thematic and structural factors suggests a path for the reconstruction of a methodological protocol. A useful starting point is the polysemy of the French *expérience*. As mentioned above, the word can mean both experience and experiment, and Foucault appeals to both sets of connotations. The experimentation involved is not restricted to the context of the practice of a particular empirical science, but is understood in a broad sense: it refers to a context of discursive openness, one in which the form of the experience has yet to be fully determined, thereby preserving the possibility of profound structural and personal transformation. This experience-as-experiment is possible in any domain of experience, but in the context in question, it intervenes at the level of discursive practices, specifically in relation to Foucault's understanding of philosophical discourse.

In Foucault's historical analyses, the experimentation involved resembles spiritual exercises after the manner of the Neo-Platonist and early Christian thinkers that Foucault studied during the final years of his life. Among other functions, this interest in the ethical practices of late Antiquity can be understood as a theoretical detour in the course of coming to grips with methodological concerns. Foucault retrospectively construed his historical analyses as contemporary practices closely related to the spiritual exercises that he identified in Greek texts. Indeed, a fruitful context in which to address this dimension of his thought is the configuration of concepts developed for the analysis of ethical relations for the analysis of techniques of hermeneutics of the self in late Antiquity and early Christianity. Foucault uses this framework as an interpretive grid for a particular aspect of the skeptical segment of his own practice of historical analysis. In a 1982 interview, he described his various objects of research in terms of different techniques or 'matrixes of practical reason.' There he specifies that his overarching objective has been "to outline a history of the different ways that humans in our culture develop knowledge of themselves," in the context of an outlook for which what is essential is not "to take this knowledge at face value, but to analyze these alleged sciences as so many 'truth games' that are tied to specific techniques that men use in order to understand who they are."⁸⁴ He enumerates four types of techniques: i) techniques of production; ii) techniques of systems of signs; iii) techniques of power; iv) techniques of the self. Together these "allow individuals to carry out, alone or with others, a certain number of operations on their bodies and their souls, their thoughts, their behaviors, their modes of being; to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (p. 785). The importance of ethical relations manifests itself here formally: they regulate

both one of the specific techniques that have been analyzed by Foucault and a facet of the general drive of his practice of analysis itself, namely the goal of self-transformation. In relation to Kant's criticism, this aspect of the skeptical moment in Foucault's version represents a shift of emphasis from the ultimately conservative Kantian goal; a similar mechanism of shock is put to work in the service of two different aims.

Foucault maintained that in certain traditions of Greek philosophy it was essential that "a subject could only have access to truth by first realizing a certain work on itself that make it susceptible to know the truth."⁸⁵ It is the philosophical significance of this relation between "access to the truth and the work of elaboration of the self by the self" that Foucault undertook to revive by emphasizing the experimental nature of his own studies (p. 630). His analyses of discursive practices both involve experiments of these practices, and are themselves experiments. In fact, on one occasion he explicitly connects this experimental side of his work with the Greek concept of exercise (*ascesis*). He describes his work as "a philosophical exercise," which from the standpoint of its "pragmatics" can be understood as "the protocol of an exercise that was long, groping and that often had to go back and correct itself" (*UP*, p. 15). Philosophy, Foucault stipulates, is "the critical work of thought on itself," and its primary task is not to legitimate what we already know, but to determine "how and to what point it would be possible to think otherwise" (*UP*, p. 15). Philosophical discourse becomes trivial if it claims to lay down the law for others from the outside, if it attempts "to tell them where their truth is, and how to find it, or when it undertakes to conduct their trial with naïve positivity" (*UP*, 15). The philosophical work that is worth undertaking, according to Foucault, explores that which "in its own thought, can be changed by the exercise it makes of knowledge that is foreign to it" (*UP*, 15). He proposes to understand his works on the model of the *essay*, in the a sense of "a modifying trial of oneself in the game of truth and not as a simplifying appropriation of others for the ends of communication—is the living body of philosophy, at least to the extent that it still is now what it used to be, that is, an ascetic exercise of self, in thought" (*UP*, 15). The stakes of this form of work are to determine "the extent to which the work of thinking its own history can emancipate thought from what it silently thinks and to allow it to think otherwise" (*UP*, 15). These historical investigations "explore that which, in one's own thought, can be altered by the exercise that one makes of foreign knowledge" (*UP*, 15). They aim to generate recognition of the contingency of one's own way of thinking by provoking thought to unlock itself from itself in order to see itself and its circumstances, anew, from a new standpoint. Foucault appeals to the image

of loosening the contingency of the forms of actuality away from the grip of their apparent necessity by way of a historical exercise its sources: to think its own history in order to liberate thought from the comfortable familiarity that, at a diachronically specifiable moment, its fear drove it to create through the invention of conservative categories that can be wholly assimilated. It is through this self-emancipation from an aspect of one's conceptual capacities, Foucault suggests, that it becomes possible to experience new and foreign forms of thought.

When Foucault's mode of analysis is considered in light of its embeddedness in the tradition of philosophical exercises, the preponderance of the present dictated by its experimental side suggests a radically counter-intuitive thrust to the aim of this type of investigation. It can be approached by reflecting on the distinction between experience-as-experiment as a discursive and textual technique, and experience-as-experiment as a broad philosophical commitment about the nature of the value of experience. This contrast introduces a degree of complexity into the role of experimentation in Foucault's work, as a result of the specifically non-textual nature of the hermeneutics of the self that serves as a kind of model for the textual function of experimentation in Foucault's writings, and which Foucault expressly contrasts with textual hermeneutics as a distinct practical tradition. Foucault integrates what Nietzsche described as the personal, non-textual ascetic practices of self-relation, into a practice of analysis of practices in history, and thus of texts. Within the theoretical apparatus that regulates his practice of historical criticism, a hermeneutics of the self is effectively incorporated into a textual hermeneutics. Thus, by virtue of its skeptical component, Foucault's Kantian criticism itself—and indeed Kant's own version of it—can be seen as an illustration of Foucault's historical observation that “the hermeneutics of the self was spread throughout Western culture, infiltrating numerous canals and integrating itself in various types of attitude and experience, such that it is difficult to isolate and distinguish it from our spontaneous practices” (p. 784). The task at hand, in these terms, is to isolate and distinguish the form of hermeneutics of the self that is integrated into Foucault's own practice from our spontaneous practices of discourse, and thus from a natural or intuitive way of conceiving Foucault's aim.

A central theme in this connection is Foucault's use of history as a device to disaffect us from a specific quality of our experience, namely, the more or less articulate conviction that it is the one and only way to experience things, that our experience is formed by rules and laws that make experience possible, and thus has and will always exist, to the extent that there has been and will be experience at all. In the *Il Contributo* piece, he explains that:

. . . recourse to history—one of the primary philosophical tendencies in France over at least the past twenty years—is meaningful to the extent that history has the function of showing that what is has not always been, that is that it is always at the confluence of encounters, of dangers. The things that give us the impression of being the most obvious were formed as a thread of fragile and vicarious history. One can indeed give the history and find the networks of contingencies of what reason experiences (*fait l'expérience*) as its necessity, or rather of what the different forms of rationality give as being necessary for them. While this does not mean that these forms of irrationality were irrational, it does mean that they rest on a base of human practice and human history, and since these things have been made, they can, on condition that we know how they were made, be unmade.⁸⁶

From this standpoint, history and historical discontinuity more specifically is an instrument of separation from the immediacy and the solidity of the contemporary, as a manifestation of the comforting transparent familiarity of one's self. It functions by the logic of a mechanism of juxtaposition: the representation of the categorical difference of forms of experience of the past, when set into proximity with the familiarity of our own form of experience, by playing on our epistemological and psychological attachment to it, produces a shocking effect.⁸⁷ Implications of the form and the varieties of this device, which will be addressed below, take shape in relation to the basic aim of Foucault's work. This objective is defined in relation to the problem of the *truth* of the historical account.

The interplay between history, truth and fiction functions as a motif of Foucault's retrospective clarifications, but its complexities have impeded as much as facilitated access to the conceptual motivations of his thought. If Foucault's criticism is or at least involves a philosophical exercise of a plurality of historical forms of experience that ultimately aims to exercise the present experience, the question of the relation between the present and a historical experience naturally arises. While this matter is left completely unaddressed by Foucault, a corresponding aspect of his conceptual practice can be defined on the basis of one of his specifications about an adjacent concern and of a particular aspect of how the relevant concepts function in his analyses. On the one hand, in his descriptions of the aim of these studies, Foucault gives unambiguous priority to the present experience: his most basic stated goal is to provoke the sort of self-transformation that is a condition of the possibility of thinking and experiencing

otherwise. In this respect, the value of exercising forms of experience of the past is subordinate to, and perhaps even exhausted in the value of the exercise of the present. On the other hand, there is in Foucault's practice no provision for the possibility of acquiring access to a historical form of experience; there is no account of how one can exercise one's experience from the standpoint of another. The conceptual discontinuity among the forms of experience of the past appears to pose obvious difficulties: not only the question of how one can arrive at true description of past practices, but apparently more intractable problems about the possibility of so much as being able to encounter conceptual difference, of recognizing the integrity of a historical practice from the standpoint of the practice presently being exercised. Although Foucault's silence in this connection is conspicuous, instead of considering it to be a failing, it can be addressed as a clue to be pursued in connection with the fundamental role of the analysis of historical practices in Foucault's work. When the teleological factor is considered in conjunction with this formal alignment, a possible determination of the relation between historical experiences and the experience of the present comes into view. It can be reconstructed around the idea of *artificiality* as a determinant of the exercise of historical forms of experience.

When faced with a historical narrative told in terms of successions of forms of experiences that culminate in contemporary experience (as such, or of something or other), one might ask oneself whether a single conception of experience is involved in both cases, as well as what the structure of such a concept or concepts of experience would have to be in order for it be possible for a reader to exercise both past defunct experiences and present forms of experience as Foucault's texts demands. This is where Foucault's enigmatic and provocative remarks about the bearing of the opposition between truth and fiction on his historical analyses intervene directly:

I am not really a historian. And I am not a novelist. I practice a sort of historical fiction. In a certain sense, I know very well that what I write is not true. A historian might well say that what I have written 'is not the truth.' . . . I know very well that what I have done is, from a historical standpoint, partial and exaggerated. Perhaps I did not consider certain elements that would contradict me. But my book [*Histoire de la folie*] had an effect on the way that madness is perceived. And thus my book and the thesis I develop in it have truth in today's reality. I try to provoke interference between our reality and what we know of our historical past. If I succeed, this interference will produce real

effects on our own present history. My hope is that my books acquire their truth after they have been written and not before.⁸⁸

The attitude that Foucault displays toward his work here is grounded on a contrast between truth as ordinarily understood and truth in the sense that his historical analyses strive to have truth. Although he requires that what he writes “must be true in terms of academic, historically verifiable truth” (p. 45)—he is not a novelist—the sort of truth he aims for is not inconsistent with partiality, exaggeration, and unabashed selectiveness. The truth of his works is the kind of truth that a fiction can have, one whose hallmark is the capacity of a discourse to effect its audience, to spur transformation. On this conception of truth, the truth of a historical account can only be measured by its effects in the present. Foucault maintains that he writes a book to “function like an experience, for the one who writes it and for the one who reads it, much more than as the observation of a historical truth” (p. 45). It is the possibility of exercising this experience that is crucial for Foucault, and not the “series of true or historically verifiable observations” (p. 45). An experience in this sense is not a proper matter for the categories true or false: “An experience is always a fiction; it is something that one manufactures for oneself, that does not exist before and that will find itself existing after” (p. 45). Thus although his studies appeal to true documents, they do so “in a way that makes possible not only the observation of truth, but also an experience that authorizes an alteration, a transformation of the relation that we bear to ourselves and to the world in which, until then, we had recognized ourselves without difficulty” (pp. 45–6). This interplay between truth and fiction, between “observation and manufacturing,” both makes our relation to the present perspicuous and “makes it appear to us as altered” (p. 46).⁸⁹ In other words, the exercise of the experience in which we have access to, “through which we are able to intelligibly grasp” historical practices, is “the way that we manage to detach ourselves from them by perceiving them otherwise” (p. 46).

The correlation between the sense in which Foucault’s historical analyses aim to be true and their capacity to alter one’s relation to the actual and to oneself suggests a methodological and an epistemological distinction between the historical experiences that are analyzed in his writings, and the present experience that these analyses aim to modify. The subordination of the former to the latter, as a consideration of method, and the fact that the standard of success of the historical work is measured by its effect on the former, invite the epistemological speculation that the historical experiences of the past that are exercised through their analysis are not real in the same sense as our present experience is real. These past experiences are manufactured, on

the basis of factual material, strictly for the purpose of generating a certain effect. In this respect, within Foucault's theoretical apparatus, it is legitimate to think of the historical experiences as fundamentally artificial. Foucault's analyses integrate a moment that is artistic in this sense: they make historical experiences into facts of art. His descriptions of discursive practices that have fallen into abeyance do not aim to recapture and make it possible to relive the forms of experience in question such as they would have been exercised as present experiences. Instead, they allow one to artificially exercise historical fictional experiences that can provoke real modification of our relation to the present.

VI. ESTRANGEMENT AS A DISCURSIVE DEVICE

Together, the figure of the intellectual as experimenter and the idea of experience as experimental exercise integrate the elements of a skeptical procedure into Foucault's practice of criticism. It is remarkable that this aspect of the practice functions in a register that undercuts the author-reader relation: there is a tacit understanding in Foucault's discussions of this dynamic that the discourse exercised in the writing of his texts and the one we exercise by reading it have the same structure. More specifically, the skeptical moment in Foucault's conceptual practice takes the form of a discursive device, which is formally similar to the antinomical situation of the moment of skepticism in Kant's criticism. These two levels of analysis mark out two functions of the moment of estrangement in Foucault's theoretical apparatus: it is both the ultimate goal of his work (the ethics of the intellectual) and the goal of various textual devices used in its first stage. Estrangement is both the goal of thought (philosophical reflection) itself, and of the device that inaugurates thought. The former, which intervenes in Foucault's work broadly as the most general, largely inarticulate stakes of his work, was addressed above as the role of the philosopher as an intellectual. The latter, which is left to be considered, is a particular type of textual device that is integrated into his discursive practice. In other words, a particularly clear manifestation of the skeptical facet of his discursive practice takes the form of a pervasive textual strategy.⁹⁰ In a pair of essays on Foucault, Ian Hacking draws attention to the role of this strategy in Foucault's work, remarking that Foucault's histories are stories; they are *dramatic*, in the sense that they present "a reordering of events that we had not perceived before," which is made effective by sudden breaks being illustrated by what he refers to as "one of the most powerful of Foucault's stylistic devices," namely, "brilliant before-and-after snapshots taken on either side of the divide during which one tradition is transformed into another, [. . .] whose quotations or

descriptions permanently fix in the mind of the reader the fact that some upheaval in thought has occurred.”⁹¹ This is an apt description of Foucault’s most important textual strategy, but a more specific characterization is possible, and a complex historical tradition into which to immerse it can be brought into view.

In this connection, the analysis of what Foucault calls “the archive” in *AS* has unique methodological importance. It defines a region of inquiry that, he writes, “is both close to us, and different than our actuality” (*AS*, 172). This space of analysis is what from “outside us, delimits us”: “it is the border of time that surrounds our present, that hangs over it and points it out in its alterity” (*AS*, 172). It is a form of analysis that functions as a mechanism of cultural diagnostic of the present:

The description of the archive deploys its possibilities (and the mastery of its possibilities) on the basis of just those discourses that have just ceased to be our own; its threshold of existence is established by the break that separates us from what we can no longer say, and that falls outside our discursive practice; it begins with the outside of our own language; its place is the gaps between our own discursive practices. In this sense, it serves as our diagnostic. . . . Not that it would allow us to make a table of our distinctive features and to outline the shape that we will take in the future in advance. But it *undoes us from our continuities*; it dissipates that temporal identity in which we like to look at ourselves, in order to conjure the ruptures of history; it breaks the thread of transcendental teleologies; and where anthropological thinking interrogated man’s being or subjectivity, it shatters the other and the outside. (*AS*, 172; my emp.)

By staking out the peculiar diachronic layer of discourse that serves as its field of analysis, one which falls into the gaps between conventional discursive taxonomies, Foucault’s study of practices in history equips itself with the capacity to achieve the distance from oneself and from one’s culture that is required for genuine cultural self-understanding. It is within this field that a discursive device can be deployed to bring the specificity and the contingency of the form of an experience into focus. It does so by dramatically drawing attention to the ruptures and breaks between present forms of experience and their precursors, by perspicuously presenting us with what is no longer possible for us, with what we can no longer say or make sense of. The unassailable fact of difference that this thrusts upon us is presented to us within this rhetorical maneuver in order to break down the comforting sense of historical continuity that reinforces the definiteness and permanence of

our forms of experience. Thus, as a diagnostic tool, the analysis of the archive does not aim to demonstrate the constitution of our identity by way of “a play of differences,” but rather “establishes that we are difference, that our reason is the difference of discourses, our history, the difference of times, our self, the difference of masks” (*AS*, 172–3). It shows that difference, “far from being a forgotten and recovered origin, is the dispersion that we are and that we make” (*AS*, 173). In this conceptual space, the discursive mechanism of estrangement integrates the figure of curiosity and the exercise of problematization into Foucault’s grid. Curious problematization and the device of estrangement function together in determining and carrying out the critical aim of Foucault’s analyses. The distinctiveness of this type of historical investigation lies in its aim to manifest the contingency of one’s own way of thinking by making experience mysterious and enigmatic, thereby provoking one’s own thought to undo itself from itself in order to see itself—its own circumstances, its own form of experience—in a new way, from a new standpoint. By responding to being confronted with the enigmatic character of one’s ordinary experience, of one’s actuality, with a historical ‘exercise’ of different forms of experience, the contingency of our own form can be loosened from the solidity of our unreflective assuredness that our own way of thinking is the only one possible. The critical aim of Foucault’s analytic grid is to let thought think its own history in order to “emancipate thought from that which it thinks silently and allow it to think otherwise” (*UP*, 15). The notion of what thought thinks silently in Foucault’s idiom marks out the implicit dimension in a given culture to which the second order conceptual discourse that regulates what is said belongs. It includes the formal features of experience that are silent not only in the sense that they are not actually ordinarily spoken of, but in the sense that they ordinarily function without calling attention to themselves: we typically do not recognize that our thinking is regulated by a specific form. The distancing of oneself from this silently thought form, which is a condition of being able to experience other forms, can itself only take place on the condition of their being made explicit. This voicing of what is silently thought is part of what is involved in the task of the strategic textual device in Foucault’s critical apparatus, one that casts a confrontation between a description of the ordinarily tacit, felt necessities of the present and a fictional description of a plurality of foreign forms of historical experience. Foucault’s discursive expedient appeals to what Hacking calls the ‘before-and-after pictures’ in the analysis of a transition from one discursive dispensation to another, the exercise juxtaposes descriptions of discursive practices, without commentary, in order to create the required violence: a shocking, distancing effect.

This textual mechanism can be associated with what Russian formalist literary theorists characterized as the device of estrangement or defamiliarization. The strategy designs to provoke a movement of self-estrangement in the reader. A classic treatment of the notion is found in Viktor Shklovsky's *Theory of Prose*, a standard of Russian Formalist literary criticism.⁹² The device is central for Shklovsky; in fact, he shapes his definition of art itself around it: "The purpose of art is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By 'defamiliarizing' objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and 'laborious'".⁹³ In a Kantian context, this device is exercised as a capacity in a practice that compels one to turn back on oneself in the effort of establishing distance between oneself and one's environing objects, including oneself, by transforming one's perception in such a way that familiar things seem to appear to us for the first time, by liberating oneself from the familiar and the ordinary in order to open a space for the strange and the unusual. The explanatory framework is an alternative version of Nietzsche's genealogy of the cognitive capacities, developed around the theme of 'automization':

If we examine the general laws of perception, we see that as it becomes habitual, it also becomes automatic. So eventually all of our skills and experiences function unconsciously—automatically. [. . .] This abstractive character of thought suggests not only the method of thinking but also the choice of symbols (letters and, more precisely, initial letters). By means of this algebraic method of thinking, objects are grasped spatially, in the blink of an eye. We do not see them, we merely recognize them by their primary characteristics. The object passes before us, as if it were prepackaged. We know that it exists because of its position in space, but we see only its surface. Gradually, under the influence of this generalizing perception, the object fades away. [. . .] And so, held accountable for nothing, life fades away into nothingness. Automation eats away at things, clothes, at furniture, at our wives, and at our fear of war (pp. 4–5).

Shklovsky's point of departure is the Nietzschean diagnostic that the general laws of perception create and entrench a proclivity toward the habitual through which everything in experience becomes automatic, so that eventually "all of our skills and experiences function unconsciously—automatically."⁹⁴ This process of automatization explains, according to Shklovsky, "the laws of our prose speech with its fragmentary phrases and half-articulated words."⁹⁵ We no longer see things, but "merely recognize

them by their primary characteristics,” and gradually, under the influence of this generalizing perception, the object fades away.”⁹⁶ After being perceived several times, through the process of automatization, objects “acquire the status of ‘recognition’”; although in a sense the object appears before us, although we know it is there, “we do not see it, and, for that reason, we can say nothing about it.”⁹⁷

Given this diagnosis, in order to remove objects from the sphere of automatization, Shklovsky prescribes a remedy in the form of a type of discursive device, one that is attuned to the essence of the practice of art as such.⁹⁸

And so in order to return sensation to our limbs, in order to make us feel objects, to make a stone feel stony, man has been given the tool of art. The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By ‘estranging’ objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and ‘laborious.’ The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to the fullest. *Art is a means of experiencing the process of creativity. The artifact itself is quite unimportant.*⁹⁹

In order to transform an object into “a fact of art,” it must be made strange. To do so, one must “withdraw it from the domain of life,” and to do this, “we must first and foremost ‘shake up the object,’ as Ivan the Terrible sorted out his henchmen,” in order to “extricate a thing from the cluster of associations in which it is bound,” by turning over the object “as one would turn a log over the fire.”¹⁰⁰ Shklovsky extends this theme by contrasting poetic and prosaic discourse as the respective manifestations of artistic and automated experience.¹⁰¹ The poet “removes all signs from their places,” and “always incites insurrections among things,” that are “always in a state of revolt with poets, casting off their old names and adopting new names and new faces.”¹⁰² Shklovsky outlines the basic act of the mechanism of estrangement when he explains that the poet “employs images as figures of speech by comparing them with each other.”¹⁰³ As a discursive device, in short, estrangement is fundamentally a form of comparison that aims to extract what is being compared from the intimacy of automated familiarity.

This sort of device is used in Foucault to provoke curiosity in all domains of historical analysis: in the analysis of discursive practices, in the analysis of relations of power, and in the analysis of ipseic practices. In each of these domains, he has recourse to the device in a variety of contexts. Without attempting an inventory of these uses of the discursive device of

estrangement—one can be identified in every instance of his criticism—the most effective way to capture the logic of this mechanism is to canvas a representative but heterogeneous selection of its uses.¹⁰⁴

Perhaps the most striking of these occurs in *Surveiller et punir*. This account of the emergence of the practice of imprisonment opens with successive descriptions of the Damien execution and the list of rules from Faucher's rulebook on the regulation of delinquent institutions. These uncommented accounts are presented in juxtaposition as samples of distinct forms of experience, of two different dispositions of relations of knowledge, power, and subjectivity; the comparison aims, through the effect of the violence of the contrast and the apparent incommensurability of the two situations, to disturb the reader's self-assurance in the feeling of the necessity of her own form of experience in this area, of the security of the inevitability of her own dispensation of thought. The juxtaposition invites an artful exercise of forms of experiences that shocks the reader out of the security that attends unreflective assurance in the uniqueness and inevitability of one's own standpoint. In this respect, the situation is structurally similar to the antinomial character of the moment of skepticism in Kant's apparatus. In both cases, the impossibility of drawing the opposed standpoints into a single frame of reference generates the sort of shock that is required to arrive at the realization that the attempt to do so is misguided, and that a plurality of standpoints must be preserved.

The use of psychotropic drugs, according to Foucault, can generate an occasion for an experience of disaffecting juxtaposition that is in many respects analogous to the moment of skepticism in the practice of criticism. In "Theatrum philosophicum," Foucault's masterful critical essay on Deleuze's *Différence et Répétition* and *Logique du sens*, he reports that the consumption of drugs such as LSD and opium stimulate the capacities that produce a form of experience that "in no way concerns the true and the false," but rather "opens a world that is 'more true than the real'" (p. 95). By displacing the relation between thought and *la bêtise* (brutish stupidity), this experience lifts "the old necessity of the theatre of the immobile," with the effect of mobilizing the former in order to "color it, agitate it, cut across it, dissipate it, fill it with differences and substitute rare lightning with continual phosphorescence" (p. 95). With the form experience induced by LSD, for example, Foucault submits that it does not "put the suzerainty of the categories out of commission," but rather "rips the background from its indifference and reduces the dismal mimic of foolishness to nothing; and it not only gives all this univocal and a-categorical mass to be seen as many-colored, mobile, asymmetrical, de-centered, spiroid, resonating, but also makes it swarm at every instant with fantasy-events; sliding

on this surface, both punctual and immensely vibrating thought, free from its catatonic chrysalis, forever contemplates the indefinite equivalence that has become a sharp event and a sumptuously prepared repetition” (p. 94). Foucault notes that opium induces different, but equally potentially estranging effects: “thought in its apex collects the unique difference, rejecting the background as far as possible, and removing from immobility the task of contemplating and of calling foolishness to itself by mimicking it; opium guarantees a weightless immobility, a butterfly-like stupor beyond catatonic rigidity; and, far below it, it deploys a background, a background that no longer stupidly absorbs all differences, but allows them to surge forth and scintillate like so many minute events, distanced, smiling and eternal” (p. 95). To be sure, this analogy between the estranging potential of certain practices of psychotropic drug consumption and the effect of the skeptical procedure in the practice of criticism raises more questions than it settles, and further examination of Foucault’s suggestion would perhaps introduce counter-productive complexities at this stage of the analysis. It is sufficient to note, in brief, that Foucault does not consider the need for shocking arousal to be limited to the sphere of intellectual work and its practice of criticism, in so far as, *e.g.*, the experimental consumption of certain drugs stimulates or otherwise promotes the capacity to unwrench thought from its unexamined and static complacency through imaginative comparative exercise of a different form of experience.

Perhaps the most complex and conceptually rich estrangement device in Foucault’s texts is the one that frames *Les mots et les choses*. This study comprises an account of the emergence of the human sciences. It is largely composed of the historical analysis of a trio of arcane disciplines, precursors of these sciences. Foucault eventually comes to describe the book as an attempt, he glosses in a late interview, to show “how the human subject defines himself in scientific discourse as a speaking, living, working individual.”¹⁰⁵ The book’s preface, however, is opaque and apparently disjointed from to the rest of its content.¹⁰⁶ It opens with the following disclosure:

The birthplace of this book is a text by Borges. In the laughter that in reading it rouses all the familiarities of thought—of our thought: of the one that is of our age and geography -, shaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes that settle down the abundance of beings for us, wobbling and worrying for a long time our millenary practice of the Same and the Other. (*MC*, 7)

The form of the claim that Foucault is advancing here is not immediately obvious. It becomes clear in course that he is describing an autobiographical

moment in figurative terms, as an illustration of the motivation that carries the book. But he is also introducing laughter as a conceptual figure, drawing it into relation with a particular experiential structure. The four effects that are attributed to the laughter provoked by Borges's piece are described by verbs of action: *secouer*, *ébranler*, *faire vaciller*, and *inquiéter* (rousing, shaking up, wobbling, and worrying). What is affected by this action is ultimately our own thought, contemporary thought, in a state of settled, comfortable familiarity. But prior to this effect, there is another affectation, which involves Foucault as a reader, and by extension each of the readers of his own text: he is associating the initial conception of the book, and thus something about its aim, with a particular form of experience that he describes by appealing to a situation in which reading something made him laugh. This effect is a particular kind of laughter, one not distinguished by association with a certain personality trait or by degree of intensity, but by its conceptual significance; Foucault uses laughter as a figure of thought, as an image to describe the articulation of a particular conceptual space perspicuously.

Given Foucault's proximity to Nietzsche in this area, one reinforced by the appeal to Nietzsche as a model for the second order discourse analyzed above, there is good reason to speculate that this piece of conceptual armature is borrowed from Nietzsche's idea of "gay science"—the subtitle *La gaya scienza* is an allusion to the troubadours—as a formal characterization of the practice of philosophy, and of the theoretical standpoint that he calls *value*.¹⁰⁷ It is most perspicuous in the writings of the mid to late eighties. In these works, laughter functions as conceptual figures that evolve from their corresponding psychological states.¹⁰⁸ They represent the poles of what Nietzsche calls gay science: the practice of criticism undertaken in—as the affective quality of the imagery suggests—a particular mood, by a particular personality type, within a specific form of space.

For most people, the intellect is an awkward, gloomy, creaking machine that is hard to start: when they want to work with this machine and think well, they call it 'taking the matter *seriously*'—oh, how taxing good thinking must be for them! The lovely human beast seems to lose its good mood when it thinks well; it becomes 'serious'! And 'where laughter and gaiety are found, thinking is good for nothing'—that is the prejudice of this serious beast against all 'gay science.' (*FW* §327/142–3)

This is a position endorsed, as Nietzsche points out in the passage of *FW* to which Foucault appeals for material for his historical model, by Spinoza. In relation to the Spinozistic imploration not to laugh, or to lament, or to curse,

but to *know*, Nietzsche submits that the last may in fact be nothing “other than the way we become sensible of the other three,” that he describes as “different and conflicting impulses” (p. 185). Knowledge and understanding is a *result* of these pressures; before it is possible, each of them “must first have presented its one-sided views, and occasionally out of it a mean, an appeasement, a concession to all three sides, a kind of justice and contract” (pp. 185–6). Since only the culmination of the process—the reconciled state of knowledge—is accessible to conscious thought, we take knowledge to be “something conciliatory, just, and good, something essentially opposed to the instincts, when in fact *it is only a certain behavior of the drives toward one another*” (p. 186).¹⁰⁹ Laughter, according to this picture, is an indispensable source of knowledge. It is the function of a more basic unit of discourse than the subject of knowledge. The level of agency of the laughter is sub-subjective: it is not an instrument for the subject of knowledge, but rather, the subject of knowledge is its instrument. Its behavior is not that of a consciousness, understood—to appeal to Nietzsche’s image addressed above—as the grasping hand that reaches furthest.

In Foucault’s Preface, conceptual laughter, itself the effect of reading a certain text, affects our relation to ourselves and to our actuality. It disrupts—rouses, shakes up, wobbles and worries—the artificially and fraudulently acquired fortitude of our thought and experience. What Foucault’s anecdote aims to convey about the book that it opens is the result of this two-stage disaffection (a reader to laughter and thought to precariousness), namely, that the content of the book is determined as a result of the recognition of ourselves, our knowledge and our present. The text that made the author of *MC* laugh is a piece called *The Analytic Language of John Wilkins*, in which Borges evokes an apocryphal Chinese encyclopedia that includes an extraordinary classification of animals.¹¹⁰ Borges’ text, Foucault writes:

. . . cites “a certain Chinese encyclopedia” in which it is written that animals are divided into: a) belonging to the Emperor, b) embalmed, c) tamed, d) sucking-pigs, e) mermaids, f) fabulous, g) free dogs, h) included in the present classification, i) that behave like mad, j) innumerable, k) drawn with a very fine camel hair brush, l) *et caetera*, m) that have just broken the jug, n) that from afar seem like flies. (*MC*, 7)

The theoretical appeal of this list is for Foucault its depiction of an unthinkable comparison. A series of characteristics is juxtaposed that we cannot simultaneously combine into a single standpoint. The items of the list are like rules that don’t belong to a recognizable game: they are all either rules to different games, or rules to a game we don’t know about.

It gives us the impression of having reached “the limit of our thought,” of “the naked impossibility of thinking that” (*MC*, 7). It presents an unthinkable common space, a non-intuitive space, in the sense of the diametrical opposite of Kant’s concept of space as the form of intuition. It is a spaced that has been “ruined” (*MC*, 8).¹¹¹ Borges, Foucault explains, avoids “the most unassuming but the most insistent necessity,” by slipping away “the location, the mute ground where beings can be juxtaposed” (*MC*, 9). As a result, Foucault characterizes what Borges’ list represents as a ‘heteropia’: by contract with a utopia, it is not a space that does not exist, but an existence (a formed series of beings) that has no space. Foucault’s emphasis in this context is on the discursive experience that reading the description of the heteropic list provokes, and not on the conceptual relation between the concepts it enumerates, as though Foucault’s affectation was the result of a conceptual analysis of the classification. Borges’ heteropia marks out a form of experience generated by the effect that the list had on him and has on us. Whereas utopias are comforting, for “if they have no real place (*lieu*), they nevertheless flourish in a wonderful and sleek space,” heteropias are worrisome, “because they secretly undermine language, because they stop one from naming this and that, because they break or overlap with common nouns, because they ruin ‘syntax’ in advance, and not merely the one that constructs sentences,—the less manifest one that ‘holds together’ (side by side and face to face) words and things” (*MC*, 9). Heteropias strike one as monstrosities, and effect one consequently (see *MC*, 7). This effect—“the wonder of this taxonomy,” and “the confusion” it produces (*MC*, 7; 9)—manifests itself psychologically and physiognomically as laughter. Foucault gives this conceptually-laden laughter a Nietzschean source:

Borges’s text made me laugh for a long time, not without a definite malaise that was difficult to overcome. Perhaps it is because in its wake it left the hint that there is worse disorder than that of the *incongruous* and of the bringing together of the inappropriate; it would be the disorder that makes the fragments of a great number of possible orders scintillate in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the heteroclite; and one must understand this word in close proximity to its etymology: the things are ‘laid,’ ‘set down,’ ‘disposed’ in sites so different that it is impossible to find a space in which to welcome them, to define a *common place* (*lieu*) beneath them all. (*MC*, 9)

The conceptual analysis of this impossibility and its relation to the sort of history Foucault is doing would take the discussion further a field that the

scope of this chapter; it is undertaken in ensuing discussions in Chapter 4. Foucault's fictional identification of the origin of the book in the disaffection produced by Borges' taxonomy and made sensible in laughter is a reflective gesture, a kind of parody of the situation of the book itself. This description of the author's reaction to the Borges' piece mimics the response that the book aims to provoke in the reader, by describing historical forms of experience—the practices that were precursors to the human sciences—whose conceptual configuration is to us, like Borges' taxonomy to Foucault, encountered as heteropias and greeted with laughter.

Chapter Three

The Aim of Criticism in Foucault

“But what is philosophy today—I mean philosophical activity—if not the critical work of thought on itself?” (UP, 14)

I. INTRODUCTION

In isolating the theoretical objectives of Foucault’s criticism, this chapter aims to define the unifying orientation of the practice. The study continues to define a standpoint from which to assess the relation between Kant and Foucault, in this case, one that marks the distinction between the two in the terms of the three remaining segments of Kant’s practice: real possibility *as* a level of analysis, experience *as* the exercise of thought, mind and thought *as* capacity. Foucault himself was at times surprisingly insightful about the Kantian resonance of the aim of his historical analysis, and this chapter accordingly exploits Foucault’s own technical terminology more centrally than the treatment of the other aspects of his practice of criticism. Following Foucault, the main lines of a relation to Kant in the register of the conceptual motivations of criticism will be tracked in terms of a shift from *finitude* to *contingency* as the constitutive principle of motivation in critical activity, and as the decisive factor in the definition of its theoretical objectives. This will require two preliminary analyses of Foucault’s own interpretation of Kantian criticism as a historical and conceptual factor of first order importance. The exposition will begin with (a) a rehearsal of the elements of the role of Kant’s criticism in Foucault’s historical analysis of the human sciences in *Les mots et les choses*, before turning to Foucault’s concept of a critical *attitude*, its origin in Kant’s theorizing the *Aufklärung*, and its importance in modern philosophical discourse. Against this background, the coincidence of the aim of criticism in Kant and the objectives of Foucault’s own approach is readily

apparent. This discussion sets a stage to (b) specify the variation between them in this connection in terms of a transformation of the object of the practice of criticism from *subjective finitude* to *historical contingency*. The comparison is discussed in terms of the variations of this factor in relation to the negative and the positive tenors of criticism. This appears to be the fulcrum of the difference between their views: at the surface, Foucault's concept of the aim of criticism replaces the negative, limiting factor of Kantian criticism with a positive one, a principle of creation that Foucault explicitly ties to, paradoxically, Kant's pre-critical concept of the description of limits and rules as a creation not of being of sense, but of being of thought. Indeed, this way of restating the project seems to strip criticism of its distinctive feature, thereby marking a regression to traditional metaphysics, and this would not be entirely false. However, by exploring the space of play between the status of the theoretical and the specificity of the theorized in Foucault, the analysis will show that (c) the more obvious positive element of Foucault's theoretical grid is counterbalanced to some extent with a negative factor that functions at a second order. This aspect of criticism is considerably further accentuated in Foucault than in Kant.¹

On the basis of the pervasiveness of the theme of criticism at the surface of Foucault's texts alone (the less than fastidious index of the four volumes of Foucault's collected published essays, lectures and interviews lists some forty discussions of 'criticism'), one would expect that there would be at least *some* affinity between Kant and Foucault in this connection. In fact, there is a specifically Kantian idea of criticism pervasive in Foucault's works. It is used in a variety of contexts, for a number of different purposes.² To begin at the highest level of generality, Foucault's historical analyses consistently display a critical orientation by contrast to other forms of historical inquiry. *L'Archéologie du savoir*, Foucault's beautifully flawed attempt to "define the unusual location" from which his historical work is undertaken in relation to "the exteriority of its neighboring areas," opens with a condensed history of recent trends in the historical methods of various areas of research, a sort of micro-history of theories of history (*AS*, 27). The analysis perspicuously frames the basic critical orientation of Foucault's approach. It tracks the implications of an important historical-conceptual transition, fixed at Marx, that marks the emergence of a new practice of historical analysis. The hinge of the transition, on Foucault's analysis, is the attitude adopted by the historian toward the archive,³ considered in relation to the activity and passivity of theoretical investment. Its formal similarity to Kant's formulation of the predicament of critical philosophy is unmistakable. Just as Kant's project is motivated by the need for a way to avoid skepticism and dogmatism in metaphysics, Foucault

describes his theoretical objectives in terms of avoiding both a rejection of history and undisciplined historical positivism.

But beyond this still very abstract sense of a critical objective, the more specific and consequential affinities between criticism in Kant and Foucault emerge when their methodological commitments are understood as practices generated by the interests of what Foucault calls an *attitude*. Thus understood, an attitude is the function of a problem, or mode of questioning, and it orients and drives a theoretical standpoint. This attitude is constitutively engaged with a type of problem and the definition of an object, which define the motives and the aims of the investigation. The central task of the present chapter is to delineate the attitude of Foucault's practice of criticism. The analysis centers on the issue of the proximity of this critical function to the one at work in Kant. It issues in an account of the aspects of Kantian criticism that define Foucault's theoretical motivations and objectives, *i.e.*, that fix the *aim* of his studies. This will provide a guiding thread for the ensuing reconstruction of the remaining segments of the practice of Kantian criticism outlined above.

Before addressing this specific critical aim in Foucault's practice and its proximity to Kant's conception, it will be helpful to sketch an analysis of the thematic role of Kant's criticism as an *object of analysis* in Foucault's writings. This role unfolds in two moments: a historical-epistemological function in Foucault's history of the human sciences and a historical-conceptual functional relation to in the emergence of the idea of criticism as an attitude (what Foucault calls, among others things, 'historical ontology of the present'). On the basis of Foucault's identification of Kant as a historical hinge figure in the epistemological shift of theoretical landscape from the classical to the modern layout, and the fact that he takes on a Kantian attitude for his own part, the association of Foucault's use of 'criticism' with the narrowly Kantian sense can be justified internally to Foucault's standpoint. However, the present study aims to display a more finely grained conceptual affinity between their postures. For Foucault, there is a theoretical gap separating Kant's speculative project of the criticism of pure reason on the one hand, and his incidental writings on the philosophy of history on the other; Foucault sees both as historically central interrogative modes, in his terms: an *analytics of truth* and an *ontology of actuality*.⁴ This tension between two senses of criticism leads Foucault to characterize Kant's thought as fundamentally enigmatic in its bipolarity. Foucault unreservedly associates his own type of investigation only with the second, and not the first Kantian voice of criticism. The present interpretation of Foucault's relation to this dual heritage extends his self-interpretation in two ways: it will both (i) provide grounds to attenuate the

putative discontinuity within Kant's thought between the two modes of questioning at the level of abstraction in question, thereby allowing for the identification of a component of ontology of actuality in the discourse of *KrV* and (ii) extend the association between Kant and Foucault by identifying both modes of investigation as equally central, and formally co-dependent elements of Foucault's position.

The examination of Foucault's criticism in this chapter falls into four parts. It begins with an indirect approach to the critical aim of Foucault's texts: it addresses one of the various manifestations of his critical attitude by way of his understanding of the historical importance of Kant's critical mode of questioning, against the background of his conception of the continuity of the contemporary and that historical role, and of the embeddedness of his own position within the contemporary. This analysis aims to show that there is ample evidence that (i) Foucault ascribed a decisive role to Kant's criticism in his historical accounts of philosophy and the human sciences, (ii) that the influence exerted by Kant's thought is still being felt in the present and (iii) that Foucault's own thinking belongs to that predicament in full, from which it follows that (iv) Foucault's analyses bear a formal affinity with Kant's project of criticism.

The second section takes a similarly indirect path to the affinity between Kant and Foucault, this time by way of Foucault's appeal to Kant's answer to the question of the Enlightenment as the historical-conceptual point of emergence of one of the two primary, distinctively modern modalities of philosophical discourse (*the analytics of truth* and *the ontology of the present*). When Foucault takes up this analysis of Kant in the late 1970s, his primary but unstated aim is to articulate the theoretical underpinnings of his own analysis. These elaborations are the result of Foucault's reflection on his own philosophical-historical enterprise. His strategy is to isolate the aim of his discourse by associating it with the specifically contemporary type of philosophical investigation: modern philosophy, as modernity's form of thought. He proposes a conception of modernity as an attitude of criticism, rather than a historical period, and of modern philosophy as the exercise of the activity that embodies this attitude: a voluntarily exercised mode of relating to oneself, rather than a particular doctrine or a theory.

The third section of the chapter begins the task of addressing the form of Foucault's practice directly. In this context, it will be possible to appreciate the extent to which the objectives of Foucault's philosophical discourse in fact integrate the elements of what he calls the critical attitude that his own historical-conceptual account suggests. Now, this theoretical aim does

not itself comprise Foucault's practice of criticism, but specifies the project in the service of which the conceptual practice is exercised. One way that Foucault situates this factor in the functioning of the practice of criticism is by way of a triadic distinction between its *method*, which concerns methodological elements that involve the demonstrative (questions concerning the forms of experience themselves, their possibility, their interrelation, their relation to truth and rationality, to norms and to subjects), its *aim*, that deals with what motivates it conceptually and historically, and its textual *strategies*, the devices and tactics it uses to reach its objectives. The first element, the method of criticism, is in Foucault the least prominent. In fact, it all but completely recedes in his practice, manifesting itself only as a series of traces in his analyses that provide the material for an inferential reconstruction of an implied process of historically situated critical reasoning. The second and the third elements together comprise the full aspect of Foucault's critical attitude; he describes it with the help of the figure of *curiosity*.⁵ This side of Foucault's practice has two central aspects: the function of indexing both the theoretical objectives and the rhetorical instruments and discursive strategies available to carry them out. The second element was discussed in Chapter Two, and the first, which concerns the factors involved in the definition of the aims of the analysis, is the object of Section III of the present chapter. These aims involve both theoretical and practical factors; they intervene from a level of consideration prior to the distinction between the two, from what Foucault calls the theoretico-practical, an inverted version of *praxis*. Considered at a certain level of generality, these remain remarkably constant throughout the fluctuations in Foucault's thinking. In fact, these guiding motivations, Foucault's underlying theoretical objectives, represent the most basic line of continuity throughout his works, and the most promising candidate to serve as a principle of unification for Foucault's work. These objectives are arranged around the ultimate ideal of acquiring the liberation that results from coming to grips not only with the finitude, but also with the contingency of experience. This process of recognizing first that our experience is formed by determinate possibilities and impossibilities, then that these possibilities and impossibilities have not always been the same, unfolds an interstice between the experience and the experimenter. At its broadest point of articulation, Foucault's theoretical motivation is to generate this distance through a strategy of relief, in the military sense, of the categories that in the thoughtlessness of their familiarity obstruct the possibility of this self-distance. The difference between the objectives of Kant and of Foucault in this register is that, whereas Kant's critical aim does not extend beyond the identification of the factors that form our experience (thereby providing an understanding of the mechanism of its regulation), for

Foucault, this initial aim is subsidiary to the goal of recognizing that these regulating and limiting factors are themselves limited, that the form of experience that they regulate is historically specific: in the past, other forms of experience embodied what was epistemologically necessary and possible, and there is no reason to think that the future will bring about similar fluctuation. This further motivation in Foucault engages the level of relations between the historical analysis and the question of what we can think or know, in order to draw from that contingency the possibility of no longer thinking in this way, and of thinking otherwise.⁶ The examination of the aspects of Foucault's practice that concern the theoretical objectives of the analysis culminates with this crucial discrepancy between the two versions of the critical attitude under consideration. This discrepancy only emerges against the background of a preponderant formal similarity: Foucault's critical attitude subordinates the negative aim of Kantian criticism to a positive one, whose possibility surfaces in light of the realization of the negative. Finally, the last section of the chapter raises the possibility of an element of reversal of Kantian and Foucauldian versions of the practice of criticism. This proposal is explored below by attributing an experimental pragmatics to Foucault's practice.

II. THE KANTIAN ENIGMA IN *LES MOTS ET LES CHOSES*

As its subtitle indicates, *MC* is in its form an archaeology of the human sciences. It presents Foucault's historical analysis of forms of knowledge as they are manifested in the discourses of various areas of research that function beneath the threshold of 'hard' or 'exact' science, at a level of development and interaction prior to their division into individual disciplines; these are the sciences that toward the end of the 18th century take the form of the study of 'man,' of the human being as both subject and object of knowledge. His historical analysis aims to define the conditions under which human sciences, 'sciences of man,' became possible as forms of knowledge. He studies the discursive forms of various areas of investigation, that is, their functioning at a point of extraction prior to the separation of the spheres of application proper to each. For example, in his study of the analysis of natural history, the analysis of wealth, and philology, Foucault accounts for the process by which they emerged, their relation to scientific and philosophical discourses, and their breaking up under discursive and non-discursive pressures that demanded a different epistemological configuration, provided by biology, political economics, philology, and, ultimately, historiography, psychoanalysis, and ethnology. This historical analysis narrates a succession of forms of experience. This form defines the varying con-

ditions of the possibility of scientific cognition since the end of the 16th century. According to Foucault's account, Kant's role unfolds as providing the philosophical expression of the distinctive feature of the emergent modern epistemological configuration and form of experience, that he calls the "analytic of finitude." In this text, Foucault's primary concern is external to the details of Kant's project; the association of Kant with the analytics of finitude is made on the basis of the historical consequences of this project. The analysis provided in *MC* offers a historical narrative of discursive practices to which Kant's criticism belongs, and plays a role that from the standpoint of his philosophy sometimes seems aberrant, rather than an analysis of his practice. It is particularly striking that the historical-conceptual factors that Foucault attributes to criticism in this narrative completely elide the Kantian distinction between the empirical and the transcendental. Foucault here is centrally concerned with historical moments of striking conceptual homology among discourses appearing to bear no notable relation to one another. This interest fixes the level of abstraction of the conceptual analysis above the threshold of textual exegesis, and endows Foucault's terminology with a strange mutant quality, precise yet somewhat unaligned with each of the discourses it characterizes. Indeed, part of the value of this treatment of Kant lies in the figure of Kantianism in the history of the human sciences that developed on the book, one that sometimes makes Kant virtually unrecognizable, and often ignores the details of his conceptual apparatus, while undeniably capturing something valuable about the historical-conceptual role of this practice. However, the criticism described as a complex of factors in the history of the sciences of man is not to be conflated with the practice of criticism around which this study is organized. The thread of the exposition is that the account of criticism in *MC* nonetheless contributes to fuller understanding of the aim of Foucault's practice of criticism. A cursory rehearsal of the narrative into which it fits will be required in order to isolate the specificity and the complexity of the details of Foucault's historical treatment of Kant.

Within the historical account of *MC*, Kantian criticism is given its familiarly decisive role of marking "the threshold of our modernity" (*MC*, 255). Foucault ascribes this position on the basis of its radical displacement of the concept of *representation*. While minding not to wander too far into the details of Foucault's cavernous account, it will be helpful to consider the importance of this notion of representation briefly. According to the broadest strokes of his historical-conceptual narrative, representation serves as the central historical-epistemological factor of what he calls the Classical space of discourse. Foucault shows that whereas the Renaissance understood

knowledge in terms of an interpretation of *signs*, and the field of relations of signification was immersed in a pool of *similitudes*, in the 17th century, this field dissipates into a space of representations where significations are reflected and *similitudes* decomposed. He describes the process whereby a new order of identity and difference emerges, one that forms the Classical epistemological configuration. Here a series of positive discursive orders based on empirical arrangements take shape. Foucault addresses three: *natural history*, *the theory of money and value*, and *general grammar*. Part of the originality of Foucault's mode of analysis is its methodological attempt to provoke resonances between these positivities on the basis of their shared structural dependence on representation. It is significant that these areas of studies, these 'positive orders,' precisely, are *not* "sciences of man" (*sciences de l'homme*, roughly the equivalent of the humanities and the social sciences). One of the important results of Foucault's historical analysis is that the concept 'man'—as, among other things, both the subject and the object of knowledge—belongs exclusively to what he formalizes as the Modern epistemological configuration. In the Classical epoch, that concept of man—the 'man' of the 'sciences of man'—is absent. On this account, man exists in the space of possible knowledge only from the historical and conceptual point at which the Classical order of representation fell apart under the strain of being confronted by what cannot be represented. Thereafter, Foucault describes, a dimension of obscurity and of depth becomes prominent. Only then, he points out, do natural history, the theory of money and value, and general grammar come to be succeeded by corresponding 'sciences of man' properly speaking: Cuvier's definition of the conditions of possibility of living in life (biology), Ricardo's analysis of the conditions of exchange value and profit in work (political economics), and Grimm and Bopp's study of the conditions of possibility of discourse and grammar in the historical depth of language (philology).

These nascent sciences of man are the epistemological contemporaries of Kant's criticism, which provides the basic structure of the Modern configuration. This account functions as a complex and highly nuanced version of a familiar way of understanding a decisive episode in the history of the conception of the relation between the mind and the world, between thought and nature. The familiar picture has a conception of relation of mental content, ideas of some kind, in a relation of representation with corresponding physical entities in the world, superseded by another conception, according to which the ideas in the mind are discursive determinations of unordered sensible multiplicity received from the world. For Foucault, this reversal ultimately leads to a new model of the very nature of thinking, one according to which thought no longer opposes the unthinkable from the outside, but

rather, is in a constitutive relation to it, occupies it. This is the discursive culmination of the Kantian subversion of the problem of representation from a question about the mechanisms with which objects cause representations to an enigma about the fact of representations discussed in the Introduction. Foucault diagnoses that Kant's criticism dissipates the mystery only at the cost of recasting the problem of the mechanisms of thought in terms of a relation between subjective and objective poles on the basis of a mode of distinguishing subject and object that has the structural disequilibrium of being an essentially subjective distinction. This Kantian dynamic is the primary historico-conceptual source of the form of thought Foucault calls the *analytics of finitude*.

This decisive and complex epistemological transformation, whose effects, according to Foucault, extend across Western discourse, occurred at the end of the 18th century. It marked, on the one hand, a historical moment replacing a metaphysically strong moment in the Classic epoch. On the other hand, a philosophical space emerged itself where Classical thought set in place impermeable epistemological barriers. The modern forms of knowledge of philology, biology and political economics were not developed in the place of Classical general grammar, natural history and the analysis of wealth, but precisely where they did not exist, in the space they left blank, as Foucault puts it, "in the depth of the furrow that separated their major theoretical segments and that filled the rumor of ontological content" (*MC*, 219). He characterizes this transformation of the geography of rationality in terms of the emergence of an epistemological discourse, centrally occupied by a task of familiarization, in the space that had been left vacant by the Classical discursive configuration's representational ontology; in the 19th century, discourse on the object of knowledge took place where the Classical plenitude of being was silenced. Conversely, Foucault points out, a new philosophical space took shape where the objects of Classical knowledge had been undone, and more specifically, the capacity to judge and its function of attribution was severed from that of articulation (the general punctuation of beings). Foucault's diagnosis is that this separation generated friction between apophatic discourse and formal ontology: primitive designation and derivation in time came to be distinguished as separate moments, thereby generating a space of possibility for the question of the relations between original meaning and history. With this diagnosis, Foucault points to this historico-conceptual moment as the point of emergence of two main forms of Modern philosophy: the interrogation of the relations between *logic and ontology* and the interrogation of the relations between *signification and temporality*. Foucault, careful to emphasize the point, reckons that "the most important

question that can arise for philosophy concerns the relation between these two forms of reflection" (*MC*, 219). He explains that the former transposes the project of quantification and calculation whereby identities and differences are related to the symbols of possible operations attributed to what he describes as the Classical science of calculable order whose universal method is algebra (in *MC*: "*mathesis*"). The latter, in the course of a constitutively incomplete activity of unveiling, updates the themes and the methods of *interpretation*. Whereas Classical thought centrally entertained the relations between designation and ontological classification, Modern thinking is structured by the interaction of the formal, both of the apophatic and of the ontological, and meaning, clarified by interpretation. Modern thought questions the relation between meaning and the form of being, on the one hand, and the form of truth, on the other; the idea of their conjunction functions as a constitutive ideal in modernity: "in the sky of our reflection there reigns a discourse—perhaps an inaccessible discourse—that would be both an ontology and a semantics" (*MC*, 221). This is the theoretical reconciliatory ideal in connection with which Foucault understands structuralism: not the latest methodological fashion, but "the alert and anxious consciousness (*conscience*) of Modern knowledge (*savoir*)," as the result of philosophical thought having come to an awareness of the bi-polarity of its ontological and epistemological segments (*MC*, 221).

Foucault's central insight concerning Kant in *MC* is that the project of criticism is the most thoroughly realized version of the elision of the problem of representation. According to *MC*'s account of the transition from the Classical to the Modern epistemological formation, the critical element of Kant's philosophy marks the historical emergence of the possibility of a mode of discourse in which being and representation no longer coincide.⁷ Criticism, on this account, "makes manifest the metaphysical dimension that the philosophy of the 18th century had wanted to reduce to the mere analysis of representations" (*MC*, 256). Conversely, this transformation marks the possibility of another metaphysics, one that would aim to "interrogate, outside representation, everything that is at its source and origin" (*MC*, 256). From this point, on Foucault's account, the form of philosophical discourse no longer revolves around the relations between the *naming of beings* and the *ordering of being*, but between *meaning* and *modes of being*. Kant's practice of criticism leads him to avoid addressing representations and what is given in them directly, by posing the question of the foundation and the justification of relations between representations at the level of what makes them possible in general, by isolating the grounds of representation in general.⁸ Foucault calls this mode of thought *anthropology*: "the legitimate limits of

cognition (and consequently of all empirical knowledge (*savoir*)) are at the same time the concrete forms of existence, as they are given precisely in that same empirical knowledge (*connaissance*)” (*MC*, 261). Foucault describes the general discursive implications of this shift in both positive and negative terms: “negatively, the domain of pure forms of knowledge (*connaissance*) is isolated, taking on both autonomy and sovereignty with respect to all empirical knowledge (*savoir*), indefinitely giving birth and rebirth to the project of *formalizing the concrete* [. . .] against all the pure sciences; positively, the empirical domains hold themselves to reflections about subjectivity, human being and finitude, taking on a philosophical value and function, as well as that of the reduction of philosophy or of counter-philosophy” (*MC*, 261). On this account, as result of the historical-conceptual transformation that gives rise to the development of discourses whose philosophical respondent is Kant’s criticism, representation is no longer held to account for the origin and the ground of truth of living *beings*, *needs* and *words*. From this new historical standpoint, representation is considered merely as an effect of these classes of objects of knowledge, “their more or less blurred respondent in a consciousness that grasps and restitutes them” (*MC*, 324). This shift programs a transformation of the concept of finitude. Whereas in the Classical configuration, Foucault points out, “finitude (as a positive determination constituted from infinity) accounts for negative forms, such as the body, needs, language, and the limited knowledge (*connaissance*) that one can have of it,” in the Modern critical configuration, the regulated content of the human sciences of life, production and of work, on the one hand, “grounds the limited character of knowledge as their negative correlate,” and on the other, “the limits of knowledge (*connaissance*) positively ground the possibility of knowing (*savoir*), but always in a limited experience” (*MC*, 327). This formalized concrete—regulated by life, work, and language, the three contemporary “quasi-transcendentals,” a Husserlian concept used frequently by Derrida, that function as the principles of contemporary thought—is the most general level of abstraction operative in Foucault’s history.

In this context, the correlation between the metaphysics of representation and the metaphysics of infinity, on the one hand, and the analysis of finitude, on the other, gave way to what Foucault describes as an alternation between the inclination to undertake an analytic of the finitude of existence and the perpetual temptation to continue the pursuit of metaphysical projects. But for Foucault, these projects are condemned to remain conceptually nugatory: after the readjustment effected by Kant’s critical incision, the very idea of a metaphysical investigation takes the form of a *temptation*,

internally contested and undermined by virtue of being submerged into the framework of the finitude of the capacities that engage in it. On Foucault's account, modern thought in its very form contests its own metaphysical advances: to the extent that metaphysical inquiry is carried out with the awareness of its own limitations—in Foucault's idiom, as an *analytics of finitude* rather than as a *metaphysics of representation and of the infinite*—it enacts its own end; the dynamic in play unfolds as a denunciation: metaphysics masks illusion, it is estranged and ideological, and it is a mere cultural episode masquerading as universal and outside history. Foucault plays on the Kantian idea of metaphysics as a propensity, as a pathological condition of humanity. Crucially, however, for Foucault, the end of metaphysics is construed as the negative side of the much more complex event of the emergence of the concept of 'man' (see *MC*, 328). Foucault focuses on Kant's criticism as an attitude toward the metaphysics of the past that occasions anthropological thought, first in the popular exercise of the practice of criticism. The typically modern feature of the assimilation of an awareness of human finitude into a theoretical outlook unfolds as this finitude turns reflective. Thus Foucault writes:

. . . [Our] culture reached the threshold from which we recognize our modernity the day our finitude was thought in constant reference to itself. Although it is true that, at the level of different forms of knowledge (*savoirs*), finitude is always defined from the standpoint of concrete man and of the empirical forms of his existence, at the archaeological level that discovers the historical and general *a priori* of each knowledge (*savoir*), Modern man—man in his corporal existence, laborious and vocal—is only possible as a figure of finitude. Modern culture can think man because it thinks the finite from itself (*MC*, 329).

This outlines the discursive practice that Foucault calls 'analytics of finitude.' He appeals to it as the ground of the possibility of knowledge within the space of the modern epistemological scheme. This space of discourse is bilateral, modeled on Kant's *KrV*. According to Foucault, it takes shape around co-dependant forms of analysis. One of them is modeled on the project of the Transcendental Aesthetic, and focuses on the body: the study of perception, sensory mechanisms, neurological organizations, points of conjunction between things and the organism. Foucault suggests that an awareness became possible at a certain point that this cognition had a certain definable nature by way of the recognition that human cognition was regulated by anatomico-physiological conditions, and that its forms are indissociable from

the specifics of its functions. This nature simultaneously determines its forms and was embodied in its empirical contents. The other type of analysis undertaken by the analytics of finitude is modeled on the Transcendental Dialectic: by the study of the illusions generated by this human nature, it aims to show that cognition is conditioned by historical, social and economic factors. Knowledge is understood as immersed in a field of relations between humans and thus cannot be abstracted from the particular epistemological figure that these form in a historical socio-cultural context. Similarly, in some respects, to the Transcendental Aesthetic analysis of the conditions of corporality, the configuration of this field simultaneously determines the forms of cognition and manifests itself in its empirical content.

This twofold analytics functions against the background of Kant's criticism, not in Foucault's account in the form of "the exercise of pure reflection," (*MC*, 330) but as a reflection that unfolds in the context of a series of distinctions—between the imperfect, rudimentary, unstable, nascent knowledge and fully realized, well-formed, definitive knowledge; between illusion and truth; between ideological rhetoric and scientific theory—that culminates with the fundamental opposition within the concept of truth itself. Indeed, there is for Foucault a form of truth that belongs to the *order of objects*, that manifests itself in the body and perception, and that takes shape in time with the unveiling of illusions, but there is also a truth that belongs to the *order of discourse*: one can maintain with respect to nature and history a language of truth. Foucault describes an irreducible ambiguity saddling this conception of truth: it admits both a *positivist* point of view, that grounds and models itself on the empiricist valence of truth, and retraces its historical origin (the truth of the object prescribes the truth of the discourse that describes its form), and an *eschatological* point of view, in which discourse anticipates the truth whose history and nature it defines (the formation of truth is constituted by the truth of philosophical discourse).

According to the narrative of *MC*, the Modern cast of thought has not been able to achieve a form of analysis that adequately incorporates the empirical into the transcendental, and the striving toward this ideal of theoretical unification unavoidably generates systematic oscillation between the two sides: "a discourse whose tension would maintain the empirical and the transcendental separately, while nevertheless allowing them to be simultaneously directed toward each other; a discourse that would admit the analysis of the man as a subject, that is, as a locus (*lieu*) of empirical cognitions, but brought back closer to what made them possible, and as a pure form immediately present to its contents; a discourse in short that would play the role of a quasi-aesthetic and of a quasi-dialectic in relation

to an analytic that would both ground them in a theory of the subject, and allow them perhaps to be articulated in the third and intermediate term in both the experience of the body and that of culture are rooted" (*MC*, 331). The form of the thinking subject regulates a mechanism of self-doubling: the subject is both regulated by the functions of the 'quasi-transcendental' objects of the new positive disciplines (life, work and language), and is the foundation, in its finitude, of these sciences. The concept of man in Foucault is constitutively regulated by a practice of exchange between its empirical and transcendental functions. The ambivalence is a product of the critical interrogation of man inaugurated by Kant. In the overlap between the empirical and the critical, in the *fold* between them, as Foucault puts it, man is held to be the only legitimate foundation of his own finitude; in this fold the transcendental function engulfs the grey, inert space of the empirical; inversely, the empirical contents "*wake up, stir a little, and rise,*" only to be immediately subsumed by a discourse that distances their transcendental component: "in this Fold philosophy fell asleep with a new kind of slumber; no longer that of Dogmatism, but that of Anthropology" (*MC*, 352). Foucault understands this configuration as a repetition of dogmatism from opposed, mutually reinforcing standpoints: "the precritical analysis of what man is in his essence becomes the analytic of everything that can be given to the experience of man in general" (*MC*, 352 my. emp.).

In order to wake philosophical thought from its anthropological slumber, the post-Kantian manifestation of the condition from which Hume roused Kant, Foucault describes the need, "to destroy the anthropological 'quadrilateral' at its very foundations" (*MC*, 353). The possibility of this task, and Foucault leaves no ambiguity here, has taken only two forms. The first, ill-fated on Foucault's view for independent reasons, is the solution of Heidegger's fundamental ontology: to cross the anthropological field again in order to undo oneself from it in order to discover a purified ontology and a privileged access to being. The other, Foucault's own strategy, takes the path of a revival of Kant's critical project, stripping of its residual attachment to the sovereignty of the thinking subject: by suspending "all concrete forms of anthropological prejudice, one attempts to reinterrogate the limits of thought and thereby to reconnect with the project of a general criticism of reason" (*MC*, 353). This return to Kant paves the way for a "return to the beginning of philosophy" in the wake of Nietzsche's announcement of the end of philosophy and of man by isolating the lethal predicament in which man and God belong to each other. For us, from Foucault's standpoint, philosophical reflection is possible only in the void left by the disappearance of "man," understood narrowly as the fulcrum of the anthropological epistemological

configuration. This void is not a lack or a deficit: “It is no less and no more than the unfolded space (*dépli d’un espace*) in which it is finally possible to think again” (*MC*, 353). As a result, from the standpoint of the role of the knowing subject, Foucault suggests that ‘anthropology’ can be seen as “the fundamental layout (*disposition*) that has ordered and directed philosophical thought from Kant to our age” (*MC*, 353). This formal characteristic remains determinative in contemporary discourse as a historically decisive factor in the constitution of the present form of experience, but it is in the process of self-dissolution: “we are beginning to recognize ourselves in it, to denounce it in a critical mode, both the forgetting of the opening that made it possible, and the obstacle stubbornly opposed to the next thought” (*MC*, 353). Before turning to the question of the relation between Foucault’s conception of Kant’s criticism, and the function of criticism in Foucault’s own works, however, a second moment of his thematic coverage of Kant’s criticism remains to be considered.

III. CRITICISM AS AN ATTITUDE: FOUCAULT ON KANT ON THE ENLIGHTENMENT

In May of 1978, Foucault delivered an extraordinarily rich lecture to the Société française de Philosophie, in which he outlines an approach to the question: “What is criticism?” The text, never revised for a written version, was published posthumously from a transcription of the presentation, and bears the traces of this dubitable trajectory. But despite its obscurities, the text provides elements of the background of Foucault’s second and decisive thematic appeal to Kant. It presents the rudiments of a reading of Kant’s heritage for the history of philosophy, one that directly informs Foucault’s conception of the predicament of modern thought. The lecture offers a second order examination of the sources of criticism that issues in the proposal that since Kant, two modes of philosophical reflection have emerged as centrally important in Western thought. Their sources can be located with by appeal to a distinction between two methodological moments of Kant’s practice of criticism: the doctrine of the systematic criticism that generated the three *Critiques*, and the popular criticism that determined his approach to responding to the Enlightenment. The first deals with the familiar, traditionally philosophical, and recognizably Kantian problems concerning the nature and limitations of knowledge, the world and truth. The other, apparently foreign to the perennially philosophical and much less recognizably Kantian, raises questions that concern the present and the nature of one’s own relation to that present. Foucault is indecisive about

how to label these modalities of philosophy, but one helpful way that he suggests is the distinction between *analytics of truth* and *ontology of actuality*. These express Foucault's understanding of the shared inheritance of Kant's criticism, and they are thematically developed in *Qu'est-ce que la critique ?* The framework sketched in this lecture marks the beginning of a strand of Foucault's work that becomes increasingly important until his death. It represents the developed expression of a problem that had been programmed in Foucault work for nearly two decades.

In his unpublished monograph on the relation between the speculative philosophy of the three *Critiques* and the standpoint adopted in the *Anthropology* submitted with his translation of this text as his *thèse complémentaire* in 1961, Foucault identifies and thematically contrasts systematic and popular modalities of criticism in Kant's writings. As discussed, an early version of the distinction between the ontology of actuality and the analytics of functions in this text, in which Foucault traces two perspicuous contemporary theoretical attitudes to the outlook of the three *Critiques* and the *Anthropology* respectively. The diagnosis of the Kantian source of the discursively bi-polar contemporary predicament is also presaged by the role ascribed to Kant's criticism in *MC*. The conceptual reversal it operated, opening and forming the space for the analytics of finitude, makes it clear that Foucault reserves a decisive role for Kant in the orientation and determination of the form of rationality that remains in place in contemporary discourse. However, while the idea of two distinct vectors of philosophical thought was introduced in that text as a distinction between a type of discourse built around concerns with logic and ontology, and another with signification and temporality, it remains allusive about their character and the nature of their opposition (cf. *MC*, 219). Traces of these elements are detectible, however, in the roughly contemporaneous review of Cassirer, a minor text that is nevertheless important not only as a point of transition in the formation of the later framework, but as a source of insight into Foucault's understanding of his own relation to the dual Kantian heritage; it will be helpful to consider its general characterization of the inheritance of Kant's criticism, in which the basic frame of the reading is already in place.

For Foucault, the predicament that has gripped philosophical reflection since Kant is fundamentally *enigmatic*, as he relates in the Cassirer review:

The Kantian enigma that, for nearly two hundred years, has stupefied Western thought, making it blind to its own modernity, brings two central figures to memory. It is as though the forgetting that took place, at the

end of the 18th century, when the modern world was born, had liberated a double nostalgia: that of the Greek world's to which we appeal in order to *elucidate our relation to being* and that of the 18th century's to which we appeal in order to *put the forms and limits of our knowledge (savoir) into question*. To Hellenistic dynasty that extends from Hölderlin to Heidegger is opposed to the modern *Aufklärer* that runs from Marx to Lévi-Strauss. Perhaps Nietzsche's "monstrosity" is to belong to both. To be Greek or *Aufklärer*, on the side of tragedy or of the encyclopedia, on the side of the poem or of well-formed language, on the side of the morning of being or of the noon of representation, is the dilemma from which modern thought—that still dominates us, but that we already feel vacillating beneath our feet—has still been unable to escape.⁹

In this early version of the Kantian bi-polarity of modern philosophy, the first figure is a precursor of Foucault's concept of ontology of actuality and of analytics of truth. But in this context, the distinction is apparently made in passing, and without calling attention to its historical-conceptual significance.

Foucault's first attempt at sharpening this grid and drawing out its history and its implications is undertaken some twelve years later in *QLC*, where both varieties of ontology are cast as distinct—but equally Kantian—manifestations of criticism. Before turning to this text, it will clarify the stakes involved to situate it against the background of a more fully realized and refined articulation of the basic framework in play. Perhaps the clearest statement of Foucault's appeal to Kant's criticism as doubly foundational for modern philosophy occurs in the course of a lecture at the Collège de France in 1983:

It seems to me that Kant founded the two great critical traditions that have divided modern philosophy. One might say that in his great critical works, Kant posed, founded the tradition of philosophy that poses the question of the conditions under which a true cognition is possible and, on that basis, it follows that an entire side (*pan*) of modern philosophy since the 19th century has presented itself, developed itself, as the analytic of truth.

But another type of question also exists in modern and contemporary philosophy, another critical mode of interrogation: . . . this other critical audition (*audition*) asks the question: "What is our actuality?" What is the actual field of possible experiences?" This is not an issue of an analytics of truth, but rather of what one might call an ontology

of the present, an ontology of ourselves, and it seems to me that the philosophical choice with which we find ourselves confronted today is this one: one can opt for a critical philosophy that will present itself as an analytic philosophy of truth in general, or one can opt for a critical thought that will take the form of an ontology of ourselves, of an ontology of actuality.¹⁰

The logic of Foucault's position implies that he does not take these alternatives to be mutually exclusive, and that a comprehensive grasp of Foucault's own theoretical commitments can only be reached by ascribing both types of interrogation to it. From the outset he retains the isolation of the source both the analytics of truth and of the ontology of actuality in Kant's thought.

The analysis of Kant's conceptions of criticism in *QLC* focuses on the unfamiliar mode of criticism, the ontology of actuality. In this text, this tradition of criticism is presented in terms of an *attitude*: "a certain way of thinking, of saying, of behaving, a certain relation to what exists, to what one knows, to what one does, a relation to society, to culture, a relation to others as well" (*QLC*, 36).¹¹ This critical attitude is situated in the space between the exercise of Kant's practice of criticism as it is undertaken in the *Critiques*, and the minor "polemico-philosophical activities" that bear the same name. It involves a moral component—it is "related to virtue," Foucault allusively suggests (*QLC*, 36)—in so far as it is attended by a specific type of imperative, other than the imperative merely to avoid error. He attempts to describe this curious type of philosophical activity by proposing a possible reconstruction of its source, and locating that source in the context of a tradition of criticism, or at least proto-criticism that predates it by two centuries.

The attitude of criticism initially arises, on Foucault's account, as a response to the historico-cultural situation that is determined by the role of the Christian pastoral. The early Christian church introduced the idea, utterly foreign to Greek thinking, that "every individual, regardless of age, status, and at all stages in life and in the very details of one's actions, should be governed and should allow himself to be governed, that is, to be led to his salvation, by someone to which he has both global and meticulous, detailed relation of obedience" (*QLC*, 37). This relation is enmeshed in a threefold relation to truth, understood as dogma, as a mode of cognition that particularizes and individuates individuals, and as a reflective technique that involves general rules, precepts and methods of examination, of confession, of interaction and so on. This operation of being directed toward salvation takes form as an art of governing and of being governed that Foucault calls

governmentalization. This type of questioning is based on the problem of how to govern became central in 16th century Western European societies. It irresistibly gave rise to another form of problem: how *not* to be governed, or more exactly, how not to be governed *as much*. This counter-questioning is Foucault's proposal for the first definition of criticism as an attitude, and as the historical tradition into which Kant was tapping when he developed his concept of criticism as an attitude. It is marked by three registers of resistance to being governed: (i) by appeal to the text of the Scriptures as a means to refuse, question and limit Ecclesiastical authority, (ii) by appeal to natural law as a way to indict the legitimacy of universal and irrevocable rights to govern, and (iii) by appeal to a standard of rationality as a requisite of accepting the claims of those who govern as true. Thus, the attitude of criticism, at its point of emergence, is anchored in biblical, juridical and epistemological registers.

By defining it as essentially responsive to the practice of governmentalization, Foucault aims to show that it is formed as the enterprise of a cluster of relations between power, truth, and the subject:

And if governmentalization is in fact the movement that, in the very reality of a social practice, subjectifies individuals by mechanisms of power that lay claim to truth, well then!, would say that criticism is the movement with which the subject gives itself the right to interrogate truth about its effects of power and the power of its discourses of truth; well then!, criticism is the art of voluntary inservitude, of reflected indocility. The essential function of criticism would be the desubjectivation of the play of what one might call, in a word, the politics of truth. (QLC, 39)

This is the sense of criticism that Foucault wants to isolate in Kant as a philosophical attitude, one that spawned a historically decisive and still contemporarily relevant mode of thought. Foucault recognizes this conception of criticism in Kant not as what is described as 'criticism,' but as the conception Kant develops of the Enlightenment.

He initially makes his case by proposing that Kant's description of the Enlightenment is best read as a variation of the critical attitude that can be traced back to the late Middle Ages. According to this understanding, the direct precursor of Kant's critical attitude is the historico-conceptual response to the religious battles and the spiritual attitudes of the second half of the Middle Ages: on Kant's description, the forces involved in the Enlightenment formally resemble those that generated opposition to the Christian pastoral's

art of governing. His answer to the question of the nature of the Enlightenment represents an appeal to courage, the lack of which he correlates with the excess of authority that leaves man incapacitated, unable to make use of his own reason, with the dependence of a child. For Foucault, this is an exact representation of the sorts of resistance that can be observed in the context of early forms of governmentalization, right down to the examples provided by Kant, that mirror the three areas of manifestation of counter-governmentalization Foucault distinguishes that are mentioned above. For Foucault, Kant's critical attitude, considered in the context of its historical sources, is motivated by the problem of irregularities in practices of governing.

In *QLC*, Foucault restricts his presentation of the critical attitude in Kant to the isolation of this historico-conceptual source, and does not specify the originality of Kant's attitude of criticism in relation to his precursors in the history of questioning how to be less governed since the 16th century. Such an account can be found, however, several years later when, in various lectures and interviews, Foucault presents a more refined reconstruction of Kant's critical attitude. At this point, he has worked-out a well-articulated view about the nature and the degree of Kant's originality, that is, the sense in which, as a mode of philosophical reflection, it is justifiable to isolate the historical emergence of the practice of criticism in Kant. The most thorough is the well-known "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?"

Foucault hints at the key to his understanding of the originality of Kant's critical attitude a few years prior to the publication of "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?" in the course of an exchange with Jacques Léonard and Maurice Agulhon about the relation between the methods of history and of philosophy. In the Afterword to a book by Agulhon, Foucault sketches the conception of the Enlightenment that he develops more extensively than in the context of his treatment of Kant's criticism, especially, the Enlightenment as an 'heritage,' rather than something to be endorsed or condemned. Citing Georges Canguilhem's diagnosis that the Enlightenment is "our most actual past," Foucault makes it clear that he takes Kant's originality to stem from the type of interrogation with which he addressed the question of the Enlightenment, one that makes a problem of what has just happened and is still happening to us, and of how we figure in that happening. According to Foucault, this is the distinctive feature of the attitude of criticism that historically emerges in Kant, as displayed in his response to the *Berlinische Monatschrift's* competition question: *Was ist Aufklärung?* In Kant's essay, Foucault finds the first attempt to answer "a question that modern philosophy has not been able to answer, but has never been able to get rid of," namely, the philosophical problem of our present, about actuality, about who we are,

what we think, and what we do today.¹² A solid and consistent field of philosophical analysis has been held captive by the mode of questioning inaugurated by Kant's competition essay, which makes it unique and decisive from Foucault's historico-philosophical standpoint, as exercised in a 1982 lecture at Berkley: "I cannot help finding this text to be both astonishing and interesting, because, for the first time, a philosopher proposes as a philosophical task the analysis not only of the system or the metaphysical foundations of scientific knowledge, but of a historical event—a recent, current event."¹³ On Foucault's reading, Kant hears the question of the Enlightenment as asking: "What is happening at the moment? What is happening to us? What is this world, this period, this precise moment we live in?" (p. 231). Foucault's understanding of the historical novelty and distinctiveness of the critical attitude displayed in Kant's response can be separated into two further registers: in relation to the history of philosophy and within Kant's corpus itself.

In the context of the history of philosophy, the originality of this mode of questioning stands out as a new way of raising the question of one's own present. Kant's approach is unlike the representation of the situation of the present in terms of its belonging to a given 'age of the world,' such as Plato's identification in the *Politics* of his present as a revolutionary age. It also differs from the strategy, deployed for example by Augustine, of depicting the present in relation to an immanent event whose signs can be perceived. It is also unlike Vico's conception of the present as a transition to the daybreak of an accomplishment, on the cusp of passage into a new world. Finally, it differs from the Cartesian mode of questioning: although Descartes does explicitly refer to the historical situation of his own discourse in relation to the order of knowledge and of the sciences of his day, for example, when he narrates his intellectual itinerary at the beginning of the *Discourse on Method*, such appeals are made in the service of philosophical motivations, to which they are subordinate.¹⁴ This is very different, on Foucault's reading, than Kant's question, which takes as its object the specificity of the present, in order to isolate that which distinguishes it from other presents. In Kant's answer, the role of the philosopher, the thinker, the one who is answering, plays a role in the answer, determines what makes sense for actual philosophical reflection. Foucault points out that the philosopher's role in Descartes' mode of interrogation—the *I* who asks *Who am I?*—is "everyone, anywhere and at every moment."¹⁵ In Kant, however, the problem is transformed, and the singular ahistorical universal Cartesian interrogator becomes the Kantian advocate, the plural voice of the historical present, who asks: "who are we, at this precise moment in history?" (pp. 231–232). The Kantian philosopher asks the question of *Aufklärung*, Foucault suggests, as a problem of *pure actuality*, prior to any theoretical problem.

Foucault also specifies the distinctiveness of Enlightenment thought in the context of the Kantian corpus itself. In contrast to some of Kant's other writings in applied practical philosophy that conceive history as genealogy, as the study of origins—for example, on the beginning of history itself, on the definition of the concept of race, on the form of completion of history, or on the internal finality of history, the modality of discourse opened by the question of the Enlightenment poses, “discretely, almost laterally,” the problem of the immanent teleology of the process of history itself.¹⁶

For Foucault, it is significant that Kant defines the Enlightenment attitude negatively, as a way out of a certain condition (*une issue*). This indicates a remarkable feature of Kant's approach, namely, that it identifies the specificity of the Enlightenment by isolating a difference in form: the difference between yesterday and today, between today and tomorrow. This theoretical orientation takes form in relation to the aim of generating and analyzing present problems by isolating within them moments of difference in relation to its past. Its status as a type of philosophical interrogation is that of an *attitude*. In this regard, Foucault identifies in Kant's practice of criticism an attitude broadly a Greek *ethos*, “a mode of relating to actuality; a voluntary choice made by some; finally, a way of thinking and of feeling, also a way of acting and of conducting oneself that both marks a belonging and presents itself as a task.”¹⁷ Considered as a practice, criticism functions as a constantly reactivated discursive attitude that is engaged by an autonomous subject who questions its own relation to its present, its historical mode of being, and its own role in the constitution of itself both as a historical and as an ethical subject. This aspect of the practice of criticism that marks it as a historically significant modern philosophical investigation, one that is still live in contemporary discourse, and characteristic of Foucault's own theoretical orientation. He describes this practice as a *permanent criticism of our historical being* or a *historical ontology of ourselves* (see p. 571).

Foucault offers a three-pronged description of this attitude. He outlines two negative (considered in relation to what it is not) and three positive characterizations of it (precautions and prescriptions), and supplements these with a detailed outline of its properly theoretical elements. He does not derive these strictly from Kant's answer to the question of the *Aufklärung*, but rather as features of the mode of philosophical discourse that was inaugurated in that context. While its negative features can be identified in Kant's criticism, its positive features historically only fully take shape once emancipated from the subjective of the form of experience. This characterization approximates the contemporary version of criticism that Foucault takes on for his own part. Consequently, the analysis of this concept will serve as an apt transition from

Foucault's readings of Kant to Foucault's Kantianism. Foucault distinguishes negative and positive poles of the attitude, in conjunction with the dissection of its theoretical functions, namely, its homogeneity, its stakes, its generality, and its systematicity.

Negatively, the *Aufklärung* is not, for Foucault, a humanism. In fact, he diagnoses tension between (1) the *Aufklärung* (as understood by Foucault's Kant), as both (a) a series of historically situated events, and (b) a process that under one aspect serves as the principle of a permanent attitude of criticism, and (2) humanism, that Foucault takes to be a series of themes that are too supple, diverse, and inconsistent to serve as the principle for the definition of a field of analysis. Foucault invests something like an ethical tone to the implications, submitting that it would be dangerous and historically inaccurate to conflate the two.¹⁸ The *Aufklärung*, furthermore, is not of the order of things of which it makes sense to be for or against, to accept or to refuse. The critical attitude orients its practice to "the analysis of ourselves" as beings historically determined, in a certain manner, "by the *Aufklärung*" (p. 572). This involves precise historical studies directed at, not the "essential core of rationality" to be found in the *Aufklärung*, but at "the actual limits of the necessary": that is toward that which is not or is no longer indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects" (p. 572).

Positively, Kant's critical attitude that emerges in the response to the question of the *Aufklärung*, and then serves as the discursive medium for an entire tradition of philosophy thereafter, is a limit attitude, but one that strives to remain at the borders in order to resist the dichotomy of inside and outside:

Criticism is indeed the analysis of and the reflection on limits. But if the Kantian question was to know (*savoir*) what limits knowledge (*connaissances*) had to renounce attaining, it seems to me that the critical question, today, must be turned into a positive question: in that which is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what is the part that is singular, contingent and due to arbitrary constraints? In short, it is a matter of transforming the criticism exercised in the form of necessary limit to a criticism practiced in the form of the possibility of going past the limit (*franchissement*).¹⁹

The analysis frames the transformation of the practice of criticism, but leaves implicit the fact that the transformation is precisely formal; the analysis of criticism as the *form* of a practice, whether it be form of the imposition of a necessary limit or form of the descriptive appeal to the possibility of going

past it, itself appeals to the necessities of the limits of the form. One appeals to this order of necessity in the process of considering a particular practice of criticism *as* posing a necessary limit, or *as* claim to the possibility of going over that limit. The logic of this implicit second order of consideration conditions Foucault's analysis in a historical framework, that once Kant's original version of criticism is purged of its anthropological bias, once the disequilibrium in its analysis of the relation between subject and object it rectified, its aim to manifest our historical contingency rather than our subjective finitude, which had been present from the outset but concealed from view, fully emerges. Criticism does not direct one to seek to establish the universal forms of knowledge. Instead, it is geared toward the undertaking of "a series of historical investigations through which the events that have brought us to constitute ourselves to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we do, think, say" (p. 574).

A second positive feature of the attitude of criticism is its *experimental* quality, which was addressed in Chapter Two as a manifestation of the moment of skepticism in Foucault's practice of criticism. Far from pretense to global or radical scope, it both forges a domain of historical analysis and subjects itself to the test of reality and actuality, in order to isolate moments of possible and desirable change, and to determine what form it can and ought to take. It is, Foucault stipulates, "a historico-practical test of the limits that we can reach and go past (*franchir*), and that the work of ourselves on ourselves as free beings."²⁰ Although this criticism cannot strive toward a standpoint from which complete and definitive knowledge of our historical conditions, Foucault specifies its mode of historical analysis in terms of a theoretical grid defined in terms of its stakes, its systematicity, its homogeneity, and its generality.

Foucault defines its *stakes* in terms of the aim disconnecting of the increase of capacities from the intensification of relations of power. The history of western societies is dominated by emphasis on acquiring technological capacities to control things and the fight for individual freedom and autonomy. But the complexity of the relations between these elements involve multiple and diverse relations of power that are filtered through a series of complex technologies. More fundamentally still, what is at stake in the conceptual reorganization required by criticism is nothing less than the aim of criticism in Foucault at most distinctive point. As Foucault puts it in a 1983 interview, "to say what is by making it appear as being able not to be, or not being as it is."²¹

Its *homogeneity* arises from the fact that the analyses to which it gives rise are directed toward a homogeneous domain articulated by of the forms of rationality that regulate ways of doing and the freedom with which one acts in these practical fields (technological and strategic poles).

The *systematicity* that characterizes criticism stems from the regularity of the structure it confers upon its investigations; although historical ontology is answerable to an open pool of problems that will generate an indeterminate number of analyses, to be generated and specified indefinitely, they will share a constant tripartite structure articulated by the domains of relations of domination over things, of actions in regard to others, and towards oneself. These generate a corresponding problematic: how we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; how we constitute ourselves as subjects that exercise, and are subjected to, relations of power; how we constitute ourselves as the moral subjects of our actions.

Finally, the attitude of criticism is hospitable to a degree of *generality*: despite the irreducible specificity of their historically determined form, it can generate analyses that treat recurrent problems that are general in scope. With this account of the most fully-realized version of Kant's critical attitude in place, its actual functioning as the source of the theoretical motivations of Foucault's conceptual practice can now be addressed frontally.

IV. FROM FINITUDE TO CONTINGENCY

To this point, this chapter has focused on the exposition and analysis of the two loci of direct interaction between Foucault's works and Kantian criticism. Kant's critical problematic plays a developed thematic role historically, in Foucault's understanding of the modern epistemological configuration. It also plays a formative role conceptually, as the model for a certain way of conceiving the nature of philosophical thinking that is important in modern philosophy, and remains relevant in a contemporary context. Textual material has been provided in support of the alignment, within Foucault's historical account, of Kant's criticism and (i) the basic epistemological ('archaeological') configuration of the complex modern discursive formation, as well as (ii) the two-faced cast for Foucault's conception of the field of analysis of modern and contemporary philosophy. At this stage, the question at hand concerns the relation of this historico-conceptual understanding of Kant's critical problematic to Foucault's own theoretical commitments.

In order to mine the theoretical affinity between Kant and Foucault as thoroughly as possible, it will be helpful to trace the links between Foucault's understanding of the Modern conception of criticism, his idea of the two senses of Kantian criticism, and his own theoretical outlook. There is, as a largely implicit supposition in Foucault, broad historical and conceptual continuity between his conception of 'modern discourse,' the epistemological configuration that regulates contemporary thinking, and his own discourse.

This continuity indirectly associates Kantian criticism, as the constitutive motivational principle of the modern thought, the attitude of criticism, and Foucault's theoretical frame. It opens the field for the isolation of a distinct and philosophically more consequential level of conjunction between the two thinkers, beyond the historical importance of Kantian criticism in Foucault's historical accounts of the human sciences (Section II) and of philosophical discourse (present Section): the formal affinity between the motivations of Kant's critical problematic and Foucault's own theoretical orientation. This level of affinity is treated in the following section.

Questions concerning the theoretical commitments embodied in Foucault's works constitute a particularly obscure area of his thinking. In connection with the aim of criticism, the interaction between Kant and Foucault intersects with a ubiquitous but unarticulated feature of the latter's works. It is possible to think of this theoretical element as a textual strategy, motivated by concerns with the relative authority of the theoretical and the theorized (these will be frontally engaged in Section V below), that leaves the relation between the theoretical texts analyzed by Foucault and his own theoretical commitments systematically underspecified and designedly underdetermined. The extent to which he means to endorse positions that he presents in a favorable, but formally neutral light goes unsaid. This generates a space of indeterminacy where Foucault's analyses of various theoretical orientations can be tremendously helpful for a grasp of Foucault's own positions, without explicitly adopting a closed theoretical stand. Such is the case with Foucault's idea of Kantian criticism; the affinity of Foucault's theoretical aims with his reconstruction of Kant's way of casting the problem of criticism is clear, but the space created by his silence about the question leaves room, within Foucault's self-understanding, for divergence, both as the result of historical transformation and of creative appropriation. The following discussion sets out to lend expression to this discrete point of interaction in a way that takes this complexity into account fully.

The present exposition has yet to account for the glaring conceptual gap between the practices of criticism that function in the historical context in Section II and in connection with Kant's treatment of the Enlightenment in Section III. Where it had served as the determinative and unifying factor of the practices of the modern epistemological configuration, in the later context, Foucault isolates criticism—now explicitly characterized as an *attitude*—both as the distinctive feature of Enlightenment thinking, and as the principle of modernity. One might grant the internal coherence of both or either appeal to Kant and still be left with no way of connecting the content of what is being appealed to under the aegis of 'criticism' in each case.

Moreover, in both cases, one may no longer recognize in it anything like the familiar Kant. The moment of conceptual void will be addressed in two ways: by bringing out (i) a dimension of continuity between the two senses of criticism in relation to the concept of the modern, and by appealing to (ii) Foucault's interpretation of Kant's own conception of their interrelation.

The broad continuity between the role of criticism in the history of discursive practices undertaken by Foucault in *MC* and its function in his readings of Kant's *WA* some fifteen years later can be appreciated by considering the way in which the idea of the modern and of modernity functions in both. Distinct but overlapping senses of "modern" have also emerged from the two main moments of interaction between Kant and Foucault on the question of criticism. On the one hand, the modern is a name for historical-conceptual unit (an "*épistémè*") in the context of Foucault's historical analyses of discursive practices. On the other hand, in Foucault's later writings, when he develops the reading of Kant's description of the Enlightenment as the manifestation of the critical attitude that has set the agenda for one side of philosophical thought since then, the modern is equated with the attitude of criticism: it is conceived as an attitude, an *ethos*, rather than either merely the label for a historical-philosophical period, or a methodological dogma. But these senses of the modern partially overlap: modernity as an attitude precisely represents one of the two central fields of philosophical objects and modalities of thought in the historico-conceptual period regulated by the modern configuration, which is structured by the orientation determined by the criticism of reason, in the narrow doctrine-of-the-system sense.

Foucault himself is not blind to the divergence between the two senses of criticism. He is acutely aware of the risk of ascribing an exaggerated role in Kant's corpus to the Enlightenment essay, the primary textual anchor of his idea of criticism as an attitude. In order not only to help dispel the suspicion of gratuity in his appeal to Kant, but also to point toward a unified, complex, but still distinctively Kantian conception of criticism, Foucault suggests a structural connection between criticism as the epistemological problem of limiting cognitive claims in light of finite human capacities, and criticism as a theoretical attitude that questions the present and the philosopher's role in it, an attitude that is possible only from the standpoint of a state of humanity that makes use of its own reason without appeal to authority. In "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières ?," Foucault suggests that the former only becomes necessary once the latter occurs and that "it has the role of defining the conditions in which the use of reason is legitimate to determine what we can know (*connaître*), what one must do and what it is permitted to hope for."²² He

describes *KrV* as the “the logbook of reason that has attained majority in the *Aufklärung*,” and the *Aufklärung* as simply “the age of *KrV*” (p. 567).

Although this connects the content of Kant’s answer to the Enlightenment question to the criticism of knowledge, it does not establish its relation to the critical attitude embodied in the answering of the question. This more immediate relation holds at the level of the aims or the theoretical objectives of criticism. If the motivations of criticism, most generally construed, are taken to involve the avoidance of epistemic claims for which the capacities responsible for its constitution are incapable, on the one hand, and of the wholesale rejection of all knowledge claims, on the other, Foucault’s understanding of the attitude displayed in Kant’s way of engaging the question of the criticism falls in line with the aims of the criticism of knowledge. The idea of taking up the currency of one’s own predicament and the function one has in the process of its constitution is conducted in the spirit of accounting for the capacities of the one holding the discourse. Moreover, there is a clear sense in which the critical attitude has an untheorized role in the form of the theoretical criticism of reason, namely, in the moment of appeal to the nature of the capacities in relation to which criticism has the task of adjusting knowledge claims (*e.g.* as the point of departure in the regressive dynamic of a deductive demonstration). But this unfolds at a high level of abstraction, and it is clear that despite various points of resonance, the specifics of Kant’s discussion of the Enlightenment and the critical project undertaken in the three *Critiques* have different focal points and are regulated by very different sets of standards. Moreover, the description of the aim of Kant’s criticism mentioned above abstracts from its context in the history of philosophy: the abysmal failure of philosophy as a science in the face of the striking success of Newtonian mechanics. The basic critical question of how experience is possible presents itself as a problem for Kant in light of this predicament, the Newtonian science that was putting metaphysics to shame relied on unjustified synthetic *a priori* claims. However, in the course detailed scrutiny of Foucault’s integration of the attitude of criticism into his own theoretical grid, a closer, more indicative level of affinity between the two senses of criticism emerges, one that begins to make the association with the historical Kant more palatable.

Notwithstanding the idiosyncrasy of Foucault’s characterizations of Kant’s criticism, the association of his understanding of it with a general tendency of the Modern epistemological configuration and of modern and contemporary philosophical modalities, in conjunction with the historical-conceptual continuity of his own discourse with contemporary forms of rationality, imply that—according to his historical narratives—his own

theoretical grid is informed by his historical-conceptual understanding of the Kantian project and of the attitude of criticism. Moreover, in the case of the attitude of criticism, consideration of Foucault's characterization of the aim of his investigations during a period prior to his appeal to Kant as the point of emergence and the architect of this philosophical field allows for the reversal of the question of the degree to which Foucault endorsed the Kantian conception that he reconstructed for his own part. Foucault, in other words, expressed the aim of his analyses in terms that directly translate what he only comes to attribute to Kant's criticism much later on. This makes it possible to see the appeal to Kant as a strategic move to make his own theoretical orientation more conspicuous by providing its historical background. Not only is there complete alignment between Kantian criticism as analyzed by Foucault and Foucault's theoretical self-understanding, but the primary motivation behind undertaking to thematize Kant's criticism is to shed light on theoretical aims and commitments that had already long been informing Foucault's research. This leaves one in the paradoxical situation of tracing the moment of inflection of criticism in Foucault's works to a point prior to the moment when Kant surfaces in connection with this attitude, and in all probability, to a point prior to the development of Foucault's reading of Kant that allowed for that association. Far from throwing the authenticity of the appeal to Kant as a self-characterization into doubt, this fact about the progression of Foucault's theoretical grid only confirms and solidifies the affinities that exist between Kant and Foucault on the question of criticism. The formal similarity extends far beyond the level of what is explicitly thematically developed by Foucault toward the end of his life. This is confirmed when the theoretical aims and motivations of his historical analyses conducted in the 1960's are scrutinized. These are modeled, unequivocally, on the critical attitude that Foucault sees in Kant, the one that orients philosophical investigation on a path of courageous study of the history of one's own most actual past.

The form taken by what Foucault comes to conceive in terms of this Kantian attitude of criticism—philosophy as the ontology of actuality—in his own theoretical grid is the practice of *diagnosis*. In a 1975 radio interview, Foucault defines the function of diagnosis as “the description of what one can make of the actual situation,” given that “one must be pessimistic, to the extent that one must eventually blacken things, precisely to makes the spots more urgent, and the possibilities for the future more lively and clearer.”²³ Its critical descriptive role is not merely limitative; as Foucault indicates in a late interview, the activity of diagnosing what we are today “does not consist in simply characterizing what we are, but, by following today's lines of fragility,

to manage to grasp what is and how what is might no longer be what is."²⁴ This positive component of Foucault's conception of criticism as a diagnostic function will be addressed at length below.

The attitude of criticism generates a particular type of philosophical investigation, one that questions its own relation to the present through analysis of the specificity of the actuality from which it is undertaken and is the reason for being undertaken. It is a reflection on the actuality of the interrogation as the motivation for a philosophical task that investigates the historical mode of being and the constitution of the subject as autonomous. This carries the Nietzschean implication that there is a practical, an ethical dimension built-into the very concept of criticism: it is a practice that, as a formal requirement, needs to be reawakened and repeated constantly. It is significant that the activity of diagnosis takes the form of a *practice*: the specific aim of historico-philosophical work can only be undertaken in the medium of a definable activity, that is, in the exercise of rational capacities.²⁵ In this connection, it may be helpful to consider the intellectual climate in which Foucault developed and attempted to articulate his theoretical orientation. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, past the twilight of existentialist fashions and in the thralls of Marxism, there was an overwhelming imperative to sacrifice theory to practice, or praxis. Foucault found himself faced with the need to distinguish what he took to be fundamentally distinct commitments about the legitimate status of intellectual work, without thereby reverting to insular intellectualism. His strategy was to think through the concept of a type of activity or practice, which he took to be the basic medium of theoretical reflection. This directly entailed a suspension of the dichotomy between theory and practice; not merely by theoretical decree, but as a direct implication of the status of the construal of theory itself as a type of practice. In the context of attempting to provide his archaeological studies with an explicit theoretical armature, Foucault develops a well-defined concept of a practice, embedded in the theory of discourse sketched in *AS*. Foucault only developed the idea of critical philosophy as a specific type of attitude and practice during the final years of his life, when the study of Ancient ethics provided him with the requisite conceptual tools to connect his early work on regulated discursive practices with a conception of the aim of philosophical investigation. However, the elements of this self-conception are detectible much earlier on.

In the years between the publication of *MC* and his appointment to the Collège de France in 1970, Foucault subjected himself to a series of interviews, many of which were dominated by questions concerning theoretical orientation and method. The methodological implacability and

diversity of his major studies of the 1960's produced generalized perplexity in the reception of these books about Foucault's aims, even at quite a high level of generality. It was quite clear that he was conducting a type of investigation that was historical and yet quite different from conventional histories both in form and content, but the motivations for this peculiarity, and its potential philosophical and historical implications were obscure; the appropriate standards of evaluation for such work were unavailable. Indeed, this made these studies vulnerable to the resentment their undeniable brilliance provoked in lesser (or less actual: Sartre) thinkers, but even the most generous *bonne volonté* was left disoriented in the face of their grueling strangeness. In this context, the interviews of the period provide helpful material for the reconstruction of the theoretical side of Foucault's studies: time and time again, one finds him needing to appeal to his exceptional creativity in order to state even his most basic presuppositions and theoretical interests, merely in order to point to the general location of his type of analysis.

A recurrent theme is his relation to philosophy, and of philosophy's relation to the present. Most often, he insists that he does not consider himself to be a philosopher, in an ordinary sense of the term; he denies himself the title not out of modesty, but as a result of the conviction that traditional conceptions of the role of the philosopher and of the tasks of philosophy no longer have conceptual currency, they are outmoded and unsuited to the present historical state of rationality. In a 1967 interview, he describes philosophy in terms of its structural connection to current culture: "one can conceive of the philosopher as a sort of analyst of cultural conjunction," where culture is taken to include "not only the production of works of art but also political institutions, forms of social life, various prohibitions and constraints."²⁶ In an interview with Raymond Bellour on the occasion of the publication of *MC*, Foucault claims to do "the history not of thought in general but of everything that "contains some thought" in a culture, of everything in which there is thought."²⁷ By taking culture, the messy, concrete formal level of thought, as the field of his historical analyses, these take on a quality that is foreign both to history and to conventional philosophical discourse. This resistance to classification among other disciplines is, as Foucault explains in another interview about *MC* for an Italian publication, what makes it possible to adopt the critical attitude:

I find it very difficult to classify research like mine within philosophy or the human sciences I can be defined as an analysis of the cultural facts that characterize our culture. In this sense, it might be something like an ethnology of the culture that we belong to. In effect, I attempt

to situate myself outside the culture that we belong to, and to analyze its formal conditions in order to criticize it, not in the sense in which it would be a question of reducing its value, but to see how it could have effectively constituted itself.²⁸

Foucault does not consistently maintain this appeal to a general understanding of culture as constitutively tied to the philosophical, but he does frequently isolate a specific sense of the philosophical, then make use of it to describe the general critical *attitude* that he later finds in Kant and makes into the organizing principle of a grid for the history of modern philosophy. He describes, for example, contemporary philosophy as a form of activity, something that is exercised in a specific manner:

Fundamentally, what does it mean to do philosophy today? Not to constitute a discourse on totality, a discourse in which the totality of the world is rehearsed, but rather *to exercise in reality a certain activity, a certain form of activity*. In short, I would say that philosophy today is *a form of activity* that can be exercised in different fields. (p. 612, my emp.)

Here there is a contrast drawn implicitly between philosophy conceived as a type of discursive activity, and an idea of philosophical reflection that takes the nature of the act of thinking philosophically itself to be irrelevant to the meaning of philosophy and the functioning of philosophical discourse. For Foucault, these traditional conceptions of philosophy fail to adequately take into account the role of the relation between thought and the modalities of thought. There are specific forms of philosophical activities, in what he calls “determinate domains” of discourse, that are organized by the aim of “diagnosing the present of a culture” (p. 620). This objective, for Foucault, is “the true function that writers we call philosophers can have today” (p. 620).

This conception of philosophy as a critical attitude manifested in local diagnostic activities aims to resist the tendency to generate a closed theory, in favor of an autonomous, open-ended, and localized mode of historico-philosophical thinking. This is particularly clear in remarks Foucault makes in the interview with *La Quinzaine littéraire* in which he responded to Sartre’s dismissal of *MC*:

After all, philosophy from Hegel to Sartre has been an enterprise of totalizing, if not of the world, if not of knowledge (*savoir*), at least of human existence, and I dare say that if there is an autonomous

philosophical activity now, if there can be a philosophy that is not merely a sort of theoretical activity within mathematics or linguistics or ethnology or political economics, if there is an independent philosophy, free of all these domains, well, it could be defined as follows: a *diagnostic activity*. *Diagnosing the present, saying what the present is, saying what it is that makes the present different from everything that it is not, that is to say of our past*. Perhaps this is the task that is assigned to the philosopher now.²⁹

This diagnostic activity, for Foucault, is always only embodied in a particular theoretical or discursive *practice*. The structure that forms these practices regulates philosophical discourse. Their specificity is not to be found in the details of dogma or modes of argumentation, but in the discursive norms that differentiate types of activity, and are exercised in concrete practical situations.

He initially associates the sense of philosophy he recognizes in his type of analysis with Nietzsche, who—before Kant in the order of Foucault's accounts—is credited with the development of the idea of philosophical thought as an activity, thus not necessarily primarily intellectual³⁰, and with the inauguration of a new philosophical field of analysis:

It is quite possible that what I do has something to do with philosophy, especially to the extent that, at least since Nietzsche, philosophy has the task of diagnosing and no longer seeks to state a truth that is valid for all and forever. I seek to diagnose, to realize a diagnosis of the present: to state what we are today and what saying what we say today signifies. This work of excavation under our feet characterizes contemporary thought since Nietzsche, and in this sense I can declare myself to be a philosopher.³¹

The idea of a diagnostic of the present is one of Foucault's favored images to illustrate the aim of his historical analyses. Foucault's father was a physician, and from his student days he displayed a fascination with the interferences between philosophy and medicine. The notion of a diagnosis of the present recalls Nietzsche's figure of the cultural physician, who looks to the historical and conceptual source of particular concepts and values in order to perspicuously describe the problems they generate in contemporary culture. This image suggests that cultural problems have the form of symptoms, and that they can be treated first by identifying the illnesses of which they are the manifestation. The historical-conceptual investigation into the origin of

concepts, genealogy³², would according to this imagery represent the diagnostic procedure. In Foucault, just as in Nietzsche, the positive task involved in this medical metaphor consists in the sort of self-transformation that is provoked by an understanding of the source of the illness, by recuperating its initial historical conditions of possibility, and drawing the consequences of the slide from its original articulation—and the context in which one can observe the factors involved in its formation—to its opaque present manifestation. Although the conceptual component of this transition from sickness to health is unavoidably implied, in Foucault, the emphasis of the theoretical aim illustrated by the imagery is on the pragmatic dimension of the procedure: the transformation that perspicacious historical diagnosis makes possible allows the cultural symptoms to subside. An extensive discussion of this aspect of Foucault's practice is provided below, but in this context, Foucault's emphasis is on the preponderance of the presence in his practice of historical analysis: the aim of the diachronic investigation is exhausted by present worries, by the need to remedy symptoms of cultural illness through the transformation of the standpoint that one takes on them. The crucial connection here lies in the relation between the diagnostic evaluation of our present predicament (as opposed the declaration of universal, atemporal truths) and the activity of *excavation* that Foucault uses as a metaphor to convey the aim and objectives of his analyses.³³ Nietzsche's contribution is to deflate the lofty ambitions of philosophical work, and to bring its object of analysis down to the ground, and into the ground upon which we stand. Using precisely the terms he uses to describe Kant's critical attitude more than a decade later, in another 1967 interview, Foucault isolates Nietzsche as the point of emergence of this different mode of philosophical investigation: "Nietzsche discovered that the particular activity of philosophy consists in the work of diagnosing: what are we today? What is this "today" in which we live?"³⁴ This study of the actual turns the philosopher's analytical gaze downward: "Such an activity of diagnosis would include a work of excavation under its own feet in order to establish how all this world of thought, of discourse, of culture before it, that was its universe, was constituted."³⁵

At this stage, Foucault does not account for—in fact, he barely even calls attention to—the paradox of characterizing a historical mode of analysis in terms of an operation on the present; this will become a central element in his later formulations of criticism as ontology of actuality. It is implied here in the image of the *work of excavation*. This characterization suggests that the object of this type of analysis of actuality is buried, that the actuality around which the problems to be addressed is constitutively sedimented, and requires a dig in order to be understood. This conception of the present can

be read off Foucault's characterization of historical inquiry in *MC*, as a modern human science.³⁶ The field of criticism takes shape beneath our feet: "this sort of research is only possible as an analysis of our own cellar," Foucault exclaims in the Bellour interview, only to immediately strip the image of its pejorative connotations by specifying that the fact that these domains of research "find their point of departure in our actuality is not a defect."³⁷ This vindication of the function of diagnostic *fouilleur des bas-fonds* of our current cultural condition is an early manifestation in Foucault's theoretical essays of the critical aim that he later locates emergent in Kant.

Foucault typically underplays the degree to which the aims of his theoretical orientation coincide with Kant's criticism. Despite the consistent isolation of Kant as the historical point of emergence of the critical attitude that generates this aim, Foucault seems wary of associating himself too closely with what on one occasion he calls "the high critical enterprise," tied to the systematic doctrine or project of the criticism of knowledge undertaken by Kant in the three great works that bear its name. On the surface of things, Foucault gives the impression of relying, at a certain distance, on the minor, tendentiously Kantian feature of criticism that concerns its relation to the present and to history while dissociating his view from the straightforwardly Kantian critical aim of limiting knowledge claims on the basis of human rational capacities. Everything unfolds here as though history has discarded the legitimacy of the strict sense of criticism, leaving in its stead only a distant, sketchy relative. However, careful consideration of the conceptual issues involved shows that Foucault's position here is the result of a more finely grained series of considerations.

In order to specify the aspects of divergence between Kantian and Foucauldian criticism in order to bring their affinity into focus, three discursive moments of Kant's critical framework can be isolated and considered separately in relation to Foucault's posture: the relation of history and rationality, the epistemic priority of the subject and the effects of the legal model. To bluntly state the position that will be gradually introduced in what follows, Foucault's relation to Kant's criticism is predicated most heavily by the second and the third moments: the critical aim is no longer constitutively articulated around the knowing subject as the indissociable locus of the capacities in question, and the modality of adjustment of capacities and knowledge claims no longer appeals to a standard of legitimacy in order to carry out its function of delimiting discrimination. Neither of these areas of divergence, however, in Foucault's deployment of the aim of criticism, generates a form no longer recognizably Kantian. Criticism, both in the sense of a philosophy and in the sense of an attitude, can be salvaged from a Kantian framework

stripped of the priority it gives to the subject in the constitution of knowledge, and of the appeal to the model of the *law* as its principle of justification. The question of the relation between history and rationality remains. This relation plays a central role in the definition of the critical aims of Foucault's analyses, and this is the moment of divergence at which the most is at stake in connection with the proximity of this practice and Kant's practice of criticism. The following analysis aims to show that this difference, though real, need not be described at a level of abstraction at which it constitutes a formal difference, and the standpoint elaborated in the present study situates itself in view of the remarkable specificity of the form of criticism at a level of abstraction that determines the differences between the two to be contingent. Foucault's reading of Kant's critical attitude in his treatment of the question of the Enlightenment suggests a way in which Kant's framework is hospitable, in principle, to the type of relation between history and rationality that guides Foucault's work, although Kant did not take this path for reasons unrelated to the practice of criticism itself. Specifically, the state of the *finitude* of human reason for which Kant's criticism is designed tends toward the awareness of a state of the historical *contingency* of rationality. Considered with respect to criticism as the aim of thought, this space—from finitude to historical contingency—represents the most perspicuous distinguishing mark between Kant and Foucault. The following discussion approaches this set of issues from two directions. In an effort to attenuate the degree of divergence, it begins by considering (1) the question of the historical, before addressing (2) Foucault's rejection of the model of the law in Kant's conception of criticism, in order to clarify the effects and implications of an important and less obvious area of divergence.

(1) The discrepancy between Kant and Foucault with respect to the relation between the historical and the rational can be accounted for from within Foucault's historical-conceptual account. This divergence is itself best understood as the result of the historical transposition of a single practice. Foucault's analysis shows that the modern epistemological configuration that emerged at the time of Kant is reaching its terminus. Indeed, this proximity to the transition to a different configuration is what makes it possible for Foucault to occupy the theoretical space that he does. This shift, in other words, does not affect the configuration of possible knowledge that is characteristically modern. Both belong to the configuration that practices the analytics of finitude, in which the aim of adjusting epistemic claims to the finite capacities of human reason.

Since the difference between Kant and Foucault's conceptions of the relation between history and rationality is partially a product of methodological factors (this relates to a circular feature of the interaction between the

theoretical and the material in Foucault that is discussed below in Section V), some of its implications will emerge only in the course of Chapter Four. With respect specifically to the theoretical aims fixed by their configuration of critical problems, however, a number of elements can be considered.

Criticism in both Kant and Foucault is fundamentally oriented by a concern with limits. In both cases, criticism involves coming to terms theoretically with the limitations that are defined by the rational functions responsible for knowledge. For both thinkers, there is a basic motivation to avoid both endorsement of impossible knowledge claims, and wholesale rejection of the possibility of knowledge claims. In both, this aim is carried out by the subsidiary aim of undoing oneself from the self-evidence of what is immediately given in order to generate the distance required to reflect on rational possibility. However, as a result of different conceptions of the relation of rationality and history, this critical aim takes a different form in Foucault than it did in Kant.

Foucault's conception of rationality as historically contingent is a direct product of historical research. Historical material can only be understood, when it is engaged from the standpoint of the attitude of criticism in light of the supposition of a conception of rationality that has mutable forms. In light of a reflection on our own actuality and our role in its constitution, historical research teaches that our own form of rationality has not always been in place, that in the past, other discursive configurations have been regulated experience in ways that are structurally distinguishable from our own. Kant himself made this discovery possible by the invention of the activity of criticism as a philosophical questioning of actuality, but his discourse, shackled—on Foucault's account—to an oscillation between this mode of criticism and its other pole, criticism as analytics of truth, did not avail itself of this possibility, still bound to an unjustified conception of the immutability of human rationality.

This aspect of the alignment of Kant and Foucault makes it clear that it is utterly inadmissible to oppose Kant and Foucault as respectively championing and rejecting reason. Foucault's conceptual practice showcases a mode of philosophical questioning that, through a Kantian reflection on the limitations of human reason, arrives at and draws the consequences of the insight that rationality—the human capacities that form experience and that in their most exacting employment aim to constitute universal and necessary cognition—is organized differently in different historical periods. There is absolutely no sense, then, in which Foucault's critical aim involves a rejection of reason.³⁸ It is strikingly clear in the abandoned general Introduction to his *Histoire de la sexualité* that he, by no stretch, attempts

to deny that the specific forms of experience under analysis in his historical discourse “contain universal structures”; his insight is rather that “the setting into play of these universal forms is itself historical.”³⁹ It is not the authority of rationality, but its status in history that is in question. In this regard, the difference between Kant and Foucault is not formal, but itself the product of a historical development that can be accounted for as a single configuration. They share a conception of rationality that shifts between them from finite to historically contingent. One might object that the relevant senses of rationality and historical contingency are incompatible; that historically contingent rationality amounts to nothing more than what is in a particular historical culture taken to be rationally compelling, the source of the felt necessities of the day; that by admitting the possibility of a historically contingent rationality, one removes the grounds to distinguish reason from what a culture takes to be rational. This raises the question of the concept of rationality at hand. *Vernunft* is polysemetic in Kant’s terminological apparatus, but the broad use of the concept—reason as the superior cognitive capacity that encompasses sensibility, understanding, and reason in a strict sense—generally designates the capacity for a *a priori* cognition. The Introduction to *KrV*, for example, specifies that reason is the capacity that “provides the principles of cognition *a priori*,” and *The Progress of Metaphysics* defines it as “only the capacity for a *a priori* cognition, i.e., cognition which is not empirical” (A11/B24; 20: 261). At this level of abstraction, Foucault’s conception of rationality is Kantian. It is the broadest function of formation, consisting of a complex of more specific functions whose exercises interact in forming an experience. The opposition to the empirical aligns the rational with the formal, with the structure of experience. To be sure, this capacity is the only source of universal and necessary cognition, but these are features of the form of experience, as products of reason, they have no absolute value, no significance outside the form of experience to which they belong. Foucault’s suggestion is that it is the organization of capacities that constitute reason or rationality that is historically and culturally contingent. His criticism does not imply that reason is contingent within a form of experience, but rather that in history there have been many forms of experience; Foucault’s historical analysis allows one to appreciate that rationality, in its varying arrangements, generates *a priori* cognition in each case. The contingency that Foucault unmasks is not of rational cognition, but of the rational itself. If to say that reason is nothing more than the function actualized in the form of experience amounts to reducing the rational to what imposes itself as rational in a given community, there is little more to say than that within this framework, it is difficult to see what else reason could be. Within a Kantian

frame of reference, it is difficult to make sense of the notion of reason as it is, independently of its exercise. Foucault's insight concerns the historical variations of this exercise, not the localization of the status of its products. One might suggest that in the process of this analysis, in the very act of showing that forms of experience and the disposition of reason are not diachronically universal, what Foucault is in fact attempting to do is to unmask irrational discourse that had been masquerading as rational cognition, and thus to undermine the rational. A more rigorous description would begin by noting that Foucault's practice itself belongs to a form of experience, and that by identifying the historical-cultural contingency of specific forms of experience in history, his discourse itself is subject to the non-contingent rationality that forms the experience to which it belongs. Now, indeed, this raises questions about the status of Foucault's practice in relation to the claims it advances, but these are independent of the compatibility of reason and the historical contingency of rationality.⁴⁰ In this context, suffice it to say that when considered in light of the aim of Foucault's criticism, which centers around the sort of personal transformation that liberation from historical-cultural necessity makes possible, the epistemological implications of the tension between the form and the content of Foucault's discourse (roughly either that his descriptions of past forms of experience are merely fabled, or that the exercise of his practice enacts non-contingent rationality) are severely attenuated. The critical value of recognizing the historical contingency of reason, for Foucault just as for Kant, is in the final analysis practical, not merely theoretical.

Foucault connects the gap between conceiving human rationality as finite and as contingent on history to a difference in the exercise of their critical aims. He sees Kant's critical attitude as negative, and his own positive. As a philosophical *ethos*, the practice of criticism functions for Foucault as a *limit attitude* that aims to escape the inner-outer distinction, and to remain at the borders. Instead of establishing the limits of legitimate use of reason, the practice of criticism turns to the positive question of determining and describing the contingent and the arbitrary in what presents itself as universal and necessary. According to Foucault, as a result of a dormant historical consciousness, the activity of criticism, beyond the goal of defining the bounds of rationality that become a subsidiary—but still necessary—aim, is ultimately geared by reflection on the extent to which it may be or may become possible to overcome those limits, and exercise different forms of experience. The focus of Foucault's practice of criticism turns to the goal of transformation, and Foucault comes to think of the activity in terms of a analysis of the historical conditions of possibility and thus of transformation of a Kantian triad of relations—one's

relation to truth, to rules, and to oneself. The critical analysis defines the form of the concrete in order to make local singularities appear in their possibilities of transformation, through the work of thought on itself that is the analysis of the relations in question. This further, positive aim is absent in Kant's exercise of the critical attitude, which remained unreflective about the role of historical transformation in the determination of the form of rationality. Kantian criticism, both as an attitude and as an epistemologically determining structural configuration, never gets past what is for Foucault only the first, subordinate, negatively oriented step. In short, the ultimate stakes of criticism for Foucault are positive in so far as it aims "to know (*savoir*) the extent to which the work of thinking one's own history can free thought from (*affranchir de*) what it thinks silently and allow it to think otherwise" (*UP*, p. 15).⁴¹ The real value of the negative step of the work of criticism, for Foucault, can only be appreciated in connection with the positive step past it: "What would the relentless effort of knowledge (*savoir*) be worth if it is only to guarantee the acquisition of cognitions, and not, in a certain sense and to the extent that it is possible, the erring of the one who knows? There are moments in life in which the question of knowing (*savoir*) that one can think otherwise and perceive otherwise than one does is indispensable to being able to continue to look or to reflect" (*UP*, p. 14). In the interview for *Il Contributo* discussed in Chapter One, Foucault explains that the activity of criticism aims to let "what ties us—sometimes in a completely unconscious manner—to our modernity appear clearly" while also making "it appear as altered."⁴² From this practico-theoretical aim, Foucault articulates four consequences that effect the type of critical philosophical activity he conducts: (i) he endeavors in them not to "lean on a continuous and systematic theoretical background"; (ii) his books are written in connection with a direct and personal experience; (iii) this relation to experience must allow for a transformation, a metamorphosis whose applicability extends beyond the personal, and is accessible to others; (iv) this experience must be connectible to a collective practice, to a way of thinking (p. 46).

(2) The other relevant point of divergence between criticism in Kant and Foucault concerns the role of the figure of the legal as a model of various dimensions of the functions of human rationality. Unlike the difference between them in connection with the relation between history and rationality, this factor represents a structural difference in the discursive configuration that regulates their positions. This opposition to the Kantian penchant for the legal model is as pervasive and multi-faceted in Foucault as the appeal to the model is in Kant. It is a factor that touches most directly on considerations of method, and so like the previous theme of divergence considered, will be treated directly in Chapter Four. In relation to the stakes involved at

the level of the critical orientation of the positions of Kant and Foucault, the legal model manifests itself primarily in the context of the focus of Kant's critical philosophy on the issue of *legitimation* to the exclusion of any consideration of the implications of the configuration of the function of legitimation itself.

These factors of divergence—one a historical-conceptual, rather than a difference of theoretical choice, the other a more directly formal difference, but one that spares the shape of criticism as an analytic aim—help understand the modifications the aim of criticism undergoes in Foucault's practice. Schematically, there is a shift in the distinguishing feature of the object of analysis from the finitude to the contingency of rationality, and of the polarity of its emphasis from the negative to the positive. The methodological dimensions of Foucault's practice complicate these moments of divergence, however. They introduce an aspect of Foucault's position that can be cast as more intensely critical than Kant in a negative vein, and invite speculation about the possibility of identifying a mirroring moment in Kant, where a silent positive moment of criticism can be made explicit.

V. PRAGMATICS OF FOUCAULT'S PRACTICE OF CRITICISM

Foucault's studies are inhospitable to theoretical assessment. The transience and inscrutability of their theoretical underpinnings reliably disconcert aims to evaluate. But Foucault had no aversion to theoretical problems. Indeed, the problem seems to be not that he says nothing about his theory, but that he says too much. If one were to take these indications at face value, his theoretical commitments and tendencies would shift in time with the individual investigations they regulate. As the project of attempting to align Foucault's practice with Kant's standpoint has shown, the difficulty lies in holding the various expressions of Foucault's self-understanding that are dispersed throughout his texts together as a coherent, cohesive theoretical outlook. There has been a point of friction building in the background of this comparison, one that can now be fully brought into view, and its implications confronted. It is generated by the convergence of (a) the attempt to *stabilize* the theoretical elements of Foucault's studies in order to draw his outlook into relation with Kant, and a feature of this outlook that can be described as (b) deliberate theoretical *restraint*: the refusal to authorize the theoretical to strip the historical of its specificity, that manifests itself precisely in the form of the theoretical instability that makes comparison with Kant's problematic. The full degree of tension produced by marshalling Foucault's theoretical commitments to philosophical analysis is not only the result of

fixing aspects that happen to be fluid and mutable (say, as a result of his lack of interest or acumen in theoretical problems), but more radically of fixing theoretical elements that are allowed, by design, to remain fluid and mutable in light of methodological concerns. Thus, instead of discouraging the sort of second order engagement involved in the comparison of two theoretical structures, the tension between the activity of taking stock of the theoretical in Foucault's studies and the instability of the elements involved in it recommends such scrutiny. In this case specifically, it invites examination of the restraint that deliberately allows for the theoretical instability (the question of the methodological value of attempting to deny the theoretical characteristics that make it theoretical). This represents a final factor involved in Foucault's theoretical grid to be considered before turning from the evaluation of the proximity of the critical segments of the configurations of Kant and Foucault in relation to the question of theoretical objectives, to the matter of the mechanisms that set them into motion, the topic of Chapter Four.

In order to allow this further dimension of formal affinity to come into view, the divergence at the level of the relation between the articulation of a theoretical armature and its deployment in empirical or historical analysis needs to be accounted for. As suggested, an obvious way to set up this contrast would be to oppose the two as being more and less inclined to or interested in theoretical concerns. But this would occlude the complexity of the second order consideration of Foucault's position. A better way to take stock of this discrepancy is through the concession that the general picture that this section aims to outline is the result of aligning a level of consideration in Kant and Foucault that does not line up of itself. The bulk of Kant's mature work is devoted to the exercise of critical philosophy itself, that is, engaged—with notoriously imposing bulk and rigidity of theoretical elaborations and artificial architectonic structure—in a systematic preparatory project. In this respect, his discourse takes place in a second order of analysis: it is occupied by a work of reflection on the limits of human rationality in order to adjudicate the types of knowledge and the theoretical and scientific modalities that are possible in the light of these limitations. In other words, the work of critical philosophy, Kant's primary occupation from 1781 on, is the activity of paving the way for legitimate metaphysics. He is theorizing about what sort of theorizing is possible. In stark contrast to this area of focus, the bulk of Foucault's work is actual discursive analysis, theory practiced, sporadically interspersed with reflection on what theory has just been or is about to be *practiced*. In this final theme of comparison between the aim of criticism in Kant and Foucault, this incongruence can be suspended in order to stage a confrontation of their views in this space, where there is no natural point

of contact: the second order of consideration of form. In the course of the following, a thematic—if undeveloped and mostly unarticulated—regularity will be displayed in Foucault’s attitude at this point of intervention; this will illuminate the decisive importance of this aspect of his position with respect to the proximity of the aim of Kantian and Foucauldian criticism. By attending to the details of Foucault’s philosophical attitude toward the relationship between the status of his own theoretical commitments and the material of analysis upon which they are brought to bear, this reconstruction of the final element of the critical segment of Foucault’s theoretical posture will show that his critical attitude is paradoxically more thoroughly theoretically reflective than Kant’s.

The sense of criticism discussed by Foucault—the notion of criticism as an attitude that works at the limits of our thought not only by way of a negative prohibition of thinking what is impossible, but also by way of a positive exercise of the possibility of different forms of thought—is itself silently accompanied by a third critical mechanism. It functions at the level not of the limits of our forms of thought, but at the level of the limits of the practice itself that projects and regulates the critical task of working out the limits of our thoughts. This feature of Foucault’s posture makes it possible to conceive of his critical attitude as more radically critical than that of Kant. By drawing this dimension into relation with one of the central lines of criticism that had already been directed at Kant’s project during the years immediately following the publication of *KrV*, Foucault’s critical attitude manifests itself as equipped with a dimension of theoretical self-transparency that Kant lacks.

It will help to keep in sight the potential distortion that is generated by representing Foucault’s analyses as employing a rigid method, as developing a theory, or elaborating a doctrine. It is worth emphasizing, again, that this is not to suggest that there is no dimension of theoretical reflection in Foucault. In the course of his analyses and in published interviews, there is extensive if irregular consideration of such issues. These often occur in the context of remarks and elaborations on the theoretical underpinnings of the sort of investigations he conducts, frequently in terms of the continuity and the shifts of his theoretical grid. Foucault’s primary concern in connection with these considerations is with questions of the relation of priority between the theoretical orientation and the historical, empirical material of his analyses.⁴³

It is to be expected, then, that the second-order feature of Foucault’s practice is left entirely unstated. It is not unlikely that it develops and functions spontaneously in Foucault, as a matter of unspoken historical-conceptual possibilities, rather than a deliberately fashioned theoretical component.

Indeed, this implicit and undertheorized status is to be expected of a putative theoretical level whose constitutive aim is precisely to restrain the density, authority, and rigidity of the explicit theoretical dimension. But it is possible to isolate it as a legitimate formal feature of his posture.

This concern manifests itself as what Foucault once called the “pragmatics” of his theoretical orientation.⁴⁴ The remark comes in the course of some theoretical alignments late in his life; it can serve as a clue for the exploration of a dimension of Foucault’s investigations that runs close to their heart throughout its mutations and remains, as a matter of conceptual necessity, unthematized. As suggested above, it is worth risking the exercise of theorizing it, as a way of representing Foucault’s critical attitude in its highest degree of intensity. This aspect of the critical dimension of his investigation is the basis for the claim that Foucault is more thoroughly critical than Kant. From this angle, the air of paradox generated by the positive orientation of Foucault’s position as a criticism can begin to unfold. The decisive factor for this element of Foucault’s attitude is the product of a confluence between its historical and its theoretical facets.

Perhaps in part as a residue of his background in clinical psychology, Foucault’s studies consistently strive to maintain a balance between the empirical and the theoretical. On the one hand, the specificity of his type of historical analysis, what distinguishes it, for example, from the history of ideas or of opinions, is that the objects that it represents are defined in the space of possibility: he does the history of what made ideas, opinions, knowledge (*connaissances*), institutions, subjective practices, etc., possible. He calls it the history of discourse or of knowledge (*savoir*). On the other hand, however, he is unremittingly attuned to the reality and to the specificity of history, which is given the balance of authority in relation to the theoretical mechanism with which he defines the space of possibility in which his analyses are conducted; this impels him to an attitude of permanent hesitation with regard to this theoretical machinery: he is reluctant to articulate it with any degree of generality, and when he does say anything about it, he tends to take back some of what he said.

As a result, there is no principled priority in the relation between the historical and the theoretical. In principle, one can begin at either end. When approaching Foucault’s works from the side of their theoretical supports, one of the salient features of the approach is the rejection of the supposition of the existence of natural objects. This doubly responsive attitude is the medium of the second order problem in Foucault. It has the result of leaving the theoretical orientation of his analyses understated and restrained, fragile and plastic in its responsiveness to the requests of historical-empirical material

that constantly threaten to throw the legitimacy of the critical apparatus into question. Foucault avoids what might be thought of as a second order dogmatism by continually re-subjecting the theory to what gives itself to its practice, which was the basis for its construction in the first place. In this register, Foucault's critical attitude is acquired at the price of theoretical fragility, by subjecting itself to the singularity of things. For this reason, there is an indispensable element of realism involved in Foucault's research that has the function of stabilizing the interaction between the archival material and the conceptual grid into which it is immersed to generate the historical discourse. In a second order register, to state matters generally, this realism can be construed as filling an analogous function in a second order register: the very idea of the reality of historical material—of facts in history—is invested with the tenor required to balance and legitimate the idea of the theoretical grid.⁴⁵

From Foucault's standpoint, the complexity of the interaction between Kant's theoretical apparatus and the material upon which it is deployed is seen as a result of a series of historico-conceptual factors. As discussed above in the context of Kant's role in Foucault's analysis of the human sciences narrated in *MC*, its development takes place in a particularly dense field of conceptual relations, one that marks the transition from a metaphysical to an epistemological factor of stability. As a result, according to Foucault's historical and conceptual account, the interplay between the practice of criticism, the elaboration of the conceptual machinery around which criticism is defined, and the conceptual origins of that framework (how the framework was established) is deeply ambiguous in Kant. This is part of what was initially involved in the post-Kantian idealists' dissatisfaction with Kant's position as a solution to the crisis of reason: although it legitimated and delimited the authority of reason on the basis of the practice of criticism, it did not account for the possibility of the criticism of that practice itself. A mechanism for adjudicating the proper sphere of knowledge claims on the basis of the functions of the subjective capacities that generate them is provided, but that mechanism is itself left unchecked. In order to avoid second order dogmatism, a second order analysis was required. As a result, the central problematic in the space opened between Kant's *KrV* and Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* can be defined around the question of the legitimation of the possibility of the practice of critical philosophy itself.

This invites the speculation it is Foucault's recognition of the indispensable historical dimension of thought and discourse generally (reason in opposition to truth, which is always dependant on history) that motivated incorporation of a historical moment into the practice of criticism. While the instability that this aspect of his thinking generates is an effect of its function, it has been the source

of considerable misunderstanding of aim and the method of Foucault's studies from the beginning. This aspect of Foucault's analyses is part of the thicket of inarticulate factors in the background that generates, orients and reorients these interrogations. As a result, this standpoint is both elusive and generously instructive. In fact, the interference between the historical narrative of Foucault's analyses and the theoretical apparatus that supports them generates an effective reading grid for an interpretation that accounts for the full scope of their complexity. It can be reconstructed in two registers. On the one hand, the details of Foucault's history of knowledge imply a specific determination of the epistemological status of its discourse and theoretical underpinnings. On the other, these historically determined theoretical buoys serve as the grid whose application to archival material determines historical events and transformations. Foucault's theoretical grid is contemporary, and therefore—on the basis of the results of the employment of this grid—historical (contemporary discourse, according to Foucault's historical analyses, is constitutively historical).

In relation to the first register, Foucault's conception of the historical character of knowledge is the product of the historical determinants of contemporary knowledge that are established by his analyses of the discursive practices of the human sciences previously discussed (Section II). In the second, the specificity of the turn to history that is required for Foucault can be approached by contrast with an appeal to history that is motivated by diametrically opposed aims. His own appeal to historical analysis, philosophically motivated by a conception of philosophy as the diagnosis of the present, represents the exact counterpart of what he describes in a subsequent interview with Bellour as a *curious sacralization* of history. He isolates two reasons for this attitude:

For many intellectuals, distant respect for history, uninformed and traditionalist, was the simplest way to attune their political conscience and the research or writing activity; under the sign of the cross of history, all discourse turned into a prayer to the god of just causes. There is also a more technical reason. In effect, one must recognize that in domains such as linguistics, ethnology, history of religions, sociology, concepts formed in the 19th century and that can be considered of a dialectical order, were in large part abandoned. Now, for some, history as a discipline constituted the dialectical order's last refuge: one could save the reign of rational contradiction in it.⁴⁶

As a result of this sacralization, intellectuals tended toward a conception of history that is organized around a model of "narrative as a great succession of events taken in a hierarchy of determinations," in which individuals

understanding themselves from within a totality that engulfs them and determines their way of thinking, but is their own unconscious creation. This incoherent conception of history as both a project and a totality—sponsored by what Foucault calls “the great cause of the revolution”—was untouchable (p. 586). By contrast, Foucault’s analyses are conducted in full awareness of, and more fundamentally precisely because of, constitutive rootedness in the present, and in a present whose structure determines the forms of historical experience that it can exercise.

By considering the implications of both this circularity and of the redundantly related axes at every stage of the interpretation of Foucault’s analyses, the complexities of their theoretical background can be effectively preserved. This is especially true in the case of Foucault’s idea of the relation between discourse and history. The pragmatics of Foucault’s practice takes the form of an organic relation between the historical and the theoretical. The rigidity that typically characterizes the strictures of a theory is avoided in order to remain more closely and directly answerable to the specificity, the singularity of the historical material. The goal is to keep the aspects of the discourse in precarious equilibrium. The definition of this ideal is guided by the second order of Foucault’s critical attitude that quietly guides his works. The balance provides a way to suspend the authority of the theoretical orientation of criticism itself is to maintain it as temporary and approximate, that is, to invest the theoretical grid with conceptual plasticity. This serves as a mechanism to account for the fact that the constitutively historical dimension of knowledge is theoretically over-determined; that discourse is determined as historical both by its contemporary position in the historical narrative of discourse that it frames, and as an effect of a theoretical segment that belongs to its own structure. The discourse, in other words, that serves as the occasion for the application of Foucault’s grid, is historical both as a historical fact and by way of theoretical necessity.⁴⁷

Foucault emphasizes the positive side of his conception of philosophical criticism at every opportunity that presents itself: “But what is philosophy today—I mean philosophical activity—if not the critical work of thought on itself? And if it does not consist, instead of legitimating what we already know, in undertaking to know (*savoir*) how and how far it would be possible to think otherwise?” (*UP*, p. 15). Yet this emphasis should not be allowed to conceal the potential force of a less conspicuous negative side of Foucault’s critical segment. In connection with this aspect of Foucault’s works, it is particularly important to do justice to the profound continuity of the development of his theoretical orientation. In order to recognize the second order aspect of this position, it is indispensable to approach the changes in Foucault’s practice

as constituting a sequence of re-adjustments and re-articulations within an organic, progressively more explicit process of theoretical elaboration, rather than a series of discontinuous, fickle shifts. These mutations are organically related in so far as they tend, from a very early point in Foucault's writings, toward the final explicit realignment he proposes. This second order elaboration stages the complete confluence between the theoretical and the historical (the material of the theory), in the idea of an *exercice*. In other words, it was only toward the end of his life that Foucault came to formulate what had been true of his work for nearly two decades, namely, that the motivation of criticism as he practiced it—to explore the limits of our thinking, at the specific points at which continuing to think becomes problematic, by attempting to think otherwise—was to be carried out by 'exercising' strange forms of experience. He came to this theoretical idiom by way of a change of chronological reference points; he generalized the focus of his historical investigations, and situated his studies on sexuality in the context of practices that began in Antiquity. Such practices, the exercise of ethical relations of a self to itself, ascetic practices, have the form of the activity that he understands to be criticism, the fundamental character of his theoretical approach. This can already be observed in Foucault prior to the publication of *MC*.

From the time of his earliest publications, especially in his account of the development of psychology between 1850–1950 published in 1957, Foucault's historical analyses took the form of descriptions of empirical archival material that appealed to the localization of moments of historical *a priori* as necessary for its intelligibility. There can be little doubt that this approach is the product of the juxtaposition, in Foucault's intellectual nutrition at the time, of the study of Kant and of psychology and its history. But at this stage, it is still premature to think of Foucault's theoretical commitment even as a well-modulated approach. Prior to the publication of *HF*, no extensive theoretical specifications are provided in his studies. However, from the historical analyses themselves, one can reconstruct the form of general way of proceeding: the historian proceeds naively, that is with no particular theoretical principle of discrimination explicit, until it is not possible to make sense of the material under analysis in terms of the rules of the practices of his own contemporary discourse, making it necessary to appeal to the norms of a different form of knowing. But this procedure is systematically understated. Its traces at the surface of the texts are limited to sporadic references to the historical *a priori* of particular discourses. Gradually, this procedure is articulated, and given increasingly frequent and varied formulation in essays, review and interviews, culminating in 1969, with the publication

of the excessively elaborate theoretical meditations in *AS*. The point to be underscored here is that Foucault's theoretical posture began gradually, in the course of undertaking historical investigation, in order to provide a mechanism to accommodate and account for the singularities—the irregular mutations, the events—of the historical material of the archive, rather than by a theoretical reflection that culminated in the adoption of a theory with which to address the history. From the start, Foucault's historical research began in the present, armed with nothing other than an awareness of the dangers of second order reflection, a will for lucidity about the forms that regulate the discourse that he carried, and a responsiveness to the experience of confronting other forms. This theoretical restraint remained a constant throughout the various transformations of this thinking, at least as an ideal.

Foucault's second interview with Bellour cited above, published in 1967, records a series of valuable methodological clarifications by Foucault, and conspicuously exemplifies both the local theoretical elucidations to which Foucault was given, as well as the his conception of the stakes of the opposition he maintained between a fixed, fully worked-out theory and the pliable theoretical prescriptions that regulate his research. In this specific content, Foucault appeals to the idea of structuralism in order to theoretically situate his studies.

The complexity of the conceptual relations involved manifests itself when Foucault is asked about the methodological orientation of the descriptive function of contemporary non-formalized domains of inquiry such as his historical analysis. Against the backdrop of a co-extensive conception of 'periodization' and delimitation of level of analysis, he offers two prescriptions to which he holds his analyses. On the one hand, the schemas he developed and used to analyze the texts that provided for his investigations ought to be able to account for the historical material found in texts with which he does not deal. On the other hand, the material that he does deal with should be able to be taken up in the description that would have a different periodization, situated at another level; if the descriptions are accurate, the difference between them should allow one to specify the transformation from one level to the other. As a result, the descriptive task of these historical analyses is ambivalent, such as when Foucault specifies that: "In one sense, description is therefore infinite, in another, it is closed, to the extent that it tends toward establishing the theoretical model susceptible to account for the relations that exist between the discourses studied."⁴⁸

One of the ways that the importance of the moment of pragmatics in Foucault's theoretical grid manifests itself is in his attempt to negotiate the tensions of his relation to structuralism. In the late 1960's, at a time when the

ossification of the practice of structuralism into a rigid parody of a position did not seem inevitable, Foucault felt the need to maintain a nuanced position with respect to what was called structuralism. Yet in a 1967 interview for *La presse de Tunisie*, with a general audience in mind, he presents this relationship with apparent humor, but perfectly clearly and unequivocally:

At most, I am structuralism's choirboy. I've rung the bell, let us say, and the faithful have genuflected, the unbelievers have protested. But the position had long been in place. I am not the one to solve the real mystery.⁴⁹

His strategy is to distance the idea of structuralism as a doctrine or a methodology by depicting it as a style of analysis that—in a context that had seen the proliferation of theoretical discourses: linguistic, sociological, historical, economic—would serve as a specific way of understanding their various forms of knowledge. “There is no textbook or treatise of structuralism,” he sees the need to emphasize (p. 583). Using the language that he retains throughout his work to characterize the basic modality of his analyses, Foucault describes structuralism as a *theoretical activity* that “only exists within certain determinate domains,” it is constitutively “a certain way of analyzing things,” such that it makes no sense to speak of “a general theory of structuralism” (pp. 583–4). It is an activity through which non-specialist analysts define the actual relations that exist between elements of cultural, scientific, ethical, political and theoretical practices. He marks out its non-dogmatic, open character by describing it as a practice of discourse, but one that is not apathetic to the concern for rigor: the system, Foucault maintains, “is actually our major form of honesty” (p. 582). This understanding of structuralism as a stylistic activity produces properly philosophical discourse, when the task of philosophy is taken to be fundamentally diagnostic: “one can very well speak of a sort of philosophical structuralism that would define itself as the activity that allows to diagnose what today is” (p. 581).

Independently of the thorny question of Foucault's proximity to structuralism, this nuanced description of the extent to which his own analyses can be considered structuralist is an early example of the plasticity with which Foucault invested his theoretical prescriptions. A central concern guiding his conceptual practice is the restraint of the authority of his theoretical framework, such that it cedes to the specificity of its object. Foucault carries this mitigation of the abstracting function of the theoretical a step further in the description of the critical aim of his research by way of a detour through Nietzsche, in the form of an analysis of the concept of genealogy

in “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire” (1971). There, Foucault emphasizes the importance of “patient relentless erudition, the minutia of knowledge (*savoir*), study of great quantities of stacked up material” in the opposition to the historical deployment of ideal meanings and indefinite teleologies. Foucault explains that in order to preserve the singularities of the events themselves, historical analysis must show “indispensable restraint,” in order to “track down the singularity of events, outside of all monotonous finality.”⁵⁰ This serves as another manifestation of Foucault’s reversal of the authority of the theoretical and the specific theorized; they can be seen to imply an interest in avoiding a repetition of dogmatism at the second order implicit in the deployment of critical philosophy. These general characterizations of Foucault’s theoretical attitude are supplemented by explicit articulations of this methodological interest, to which Foucault gives voices at in the course of various theoretical discussions.

Perhaps the most forthcoming of these occurs at the opening of a discussion on subjectification published in 1982. There Foucault gives a detailed explanation of what he considers to be the indispensable balance between the two basic components of his position. Here, perhaps in part due to the fact that this is one of the few texts Foucault wrote in English, one finds him occupying a level of generality that is rare in his writings:

Since a theory assumes a prior objectification, no theory can serve as a basis for analytical work. But this analytical work cannot be undertaken without conceptualization of the problems treated. And this conceptualization implies a critical thought—a constant checking. The first thing to verify is what can be called the “conceptual needs.” I mean that the conceptualization should not be founded on a theory of the object: the conceptualized object is not the single criterion of the validity of a conceptualization. We must know the historical conditions that motivate our conceptualization. We must have a historical awareness of the culture in which we live.⁵¹

The constant checking of the suitability of the theoretical elements for the material being analyzed that is described here draws Foucault’s practice into relation with his more general critical attitude of diagnostically taking stock of the present. That against which the critical aim is checked is brought into view through the permanent reactivation of the practice of questioning the currency of one’s own situation. What is required is an experimentally-structured approach, in which the theoretical elements of the research represent the hypotheses, to which one is ideally not committed until they can be validated

by the results of the experiment. In 1971, Foucault goes so far as to claim that some of his studies were effectively conducted altogether without defined theoretical underpinnings: “in *The History of Madness* and in *The Birth of the Clinic*, I was still blind to what I was doing.”⁵² More moderately stated, his experimental pragmatics lead him to undertake research projects without a clearly-worked out theoretical grid, and in the process of conducting analysis, a type of object and its attending method come into view together, allowing for a retrospective reconstruction of the theoretical orientation that had been at work implicitly and inaccessible to the analyst.⁵³ Reading Foucault’s theoretical restraint as part of a process of structural internalization of second order concerns allows for the reintroduction of a negative, limiting element of criticism after the deployment of the positive function of criticism that reflects on the possibility of thinking otherwise.

Practices as Forms of Experience

I. INTRODUCTION

Even from a distance, Foucault's method has unmistakable Kantian undertones, and his deceptively familiar concept of the 'historical *a priori*' of practices is a striking terminological manifestation of this similarity. The concept marks a level of analysis for the formal conditions of thought during a given period of time in a particular culture. This analysis proceeds regressively from the experience of a historical practice, by way the exercise of an experimental protocol on archival material, to the configuration of concepts that forms and regulates it, thereby determining its order of intelligibility. The methodological insight is that this point of arrival, the regulating factors that form a given historical practice, can be postulated as real and effective on the basis of its indispensability for the point of departure. Foucault's analysis isolates the forms of historical experience exercised through documentary and archival work by identifying an indispensable feature of that experience to it, and on the basis of this feature provides the description of a form that makes its rules explicit.¹ This regressive dynamic marks a methodological constant in Foucault's historical practice. It is decisive in determining the experimental transition from the documentary material that provides access to cultural difference indirectly, through the detour of a description of the norms that determine what is and what is not possible within the experience of that material. It is clear that this dynamic bears a resemblance to what Kant describes as the objectives of the critical method, but this assessment of Foucault's Kantianism has yet to define the details of this relation and to indicate its primary and most immediate implications; while it is true that the form of movement in thought that transfers attention from what is undeniably indispensable in an experience to a description of the rules that determine the modality of that experience does characterize something definitive

in both Kant's critical philosophy and Foucault's historical analysis, it could also serve as a description of Plato's dialectical method.² A finer grain seems advisable.

Gilles Deleuze is one of the few to have considered the formal relation between Foucault and Kant in detail. Deleuze habitually appeals to a contrast between Cartesian and Kantian models as a device with which to bring the specificity of a form of thought into focus.³ Although the direct treatment of the matter is restricted to several paragraphs in the middle of the book, the isolation of the Kantian elements represents the organizing idea of Deleuze's exposition of Foucault in his *Foucault*. It introduces a challenging and original way of engaging with Foucault's works, and a fine starting point for the examination of the methodological question. Two themes from Deleuze's discussion are particularly worthy of attention in this connection. The first concerns Deleuze's specific proposal for the analogue of the element of receptivity in Foucault's Kantian model of experience: as the respondent to Kant's forms of sensibility he creatively perceives a *form of visibility* in Foucault's framework. The other is the aspect of Kantian thinking that for Deleuze is the most remarkable point of divergence between Kant and Foucault, namely, that whereas Kant's critical method aims to establish the conditions of *possible* experience, Foucault's historical analysis aims to restrict its scope to the conditions of *real* experience. Without removing from their philosophical value or their legitimacy within the parameters of Deleuze's method in both cases there is room for serious reconsideration of these interpretive suggestions when considered from a standpoint native to the Kantianism of Foucault.

II. KANT AND THE FORM OF EXPERIENCE IN FOUCAULT

According to Deleuze's reconstruction, the theme of visibility as the form of receptivity represents not a difference, but the decisive point of similarity between Kant and Foucault. Indeed, it provides the kernel around which his entire exposition of Foucault's historical analysis is constructed. It is worth exploring this interpretive suggestion in some detail, for although it coincides broadly with the general direction of the formal alignment that is being presented here, in one crucial respect, it goes importantly, but instructively awry. Deleuze makes Foucault's conception of experience explicit as a thoroughly Kantian structure. His understanding of Kant's conception of experience, not unlike current Neo-pragmatist interpretations, places considerable emphasis on the heterogeneity and the indispensability of both of the constituents of the formal dualism of Kant's conception of experience

and the function-relative nature of the distinction between form and content. Deleuze presents the structural elements of experience in Foucault as the formal elements of historical formations.⁴ According to this reading, the basic structure of the historical forms of experience that Foucault's analysis describes is built around a distinction between content and expression. They are made "of things and of words, of seeing and of speaking, of visible and of sayable (*dicible*), of zones of visibility and of fields of legibility, of contents and of expressions."⁵ This initial structural opposition between content and expression is supplemented by a subordinate distinction between the form and substance or content of each. Together, their description in the course of historical analysis isolates the conditions of possibility of a given form of experience in history.

Upon developing this dual formalism, Deleuze recasts it in relation to the Kantian model, in the background all along: "Visibilities form with their conditions a receptivity, and statements, with theirs, a spontaneity. Spontaneity of language and receptivity of light."⁶ According to Deleuze, Foucault transposes the Kantian spontaneity of understanding, of the I think, by "the 'there is' (*il y a*) of language."⁷ Similarly, the receptivity of sensible intuition in Foucault becomes a receptivity of light that represents, Deleuze suggests, "a new form of space-time."⁸ On this view of Foucault's model, statements unified in a practice have a determining role in that form of experience, and visibilities indicate the form of the determinable. As in Kant, both are irreducible features of experience. Deleuze outlines this moment of Kantianism as a decisive break in the history of philosophy:

This was Kant's great rupture with Descartes: the form of determination (I think) does not deal with an undetermined (I am), but with the form of a pure determinable (space-time). The problem is the co-adaptation of the two forms, or the two sorts of conditions, that are of a different nature. It is this problem transformed that one finds in Foucault: the relation between the two 'there is,' between the determinable visibilities and the determining statements.⁹

Deleuze enters into considerable detail about how he understands the visible and the 'sayable' to function as indispensable, interacting, and yet fundamentally heterogeneous (thus as different types of forms needing to be differentiated by some sort of content of the form itself) elements of the form of an experience. In order to make his reconstruction palatable in view of the apparent absence of the form of visibility in Foucault's writings, Deleuze also places importance on the question of the relative priority of the two

types of forms, and of their “mutual embracing and capturing.”¹⁰ In addition, Deleuze discovers in Foucault’s analyses a respondent to a Kantian conceptual device to explain the mode of interaction between the two types of formal aspects: the schema of the imagination. In Kant, since, in the constitution of an experience, receptivity maintains its opposition to the spontaneous form of determination by generating a form of determinability, a third distinct formal factor is required, namely, the “mysterious” capacity of the imagination. In Foucault, on Deleuze’s reading, a third factor similarly intervenes in the co-operation of the legible and the visible. Deleuze finds only negative characterizations of this capacity and of the nature of its actualization. He refers to Foucault’s reference to an enigmatic space, a required distance, a nowhere (*non-lieu*), a space of interaction in another dimension that the forms that interact; this would be “an informal dimension that will account for both the stratified composition of the two forms, and of the primacy of one over the other.”¹¹

Both the form of this comparative analysis, and the broad insight at its source—namely, the recognition of a deeply Kantian structure in the historical forms of experience described by Foucault—are penetrating and valuable. However, the creation of a foreign concept for the articulation of the factor of receptivity is excessive, perhaps even misguided in relation to the nerve of the studies it is supposed to be addressing. There is an alternative, another possible figure for the form of receptivity that is based in Foucault’s own concepts, and that makes for a more accessible and cohesive reconstruction of his critical practice. The analysis of this alternative Foucauldian version of the form of receptivity will gain from a further point of consideration of Deleuze’s reading.

Deleuze insists that visibility functions as a discursive form in Foucault, despite the apparent marginality of the theme. This interpretation draws on the widely held view that during the 1960s Foucault and many of his contemporaries had an excessive reaction to phenomenology that led them to underemphasize the role of the visual in favor of the textual.¹² Thus, Foucault’s hostility to some aspects of his own early historical studies in subsequent theoretical reappropriations, such as the one carried out in *L’archéologie du savoir*, is considered to be a manifestation of a broader hostility to the phenomenological that, as a kind of side-effect, masked the structural role of a visual theme in his own work. Indeed, Deleuze would have one believe that this factor exerted such sway on the self-awareness of Foucault’s works that what Deleuze confidently refers to as Foucault’s ‘theory of visibilities’—remember that Foucault often denied having even a theory of power—is in Foucault’s texts altogether void of theoretical markers: Deleuze

simply invents a concept useful for understanding the implications of Foucault's studies. This violent interpretive decision is theoretically buttressed in Deleuze's work by a thorough understanding of the source of the philosophical value of engaging with its tradition. Without attempting to reconstruct the logic of the position, it is instructive in this context to note that Deleuze vindicates conceptual invention as an end, and the use of philosophical texts as toolkits in which one finds a certain number of concepts ready to be used as instrument for one's own purposes. In his own readings of other thinkers, these commitments generate exceptionally insightful and fresh spawns of canonical figures, but they are at odds with the more conservative methodological wager that informs the present investigation. Although Foucault's relation to phenomenology in connection with the theoretical relevance of the visual is a valuable point of consideration, one cannot do so from within Foucault's own conceptual framework. In fact, it is more instructive to consider the matter within the broader context of the shifting relation between the discursive and the non-discursive in Foucault's works. This calls for a rather extensive exposition of an alternative, more familiarly Foucauldian reconstruction of the theoretical armature of his writings.

The first of Deleuze's idiosyncrasies to dispense with is the reduction of the non-discursive to the visible. This is symptomatic of a distortion of the nature of the distinction in Foucault between the discursive and the non-discursive: the visual aspects of Foucault's analyses that Deleuze marks out properly belong to a distinct field of consideration, one that at the highest level of generality Foucault refers to as the non-discursive. The sort of theoretical framework that Deleuze reconstructs is tailored to the analysis of discourses. But further bearings in Foucault's writings are required in order to be in a position to take stock of this distinction. If one takes Foucault's uninterrupted tendency to emphasize the basic continuity of his research seriously, a reasonable way to address this sort of issue is by isolating the semantics of the basic object of this sort of analysis. Now, the cultivated polyvalence of Foucault's theoretical standpoint across his studies makes any kind of general reconstruction a challenging and a questionable undertaking. In this case, however, there is a genuine thematic continuity that can be abstracted from the terminological fluctuations.

The received view of the development of Foucault's work distinguishes three periods of development: an early 'archeological' period to the end of the 1960's, a middle 'genealogical' stage until the late 1970's, and a final period to his death in which he became concerned with a form of ethical problems in relation to the Greeks. The triadic division and the dating is roughly accurate, and obvious from a cursory survey of Foucault's works.

The details of the nature and the stakes of the methodological and thematic shifts have, however, been a source of constant debate among commentators from a very early point in Foucault's career. Without attempting to contribute to this particular tradition of criticism at any proximity, it is possible to reconstruct an accessible framework within which these shifts can be situated on the basis of Foucault's own retrospective sums attempted toward the end of his life. The theoretical modifications of Foucault's studies can be understood as generated by shifts of objects of analysis. These take place against the background of continuity provided by the fact that all of Foucault's areas of analysis have been analyses of *practices*. Broadly speaking, two important changes of area of research turned out to be decisive within this unified field: (i) a move from the analysis of discursive practices constituted by relations of knowledge to institutional and social practices constituted by relations of power, and (ii) a move from these to ethical practices of the self in relation to itself.¹³ The conceptually relevant aspects of Foucault's terminological and methodological mutations are by-products of these shift of domains of research. The nature of Deleuze's distortion in the imposition of the form of visibility onto Foucault's theoretical armature will come into focus as a result of these articulations. The first task in the exposition of this overcharging frame of reference is to address the relevant concept of practices.

III. THE CONCEPT OF A PRACTICE

. . . [T]heory does not express, translate, or apply a practice, it is a practice.¹⁴

*What I try to analyze are practices: the logic immanent to a practice, the strategies that support this and, consequently, the way individuals—freely, in their struggles, in their confrontations, in their projects—constitute themselves as the subjects of their practices or refuse on the contrary the practices offered to them.*¹⁵

This section aims to define the category of 'practice' as the unit of Foucault's historical analysis and the basic form of the theoretical object of his criticism. In order to draw the implications of this formal feature for an understanding of Foucault, it is advisable to begin with a preliminary examination of the operative concept of practice. In the exposition of his prior research presented with his nomination to the Collège de France, Foucault describes the *object* of his studies as "the knowledge invested in complex institutional systems," and their *method*—stated in the tone of an austere joke, expressed in a form in which it is difficult to recognize anything methodological—as the decision

that “instead of going through, as it is not unusual to do, only the library of scientific books, it was necessary to visit a set of archives that include decrees, rules, hospital or prison registers, acts of jurisprudence,” such that he undertook the analysis of a knowledge at the Arsenal or in the National Archives, because the “visible body” of the knowledge under analysis is not, for Foucault, “rhetorical, scientific, or literary discourse, but *a daily and regulated practice*.”¹⁶ On the authority of Foucault’s self-perception, his concept of a practice can be described in terms of the visible body of everyday, concrete knowledge, at a level at which form is considered without abstracting from the specifics of its empirical conditions of possibility, while maintaining a regularity that can be made explicit. The relation between practices and the level of abstraction of their visible body will be more adequately addressed in view of Foucault’s attempt to articulate the specificity of his appeal to the category of practices. In the context of discussion of political matters, Foucault describes practices in terms of their double feature of both possessing the form of, and of providing the form for, the visible body of a form of knowledge. In these contexts, his more specific concerns are political practices. In the course of attempting to situate his analysis of liberalism, for example, Foucault explains that a practice, as he understands the term, should not be treated “as a theory or as an ideology,” but as “a ‘way of doing things’ oriented toward objectives and regulating itself with continuous reflection.”¹⁷ Consequently, the form of inquiry that is most fundamentally the analysis of practices is a mode of research that engages with its subject matter by way of *what was done*, of *what individuals did*. This, the basic form of concrete, quotidian activity, is the most general sense of the practices that serve as the unitary items of Foucault’s analyses.

This general flavor of the concept of practices in Foucault is supplemented and enhanced in an exceptional treatment by Paul Veyne, a historian by profession who displays exemplary philosophical sensitivity and unrelenting insight, in his landmark 1978 essay “Foucault révolutionne l’histoire.”¹⁸ His explanation is refreshingly exoteric:

Foucault did not discover a new agency called ‘a practice’ that had been until then unknown. Rather, he makes the effort to see people’s practice *such as it really is*; he does not speak of anything other than what every historian speaks of, that is, of what people do: he simply undertakes to speak of it *exactly*, to describe its sharp contours, instead of speaking of it in vague and noble terms. He does not say: ‘I’ve discovered a sort of historical unconsciousness, a preconceptual agency (*instance*) that I call practice or discourse . . . Ah yes! But how ever am I going to go about

explaining this agency itself and its transformation?’ No: he speaks about *the same thing as we do*, that is, for example, of the practical conduct of a government; except that he shows it to be as it really is, by tearing away the drapery. . . . A practice is not an agency (like the Freudian id) nor a primary motor (like the relation of production). . . . [A practice] is not a mysterious agency, a basement of history, a hidden engine: it is what people do (the word indeed says what it means).¹⁹

While practices are not hidden like a secret, ready to be unveiled, Veyne qualifies, they are, nevertheless, hidden, but hidden in the sense of ‘the hidden part of the iceberg’: practice shares the fate of most of our other activities and of universal history, namely, of having the characteristic that “we are often conscious of it, but we do not have the concept for it” (p. 211). In the case of speech, for example, Veyne specifies: “when I speak, I generally know that I am speaking and I am not in a state of hypnosis: nevertheless, I take myself to be expressing myself naturally, in saying what is imposed, I do not know that I am applying binding rules” (p. 211).²⁰ He suggests that “when one behaves in a certain way, one necessarily has the corresponding mentality” and that “these two things go together and compose the practice, just as being frightened and trembling, being happy and laughing out loud; the representations and the statements are a part of the practice and that is why ideology does not exist” (p. 216).²¹ The production of something requires conscious humans who “must represent certain technical or social rules to themselves and they must have the adequate mentality or ideology, and together all of this makes a practice,” even though “they do not know what this practice is: it ‘goes without saying’ for them” (p. 216).²²

There is a dense background to the concept of practices in Foucault at the level of the cultural and political factors that intervened in his intellectual formation. Without attempting anything like a thorough survey of these, it may be of some help to set out a few of the intervening considerations in terms of their conceptual impact on Foucault’s way of thinking about practices. In a 1966 interview, for example, one that is dripping with the Marxist atmosphere that had been with Foucault since his student days, generating a tension heightened by hostility to humanist existentialism, to the role of the will to circumvent a dichotomy between theory and practice in the formation of his historical approach.²³ He describes his field of historical analysis as one that is hospitable to theories, institutions, as well as practices, and qualifies it on this basis as a “theoretico-active” standpoint as opposed to a “practico-inert point of view.”²⁴ The “style of research,” undertaken from this simultaneously theoretical and spontaneous point of approach, allows

Foucault “to avoid all problems of priority between theory and practice, and inversely” (p. 498). Soon thereafter, he would notice that it is possible to avoid the awkward neologisms by simply placing theory and practice into a genus-species relation: theory, like all other forms of human behavior, is a form of practice.

Later in his life²⁵, Foucault would explain that his strategic attempts to outdo the Marxist-existentialist theory-practice opposition were an early manifestation of the work of a ‘specific intellectual,’ undertaken by the figure of the intellectual as experimenter. It was motivated by the recognition that things need not be seen as necessarily tied to the theory-practice opposition; there was a “more directly practical” way of posing the issue, which was, Foucault explains, “to put it directly to work in one’s own practice.”²⁶ He maintains that his books “were always his problems,” whether it be with madness, with incarceration, with sexuality, such that—having internalized Nietzsche’s insight about the true nature of philosophical texts²⁷—as mentioned above, he considers them to be “autobiographical fragments” (pp. 747–8). Furthermore, Foucault describes the sustained attempt to impose a dimension of interference between the conceptual or historical elements and the practical activities on his work, and to have avoided investing his research with a prescriptive component, so that he emphasizes, his analysis of the form of a practice “does not serve as a law in relation to an actual practice that it questions” (p. 748). The focus on practices as the object of analytic work functions as a way to resist attempting to theorize about practice without privileging theory over practice. This theme lines-up with Foucault’s concept of critique as analyzed in Chapter Three, according to which critical thinking is the manifestation of an attitude, it is essentially a type of *activity*. This surfaces clearly, for example, in Foucault’s insistence on the need to think of philosophical reflection pluralistically, that is, not as a particular theory, but as a style of thinking engaged in various theoretical activities.²⁸ All of these elements flow from Foucault’s assimilation of the simple insight that theoretical research is not of a fundamentally different nature than practice, and that it is not in principle opposed to it in any way, but that it is rather necessarily a specific kind of practice.²⁹ With these bits of the backdrop of the mood of the cultural context and of the motivating factors involved in the shaping of Foucault’s outlook in view, the concept of a practice is more readily accessible.

The most basic form of a practice in Foucault can be defined in terms of its primary conceptual function, which is to unify the rules and other regulating factors that guide and limit a given type of action or behavior.³⁰ During the 1984 study sessions at Berkley, Foucault fixes the concept of a

practice as a particular “mode of both acting and of thinking” that provides “the key for the intelligibility of the correlative constitution of the subject and the object.”³¹ Objects, as Veyne understands Foucault’s standpoint, “seem to determine our conduct, but our practice determines its objects first.”³² It makes methodological sense, then, to begin with the practice itself, so that the object to which it applies is, to borrow Veyne’s turn of phrase, its beneficiary and its guide, in the sense that “a ‘beneficiary’ is a beneficiary in so far as I allow him to benefit from something, and that, if I guide someone, he is the guided what it is only in relation to it.”³³ When Foucault maintains that the description of a practice provides the key to the intelligibility of subject and object, he implies that both are nothing other than its correlate, and they are ontologically simultaneous and coextensive.

Veyne reconstructs Foucault’s method around this structure, and it is worth following his reading on this further step. This method consists, Veyne writes, “in understanding that things are only the objectifications of determined practices, of which the determinations must be brought to light, since consciousness does not conceive them.”³⁴ The process of bringing them to light is what in *AS* Foucault calls ‘rarefaction.’ Thus, on Veyne’s reading, Foucault’s central and most original thesis is the following paradox: “*that which is made*, the object, is to be explained by what the *making* has been at every moment in history; we are mistaken when we imagine that the *making*, the practice, is to be explained on the basis of that which is made.”³⁵ The implications of this formulation of Foucault’s method extend as far as the concept of a practice, or any other concept used by Foucault, for that matter.

One way to begin to examine these consequences, while highlighting both the continuity in Foucault’s studies, and the Kantian element involved, is to approach them as analyses of distinct forms of experience. In Foucault’s first historical studies of discourses this is the favored idiom for labeling the unit of the analysis. Foucault distances himself from this appeal to various types of experience as a way of describing what it is that his analyses are describing during the 1960s, while concerned about misrepresenting these descriptions as being of a phenomenological character, as though speaking of a particular experience of madness, for example, meant that he was describing an immediate ‘lived’ experience, a perception literally speaking. But later on, profiting from the ‘ransom and reward’ structure of the empirical bent of his theory³⁶, he returns to his use of the concept of a form of experience as a legitimate way of marking out a formal unit that is not necessarily structured around the primacy of a reflective subject’s privileged access. Indeed, texts as methodologically and thematically diverse as *NC* and his socio-political

interventions about the function of the intellectual during the final years of his life align themselves naturally when their basic items of description, practices, are understood to be unified forms of experience. Thus, at a level of abstraction that undercuts the shifts in his terminology, forms of experience in Foucault can be considered to correspond to types of practice. According to this way of naming things, the structure of a practice defines the form of the experience it generates.

Thus conceived, it is easier to appreciate how the forms of experience in Foucault's studies lend themselves to reconstruction on a rigorously Kantian model. As Deleuze recognizes, like the experience of the real for Kant, Foucault's practices necessarily have both spontaneous and receptive components.³⁷ Moreover, like the formal components of experience in Kant, these forms in Foucault's studies function as ontologically coextensive with the practices they are supposed to structure: the factors that regulate experience have no self-standing status independently of their regulating functions. And yet, although Foucault himself seems to resist the fact³⁸, just as in the Kantian context, the implications of such analysis are not limited to the empirical context of engaging in these practices. When one describes a practice, one is describing the regulating factors that condition experience by forming it in a certain way; Foucault's point of divergence with Kant in this regard stems from the incorporation of a diachronic element into theoretical considerations, and more specifically the strictly retrospective applications of the conceptual analysis (he provides the conditions only of experiences that have already been).

IV. DISCURSIVE PRACTICES

It can only take one so far to discuss the Foucauldian idea of practices and of forms of experience as such, considered in abstraction from the particular domain of experience in question, from the sort of thing that is being practiced. Since Foucault invariably typically addresses quotidian practices *in a specific field of research*, whether it be the discursive, the institutional, or the ethical, from the standpoint of conceptual analysis, the examination of practices or forms of experience in their use within a given field or domain is irreplaceable. The point of focus of the present study is practices of discourse, the field of research explored by Foucault in his first series of publications. Indeed, he consistently characterized his studies prior to 1970 as essays in *historical analysis of discursive practices*. In these works, it is discourse that Foucault analyzes as a practice.

These histories analyze particular discursive units, distinguishing one unit from another on the basis of the conceptual configuration that

is proper to each. He calls the discursive configuration that is actualized in a specific form of experience the practice of that discourse, in both the verbal and the nominal uses of “practice.” Within each practice, the subject and the object of the form of experience it marks out are constituted, *i.e.*, come into existence, are distinguished, formed and made intelligible. In these terms, the aim of Foucault’s historical investigations is to gain access to these forms of experience, to be able to experience them, in a sense, for oneself. Foucault undertakes to achieve this through the reconstruction of the form of the discursive practice involved, by isolating and piecing together the normative factors that structure it: its rules (its spontaneity) and its place (*emplacement*) (its receptivity). In the attempt to bring Foucault’s concept of discourse into focus, there is considerable risk of getting mired in the technical details of his discontinuous attempts to explain his theory. In this regard, Paul Veyne’s warning is valuable, if mildly excessive:

What Foucault wanted to say was quite simple, but he said in several ways and always confusedly: he spoke of ‘discourse,’ of ‘discursive practice,’ of ‘presupposition,’ of ‘episteme,’ of ‘historical a priori,’ as well as of ‘statement’ in a laborious exposition in *AS*. More than one commentator has scrutinized this vocabulary and based his critique on these approximations; rather than the words that Foucault uses, one would do better to consider, I believe, what he is talking about: that during every period, thoughts, cognitions, words, writings or practices of a human group are set up within narrow limits. Contemporaries are unaware of these limits, they do not see the bowl in which they are contained, nor even that there is a bowl; on the contrary, these captives of discourse believe that they are freely deployed in truth and reason.³⁹

If one pursues this orientation, from the conceptual cacography of Foucault’s self-portraits taken en masse, there emerges quite a simple path of approach, which is to pursue the track undertaken above in defining the concept of a practice.⁴⁰ Broadly speaking, just as the idea of a practice refers to what is practiced, a discourse refers to what is said, that is, to the practice of saying. As Veyne suggests, “Foucault does not reveal a mysterious discourse, different than the one that we all hear: he simply invites us to observe exactly what is thereby said.”⁴¹ If one allows this apparent platitude to set the tone, and renounces remaining orthodox to the needlessly elaborate terminology in which Foucault occasionally indulged, a strongly

unified and exact series of characterizations of the function and the structure of discursive practices is discernable not only in *AS*, but in contemporaneous texts of circumstance.

The most detailed treatment is offered in the second chapter of *AS*, a book that develops the concept of practices as the discursive unit of the synchronic structure of historical forms of experience. It aims to describe “discourses as practices in the element of the archive” (*AS*, 173).⁴² Discursive practices are presented as the distinctive items of the domain of analysis most basically defined as “relations between statements” (*AS*, 44). On this terrain, the primary analytical task is “to describe statements in the field of discourse and the relations of which they are susceptible” (*AS*, p. 44). In this context, Foucault calls the practices of this field of research unified “discursive formations” of statements; the difficulty that arises when considering these to be the units of analysis is to determine the sort of relations that can be “legitimately described between these statements” (*AS*, 44). The discussion takes a *via negativa*, as it so often does in Foucault’s methodological reflections: it arrives at a sustainable hypothetical way of proceeding by eliminating more current and obvious approaches. Four paths of investigation are canvassed, and each generates a segment of the description of the concept in question. The analysis aims to show that familiar fields of research such as medicine, grammar and economics are discursive practices that we have in fact been using dogmatically, that is, without reflection about what defines them as unified and individual fields and practices. To begin, Foucault reasons that practices cannot be differentiated by appealing to a type of *object* that would be proper and permanently connected to each, to “a full, tight, continuous, geographically well-articulated domain of objects,” for this “does not allow one to individualize a set of statements, and to establish a relation between them that is both describable and constant” (*AS*, 45; 52; 45). The unity of a discursive practice might rather be a function of “the space in which various objects take shape and are continuously transformed,” and the distinctive relation on the basis of which to distinguish practices would be “the play of rules that make possible during a given period the apparition of objects,” that is, in each case, “the simultaneous or successive rule of emergence of the various objects that are named, described, analyzed, appreciated or judged in it” (*AS*, 46). These rules would define not the permanence of objects, but its suspension: their non-identity and transformation over time, the ruptures and discontinuities that interrupt them. They would define concrete forms of *space*, by appeal to which it would be possible to unify and individuate discursive practices by articulating types of distribution

and dispersion of objects, by fixing the gaps and the characterizing the distances between them. Practices cannot be unified and individuated by appealing to particular types of succession of statements, that is, by a specific “constant character of enunciation,” such that each discursive practice would amount to “a codified and normative system of enunciation” (*AS*, 47; 48). However, their principle of unity might rather be “the system of rules that made possible” not only “purely perceptive descriptions,” but also mediated descriptions; it would be “the system that regulates their distribution, the support they give each other, their manner of implication or exclusion, the transformation they undergo, the play of their relaying (*relève*), of their disposition and their replacement” (*AS*, 48). The principle of the unity and the identity of practices cannot be based on the reconstruction of a “conceptual architecture,” on “a well-defined alphabet of notions,” for such “a permanent and coherent system of concepts” does not account for the emerges of new and sometimes heterogeneous and incompatible concepts (*AS*, 49; 52; 48). Instead, the unity of a practice might be sought in the regularity of “the simultaneous or successive emergence of concepts, of the gaps between them, of the distance that separates them and eventually of their incompatibility” (*AS*, 49). Rather than “a conceptual architecture that is sufficiently general and abstract to account for all the others and to introduce them into the same deductive edifice, one would attempt to analyze the play of their appearing and their dispersal” (*AS*, 49). Finally, the distinction and unification of discursive practices cannot be based on the isolation of persistent themes, for the simple reason that, on the one hand, a single theme can give rise to two different practices, and on the other, a single practice can be supported by more than one theme (see *AS*, pp. 50–1). It is more likely that the required principle of unity and identity is to be found “in the dispersal of the points of choice that it leaves open,” that is, in “the different possibilities that it opens to reanimate themes that already exist, to provoke opposite strategies, to make room for incompatible interests, to allow one, through a play of determinate concepts, to play different parts” (*AS*, 51). On Foucault’s account, this would amount to the definition of “a field of strategic possibilities,” prior to the given thematic options and preferences.

Foucault brings together these four open theoretical paths as segments of a unified approach for the analysis of practices of discourse, one that bases the unity and the distinction of the practices under description—the specific formations of statements and forms of experience—on the isolation of a system of the dispersal of statements and a principle of the regularity of objects, types of enunciation, concepts and thematic decisions (see *AS*, 53). These regulating factors generate “the conditions of existence (but also of

coexistence, of maintenance, of modification and of disappearance)” of given discursive practices (*AS*, p. 53).

Once again, it is helpful here to be sensitive to the political and cultural context of the development of Foucault’s approach. Some of the central stakes involved come into view in his detailed response to a question submitted by the readers of the journal *Esprit* about *MC* in 1968.⁴³ The question called for specification about the implications of Foucault’s historical method for the possibility of adopting a progressive political outlook. At the crest of his response, Foucault attributes a series of critical functions to his approach; the idea of a discursive practice is formulated in the first and the fourth, but these functions are best understood in light of the third, described as the task of reconsidering the refusal to consider the mode of existence of discourses. This tendency to deny discourses an ontological status of their own is characteristic of the conventional methods the history of ideas, which Foucault sees as essentially ‘negating’ in this regard. Its denial of the actual existence of discourse, its circumvention of the question of the ontological modality of discourses, takes three forms: (i) it refuses to treat discourse as anything more than an indifferent element, “a pure surface of *translation* for mute things,” no more than a “simple space of expression,” with no consistency or law of its own; (ii) it refuses to see anything more in discourse than psychological and individualizing, linguistic, rhetorical, or semantic units; and finally, (iii) it refuses to recognize any functions internal to discourse: since all operations are conducted before and outside of it, discourse is “merely the light excess that adds an almost impalpable fringe to things and to the mind: a surplus that *goes without saying*, since it does nothing more than to say what is said.”⁴⁴ The basic structure of Foucault’s understanding of a discourse as a practice is displayed in the formulation of his alternative to this negating disposition toward discourse that he presents in his response to the *Cercle épistémologique*. The paradox of the form of this formulation is apparent at the surface of its words when Foucault writes that discourse “is not nothing, or almost nothing” (p. 685). But this determinate negation is merely the precondition of his positive exposition of the concept:

Discourse is constituted by the difference at a given epoch between what one can say correctly (according to the rules of grammar and those of logic) and what is effectively said. The discursive field is, at a given time, the law of this difference. It thereby defines a certain number of operations that are not of the order of linguistic construction or of formal deduction. It deploys a “neutral” domain where speech and writing can make the system vary by their opposition and the difference

of their functioning. It appears as *a set of regulated practices that do not simply consist in giving a visible and external body to the agile interiority of thought, nor in providing for the solidity things the surface of appearance that will duplicate them.*⁴⁵

Discourse is made up of determinately formed practices that condition its existence at any given time and place on the basis of a modality of intelligibility that in abstraction falls between the semantic and the formal-logical. The concept of a practice is as important for Foucault's method as it is for the aim it fixes. He begins to elaborate the concept in the course of a delineation of two of the other critical functions of this approach. The first critical operation that Foucault circumscribes for his historical analyses is to define an articulated field of investigation by *establishing limits* where the history of thought traditionally helped itself to an *indefinite space* of analysis (p. 683–4). This function is carried out in three movements. They take shape as (a) a suspension of the interpretive principle according to which discourses have no assignable boundaries, in favor of a conception of discourses as “limited practical domains that have their own boundaries, rules of formation, and conditions of existence” (pp. 683–4); (b) a suspension of the thematic privilege of subjectivity, according to which a ‘sovereign’ subject is supposed to activate linguistic codes from the outside, leaving a permanent trace in discourse, that is, who would construct significations and then transcribe them into discourse, in favor of an identification of roles and operations of various “discoursing” subjects (p. 684); and (c) a suspension of the usual focus on the search for the indefinitely regressive origin, and the notion that the role of the history of thought is to awaken the forgotten, to unmask the occult, and to restore what is barred, in favor of an analysis of well-defined historical discursive systems (that have fixed thresholds and conditions of emergence and disappearance) (p. 684). The other main critical function, which according to Foucault encapsulates the three included under the theme of limits, is to bring into focus the ambiguous status of the series of disciplines referred to as the history of thought, of ideas, of sciences, of knowledge, of concepts or of consciousness. In the face of uncertainty with respect to the domain of these types of history, and their proper objects of investigation, as well as their relation to other domains of historical analysis, Foucault's approach is meant to substitute “the analysis of discourse itself,” so that it can appear “in a describable relation to the set of other practices,” making possible “a history of discursive practices in the specific relations that articulate them onto other practices” (pp. 686–7). This would not represent a global history, organized around a single principle or form, but a general history, where “one could

describe the singularity of practices, the play of their relations, the form of their dependencies” (p. 687). This is how Foucault lays out the basic shape of his theoretical orientation, as “the discipline of the historical analysis of discursive practices” (p. 687).

Perhaps the decisive function of this new way of thinking historically is the resistance to the priority of the subject, which in interviews often manifests itself as a violent opposition to phenomenology.⁴⁶ In the Preface to the English edition of *MC*:

Discourse in general, and scientific discourse in particular, constitutes such a complex reality that it is not only possible but necessary to address it at different levels and according to different methods. If there is one approach, however, that I categorically reject, it is the one (let us call it, broadly speaking, phenomenological) that gives absolute priority to the observing subject, that attributes a constitutive role to an action and to possess its point of view as the origin of all historicity—that one, in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness. It seems to me that the historical analysis of scientific discourse should, ultimately, issue in a theory of discursive practices rather than a theory of the subject of knowledge.⁴⁷

Whereas the theories of the subject “look for what in man’s thought is above discourse,” the analysis of discursive practices aims “to take discourse in its manifest existence,” or as Foucault loosely puts it in an interview, to take discourse “as a practice that obeys rules.”⁴⁸ For Foucault, discourse “is not a consciousness (*conscience*) that lodges its project in the external form of language,” nor “a language, plus a subject to speak it,” but “a practice that has its own forms of sequence and succession” (*AS*, 221). Foucault’s studies isolate these forms, these rules that guide the formation, the modes of existence and coexistence, and the systems of functioning of various discourses, with the aim of describing these practices concretely, in their consistency and their ‘quasi-materiality.’ Foucault attempts to “analyze the discourses themselves,” which is to say, to analyze “the discursive practices that are intermediate between words and things,” the practices “on the basis of which one can define what things are and isolate the use of words.”⁴⁹

These two tasks—the definition of what things are and the isolating of the use of words—are in fact two aspects of one and the same theoretical interest, namely, the description not of the subject, but of the object of a discourse:

The conditions for the appearance of an object of discourse, the historical conditions of being able to “say something” about it, and of several

people being able to say different things about it, the conditions of its inscription in a domain of kinghood with other objects, of it being possible to establish relations of resemblance, proximity, distance, difference, transformation with them—these conditions, one can see, are numerous, and weighty. Which means that *one cannot speak at any time about any thing*; it is not easy to say something new; it is not enough to open one's eyes and to pay attention, or to make oneself conscious, for new objects to be, right away, illuminated, and for them to sprout their first clarity from the ground up. (*AS*, 61; my emp.)

The work of establishing that about which one can speak within a given practice of discourse is not merely a negative difficulty; it is not, for Foucault, “attached to an obstacle whose capacity would be, exclusively, to blind, to bother, to prevent discovery, to mask the purity of evidence or the mute obstinacy of the things themselves” (*AS*, p. 61). The object of a discourse does not exist prior to its practice, as it were, “waiting in limbo,” as though waiting, Foucault puts it, “for an order that would liberate it and allow it to be incarnated in a visible and talkative objectivity” (*AS*, 61). Instead, within Foucault's frame of reference, the object of a discourse only “exists under the positive conditions of a complex network of relations” (*AS*, 61).

Such networks of relations are what Foucault means by practices of discourse.⁵⁰ At times, he distinguishes the level of abstraction by appeal to the concept of ‘system of formation’:

By system of formation, one should understand a complex network of relations that function like a rule: it prescribes what must have been in relation, in a discursive practice, in order for it to be able to refer to a given object, for it to be able to put a given statement into play, for it to be able to use a given concept, for it to be able to organize a given strategy. To define a system of formation in its singular individuality, is thus to characterize a discourse or a group of statements by the regularity of a practice. (*AS*, 98)

Thus it emerges quite clearly discourse that is for Foucault constitutively a species of practice: what it is to be a discourse is to be a type of practice, it is essentially a qualifying adjective of ‘practice.’ The concept of a practice as a unit in the terrain of historical analysis is appealed to largely in order to give content to the concept of discourse that is operative in conventional histories of thought. The conceptual structure of individual practices provides discourse—understood in the way Foucault uses the term, as the field of a type

of practices—with a formal, *a priori* topography. He calls this the *positivity* of discourse, that is, discourse considered “as practices tied to certain conditions, subjected to certain rules, and susceptible to certain transformations” (“their conditions of existence, the systems that regulate their emergence, their functioning and their transformations”).⁵¹ More elaborately, he defines ‘positivities’ as:

. . . the set of conditions according to which a practice is exercised, according to which this practice gives rise to partially or totally new statements, according to which finally it can be modified. [. . .] It is a matter of making discursive practices appear in their complexity and their thickness; to show that speaking is to do something,—something other than expressing what one thinks, translating what one knows, something other than putting the structures of a language into play; to show that adding a statement to a preexisting series of statements is to make a complicated and costly gesture, that implies conditions (and not only a situation, a context, motifs) and that involves rules (different than logical and linguistic rules of construction); to show that a change, in the order of discourse, does not suppose “new ideas,” a little ingenuity and creativity, or another mentality, but transformations in a practice, eventually in those adjacent to it and in their common articulation. (AS, 272; cf. 164, 166–7)

Foucault’s analysis attempts, consequently, to define not “thoughts, representations, images, themes, haunts that are hidden or manifested in discourses,” but “these discourses themselves, these discourses as *practices that obey rules*” (AS, 182; my emp.). The sense in which practices can be said to “obey rules,” as opposed to being objectively regulated, is not immediately accessible. The description of the constitution of experience as involving a process of *obeying*, *following* or *applying* rules appears to imply a more central role for the subject than Foucault is prepared to admit. If one does not attribute this agency to the subject, the process seems opaque. In this respect, Foucault appears to be conflating normative and causal registers, and drawing connotative benefit from appeal to the former in a conceptual practice from within which only the latter is legitimately available. Three sorts of consideration may be instructive in this connection. A minor but remarkable factor is that as a result of the greater plasticity of the language, it is more readily admissible in French than it is in English to describe objective processes such as regulation loosely, by appeal to verbs of action that strictly speaking imply an acting subject. This is a matter of the relation between the grammatical

and the conceptual. Another intervening complication is that Foucault does not attribute practices to individual subjects, but to cultures and social units. One way to make sense of Foucault's description of practices obeying rules is by attributing the action of applying the rules that structure the practice to the culture in which it is found, and which is individuated and unified through its exercise. This is a matter of the possible agency of the self-application of rules. But perhaps the decisive consideration in this area concerns the character of the project in the service of which Foucault offers the description of practices as obeying rules. This aspect of Foucault's standpoint is oriented by logical, not either genetic or phenomenological interests, and it functions at a level of abstraction that undercuts the distinction between the causal and the non-causal. The description of the structure of practices is normative in a sense that encompasses the causal norms of nature. In this context, the concern is not to give an account of how practices are formed, nor a description of the experience of forming them, but to arrive at a second order description of the relations that condition a given cultural reality. In this respect, practices are described from the standpoint of the historical analyst in view of accounting for how a particular form of experience is possible, not from the standpoint of the actual process of the constitution of the experience. This is a matter of the character of the description of practices in Foucault, of the normative field of analysis that his investigations occupy. On the basis of these considerations, it seems reasonable to qualify Foucault's references to practices obeying rules as a comparatively loose use of language that is unfortunate to the extent that it lends itself to misunderstanding of the sort of task his discourse is undertaking, without for that reason identifying a trace of structural inconsistency in Foucault's approach.

According to this outlook, the rules of a practice articulate the relations that constitute objects with in it. These relations, Foucault specifies, "do not characterize either the language discourse uses, or the circumstances in which it is deployed, but discourse itself as practice" (*AS*, 63). Thus when one attempts to isolate the unity of a discourse "on the side of the objects themselves," that is, by way of "their distribution, the play of their differences, of their proximity or their distance," or: "on the side of what is given to the talking subject," one is turned back upon "a way of relating that characterizes the discursive practice itself," such that one discovers not only "a configuration or a form, but a set of *rules* that are immanent to a practice and define it in its specificity" (*AS*, 63). The suspension of the priority of the subject leads the study of discourses, according to Foucault, to the analysis of rule-guided practices.

But the form of objectivism that results from Foucault's resistance to theories of the subject does not issue in aspirations to be scientific. Scientificity,

Foucault notes, “does not serve as a norm” in his investigations; rather one attempts to display “discursive practices to the extent that they give rise to knowledge (*un savoir*), and that this knowledge takes on the status and the role of science” (AS, 249). Thus these practices are considered to be epistemologically prior to scientific norms: the systems of forms, the positivities, functions as “the set of relations that can unite, in a given epoch, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, to sciences, eventually to formalized system” (AS, 250). These rules represent “a set of relations between sciences, epistemological figures, positivities and discursive practices,” and this is what makes possible “the grasp of the play of constraints and limitations that, at a given moment, impose themselves on discourse” (AS, 251). Foucault’s distinction here does not amount to a contrast between knowledge and ignorance, or between reason and the imagination, between armed experience faithful to appearances, or between reveries and inferences and deductions: the rules of a practice do not describe “what one can know in an epoch, while accounting for technical difficulties, mental habits, or bounds posed by tradition,” but rather describe “what, in the positivity of discursive practices, makes epistemological figures and sciences possible” (AS, 251). Thus Foucault perceives an important difference on this score between his historical practice of criticism and Kant’s practice of it on a theoretical terrain. He insists that his approach does not amount to

. . . a way of taking the critical question up again (“given something like a science, what is its right or its legitimacy?”); it is an interrogation that accommodates the given of a science only in order to ask itself what it is for that science to be given. In the enigma of scientific discourse, what it puts into play is not its right to be a science, it is the fact that it exists. And the point upon which it differs from all philosophies of knowledge (*connaissance*), is that it does not relate this fact to the *instance* of an original donation that would ground fact and right in a transcendental subject, but to the processes of a historical practice. (AS, 251)

But Foucault’s conception of Kant, and the sorts of motivations involved in his way of representing it in relation to his own work, as always, calls for careful scrutiny. A variety of external factors intervene in this context to distorting effect. It is remarkable in this context, for example, that Foucault has a tendency to reductively assimilate Kant’s conception of the transcendental and of subjectivity to what he understands to be the phenomenological appropriation of these concepts. But the decisive factor is perhaps rather

that Foucault shifts the emphasis in Kantian criticism away from its argumentative aspect, which aims to deduce the legitimacy of discourses to the relation between given discourses in their particularity and their conceptual structure.

By addressing discourses as practices in this manner, Foucault draws attention to his interest in treating discourses both (i) in their concrete materiality and (ii) in their formality, their being ordered by specifiable rules. He relates that he would like to

. . . show that “discourses,” as they can be heard, as they can be read in textual form, are not, as one might expect, the pure and simple intersecting of words and things: the obscure track of things, the manifest, visible and colorful chain of words; I would like to show that discourse is not a thin surface of contact, or confrontation, between a reality and a language, the interpenetration of a lexicon and an experience; I would like to show, on the basis of precise examples, that by analyzing the discourses themselves, one sees the apparently so strong grip of words and things loosened, and a set of rules proper to the discursive practice released. These rules define not the mute existence of a reality, not the canonical use of a vocabulary, but the regime of objects. (*AS*, 66)

As objective regimes, discourses can no longer be treated merely as sets of signs, but take shape “as practices that systematically form the objects they talk about” (*AS*, 66). For while discourses are indeed “made of signs,” Foucault explains, “what they do is more than to use these signs to designate things,” and it is “this *more* that makes them irreducible to language and speech, it is “this ‘more’ that must be allowed to appear and that must be described” (*AS*, 67). The surplus represents what is distinctive about the unit of analysis that is discourse as a practice. This, Foucault cautions, should not be confused with “the expressive operation through which an individual formulates an idea, a desire, an image,” nor with either “the rational activity that can be engaged in a system of inference,” or “the ‘competence’ of a speaking subject when it constructs grammatical sentences” (*AS*, 153). A discursive practice is “a set of anonymous, historical, always temporally and spatially determined rules that have defined, in a given epoch, and for a given social, economic, geographical or linguistic area, the conditions of the exercise of the function of enunciation” (*AS*, 154).

This series of specifications makes it clear that for Foucault, the crucial conceptual distinction is not the one between discursive practices and non-discursive practices, but between an understanding of discourses that

has them standing in opposition to practices and a conception of discourse as practices. Foucault operates with the first distinction—and it is drawn in various ways—but only against the background of endorsing the latter understanding of the discursive according to the second distinction. Now if, as noted above, Foucault delimits the field of research specific to discursive practices as the relations between statements, a comprehensive grasp of the former concept will require a specification of the later. Foucault provides these indications in a chapter of *AS* entitled “Defining the Statement.” Here he begins by rehearsing his previous characterization of statements as the ‘atoms’ of discursive practices:

At first glance the statement appears as the last indecomposable element, susceptible to be isolated in itself and capable of entering into a play of relations with other similar elements. A point with no surface, but that can be located on planes of distribution and in specific forms of organization. A grain that appears on the surface of tissue of which it is the constituting element. (*AS*, 106–7)

Foucault goes on less to rectify this first impression, one that he has encouraged repeatedly, than to supplement it with a somewhat more substantive account of the nature of statements by aiming to isolate the principle of their individuation. His description takes his habitual negative path: statements cannot be individuated on the model of their proposition, sentences or speech acts, whose “criteria are too numerous and weighty,” they “do not preserve the full extension of statements” (*AS*, 111). Although the fact that statements at times behave like each of the three models available from conventional descriptive practices (logic, grammar and speech act theory), they do not always conform to these forms: there are statements that cannot be recognized as either propositions, sentences or speech acts. Moreover, in relation to these approaches, in each case, the statement stands as a mere accidental substance, “it plays the role of a residual element, of a fact pure and simple, of non-relevant material” (*AS*, 112). It is what is left over after one defines the structure of a proposition in logic, the repository of linguistic elements in which to recognize a possible sentence in grammar, and the visible manifestation of speech acts in analytic philosophy of language. Everything happens as though, Foucault suggests, “the statement was finer, less loaded with determinations, less strongly structured, more omnipresent also than all of these figures; as though its features were less numerous, and less difficult to reunite; but also as though it thereby challenged all possibility of description” (*AS*, 111–2). This makes it seem as though the

presence of *any* series of signs (figures, graphics, traces) would be sufficient to constitute a statement, such that statements would serve as the given matter for the various methods of description of language to evaluate and determine. Were this the case, signs and statements would be ontologically aligned, they would share what Foucault calls “a threshold of existence” (*AS*, 112). But this answer generates a series of questions: “What does it mean when one says that there are signs, and that in order for there to be a statement, it is sufficient that *there is* a sign? What singular status is one to give to this ‘there is?’” (*AS*, 112) For Foucault, it is clear that although language would not exist without statements, these do not exist in the same sense as a language and its set of regulated signs, and no particular statement is indispensable for the existence of a language. On the one hand, language only exists as “a system of construction for possible statements,” but on the other, it only exists as “a (more or less exhaustive) description obtained of a series of real statements” (*AS*, 113). Thus language and statements cannot be said to exist in the same sense, and the possibility presents itself that for there to be a statement, it is sufficient that signs be produced in time and space and given a material existence. But Foucault considers this condition to be too weak. It would admit as statements, for example, both a series of letters of the alphabet written randomly on a sheet of paper as an example of what is not a statement, and the lead characters used to print books. On the basis of Foucault’s use of the concept, the former would be a statement, but not the latter. He specifies that although “a regular linguistic construction is not required to form a statement,” just any “emergence of signs in space and time” is not in itself sufficient for “a statement to appear and to come into existence” (*AS*, 114). Statements, according to Foucault, are not of the same ontological modality as either the objects of perception or language, despite the fact that they share a basic characteristic with each. Like language, Foucault specifies, statements are composed of “signs that are definable, in their individuality, only from the inside of a natural or artificial linguistic system” (*AS*, 114). Like the objects of perception, statements are invariably conferred with, as Foucault describes it, “a certain materiality and can be situated with spatiotemporal coordinates” (*AS*, 114). Foucault’s view, in short, is that the statement is neither a unit of language (along side a sentence, a proposition, a speech act), nor an independent, delimited material object. And yet, he maintains that it is indispensable in the determination of “whether or not there is a sentence, a proposition or a speech act,” and whether “the sentence is correct (or acceptable, or interpretable),” or whether “the proposition is legitimate and well-formed,” whether “the act conforms to what is required and has been well executed” (*AS*, 114–5).

Rather than situating statements within the series of logical, grammatical and locutionary units, rather than attempting to locate them as at a particular level of analysis, Foucault describes them as “a function that is exercised vertically in relation to these various units, and that allows one to say, about a series of signs, whether or not they are present” (*AS*, 115). A statement is not a structure, but “a function of existence proper to signs and on the basis of which one can determine thereafter, by analysis or by intuition, whether they ‘make sense’ or not” (*AS*, 115). The statement evades structural description as the unit of discourse because it is not in fact in itself a unity at all, but “a function that crosses a domain of possible structures and units and that allows them to appear, with concrete contents, in space and time” (*AS*, 115).

Once spurred by an actual need for philosophical intervention, once provoked by a (personal) problem in the present, the methodological starting point of Foucault’s research is a particular practical field or domain, chosen for its potentially estranging capacities in connection with the need in question. For example, Foucault’s distress with the current state of prisons motivated research in the history of penal practices. The domain of research in each case is made-up of a body of material that one can access. Foucault calls this an *archive*, meant in the first instance in a quite literal sense. But the methodological significance of this physical place is specifically conceived.

Instead of seeing, in the great mythical book of history, words translate thought constituted previously and elsewhere, one has, in the girth of discursive practices, systems that inscribe statements as events . . . and things . . . I propose to call all of these systems of statements *archive*. (*AS*, 169)

The material that comprises an archive for discursive analysis is not a repository of all the texts that a given culture may have preserved to document its past or of institutions it wants to commit to memory and to which it want to maintain access. Instead, Foucault conceives of it as that which can account for the fact that all kinds of things that have been said the possibility of which cannot be fully accounted for strictly on the basis of the laws of thought or with circumstantial considerations, but only as regulated by “a whole play of relations that characterize a specific discursive level” (*AS*, 170). It is what allows one to fix what it was possible and impossible to say with a given practice of discourse, at a given time and in a given culture. Thus, for Foucault, an archive is an intermediary type of field of research: “Between *language* that defines the system of construct of possible sentences, and the *corpus* that passively collects pronounced words, the *archive* defines

a particular level: that of a practice that allow a multiplicity of statements to emerge as so many regular events, as so many things offered up for treatment and manipulation.” (*AS*, 171) Midway between tradition and amnesia, it provides the material for the description of the rules of the practice that allows statements to exist and to be transformed. Within Foucault’s approach, the archive in question serves as the analogue to the immediately accessible experience that, in Kant’s transcendental regression, is the point of departure of the exposition of the structure of the mind and of the form of experience. Foucault has modeled this starting point on the intermediary status of this sense of Kantian experience.

These specifications of the concept of a discursive practice, or of discourse as a unified and individuated practice provide a renewed standpoint on the structural similarity between practices as forms of experience in Foucault’s analysis, and the form of experience (that is the desideratum of transcendental reasoning) in Kant. The general framework for this theoretical alignment was presented above as a variation of a suggestion made by Deleuze: for Foucault just as for Kant the form of experience is comprised of both a spontaneous and a receptive dimension. If the former in Foucault materialize as statements, the manifestation of the latter in Foucault’s theoretical apparatus remains to be specified. The examination of this aspect of the comparison can begin by revisiting the concept of experience involved.

The concept of experience in Kant is among the most intractable of his philosophy, and is a constant source of controversy in the literature. As discussed in Chapter One, the complication arises primarily as a result of the fact that he seems to use distinct concepts of experience without expressly distinguishing them; this generates debate in relation to what sense is at issue in crucial contexts. There is ambivalence between a broad and a strictly Kantian sense of the conception of experience, where the first roughly designates ordinary perceptual experience, and the latter cognition, or scientific experience. There are a number of implications of this ambivalence in Kant’s philosophy, and many of them weigh on an understanding of basic issues in it. Although these can largely be circumvented in relation to the present concerns, the sense of experience involved in the forms of experience of discursive practices of Foucault’s analysis are saddled with obscurities that make the comparison with theoretical experience in Kant problematic.⁵²

There is a pair of straightforward points of contrast between the experience analyzed in Foucault and Kantian experience in connection with the mode of theoretical access to the analyzed experience. Neither is due to a feature specific to Foucault’s approach, but both are by-products of wide scale post-Kantian historical-conceptual transformations, namely the introduction

of a historical dimension into the conceptual sphere and the elevation of language to the status of a first order point of philosophical relevance. In Foucault's case more specifically, the first is a result of his recognition of a conceptual discontinuity in history: since he understands history in terms of successions of practices or forms of experience, the ones analyzed in history are not immediately accessible from the standpoint of the analyst, as they are in the case of Kant's analysis of experience (even in the event that the relevant sense of experience in Kant is an experience in a strong sense, involving only the necessary and sufficient elements of experience, these are nevertheless abstractions from, and thus belong to ordinary experience to which everyone has immediate access). This historical orientation is sufficient to account for his emerging experience into a medium of language, even if one suspends the question of the role of language as such: the medium of access to history has primarily been, and is exclusively for Foucault, written language. The forms of experience that are analyzed in Foucault's studies are textual, and not sensible experiences.

Another equally substantive but less obvious point of contrast between Kant and Foucault on experience emerges in relation to the structural complexity of Foucault's conception of experience that is marked by the polysemy of the French *expérience*: experience in Foucault involves both experience and experiment. The latter aspect incorporates an element of exercise into the process of having an experience; what is experimentally exercised is the other aspect of an *expérience*, an experience. The experimental side of Foucault's conception of *expérience*, which is a part of Kantian criticism but is not a part of Kant's concept of experience, was addressed in Chapter Two; what is at stake in this context is the experience itself, as a form of representation of objects and relation to reality. In this respect, the conceptions of experience in Kant and Foucault are squarely aligned.

This structural similarity can only be fully appreciated, however, on condition of removing a considerable impediment that stands in the way of this recognition. It makes it seem as though the discourses of Kant and Foucault are dealing with were different sorts of things when analyzing experience, and by extension that the nature of the activity is equally divergent. Whereas Kant's analysis is of experience to the extent that it is articulated by universal and necessary rules, Foucault's studies analyze local experiences in a way that, from the standpoint of the analysis, preserves a plenitude that exceeds the features of purely formal universality and necessary. This encourages a misapprehension of the degree of similarity of the structure of their conceptions of experience. Part of the problem is that when considering Kant in connection with Foucault's studies, there are a pair of facts that are so obvi-

ous that they are easy to ignore: (i) a broadly Kantian analysis of the objective conditions of experience is legitimate of any and every locally delimited field of research and period of history toward which one can direct one's analytic attention, and (ii) the objects of discourses have the basic structure of sensible objects in Kant's theoretical philosophy. They are not less than the objects of which Kant deduces the conditions of possibility, but more. The key of the continuity is the critical capacity to abstract.

One way to come to a more balanced understanding of the proximity between them is to attend to the process through which, both in Kant and in Foucault, the experience that criticism analyzes is initially brought into focus, and the conceptual field defined, for the description of the form of experience. It is particularly important to bring this aspect of Kantian criticism into the clear, not only because it is not perspicuously presented in Kant's writings, but also and especially because it represents an axis of Foucault's apparatus that is entirely unreflective: there is no trace in Foucault's texts of any theoretical awareness of its role in the dispensation of their form of analysis. This lack of self-transparency of Foucault's version of Kantian criticism is an important source of misguided surface hostility to Kant and certain Kantianisms.

The problem can be explored in the relation to the facet of Foucault's conception of experience that mirrors the capacities of receptivity in Kant.

V. RECEPTIVITY: THE HISTORICAL *A PRIORI*

To this point, the discussion of Foucault's notion of practices and of forms of experience has focused exclusively on the component of spontaneity: the rules and other ordinances that organize historical material into objective form. There is also a receptive component, which although structurally equally prominent, is—as a result of determinable theoretical motivations—considerably less frequently expressly addressed in Foucault writings. Now, rather than considering with Deleuze the form of visibility to be the respondent of the receptive capacities in Kant, in light of the preceding expository exercises, it is possible to reconstruct the basic structure of Foucault's practice in a way that aligns with Kant on a finer grain. Just as in Kant there are two formal components to the receptive, two basic receptive capacities, *i.e.*, just as Kant presents space and time as the forms of intuition, one can distinguish two forms of receptivity in the structure of Foucault's concept of discursive practices that also breakdown into spatial and temporal registers. For Kant, the mediating function of these capacities accounts for the sensible dimension of experience, the

features of experience whose source is not in the capacities of the mind; for Foucault, it accounts for the aspects of experience that are left out in an analysis of statements themselves, namely, the origin of statements: the dispensation of the stating agent and the historical situation of the practices that structures of statements comprise.

There is evidently a significant difference here between the receptive capacities involved. Whereas space and time was exposed in the Transcendental Aesthetic of *KrV* as the receptive forms of experience, which represent space and time as we have immediate access to them introspectively, the description of a spatial component of Foucault's account of the form of a discursive practice can only be understood as an image. The space being described is not the physical space in which the practice is undertaken, but a theoretical space that belongs to the structure of a discursive practice. The temporal aspect does not concern the time in which the practice was undertaken, but a historical factor: any given discursive practice is in Foucault addressed in a diachronic account, placed in relation to the practice it replaced and the one that replaced it. It remains to address how these spatial and temporal factors function in Foucault's description of discursive practices, as forms of receptivity or determinability.

The temporal form, the historical constituent of the practice, already intervenes in the exercise of the spontaneity, in which the normative factors isolated as the determinants of a given practice are indispensably encountered as historically limited; this will be evident on the basis of the diachronic delimitation of the practices Foucault analyzes. The spatial form accounts for the presentation of the determinable factor that depends on the standpoint from which the discourse is held. The space of a discursive practice provides the normative aspects that are determined by 'where' it is being practiced, not in a physical or a geographical sense of the word, but in terms of a broad-based spatial analogy. This factor can be articulated in terms of the notion of an historical *a priori*.⁵³

Foucault introduces the concept of an historical *a priori* in conjunction with the idea of positivity. "The positivity of a discourse," according to Foucault, "characterizes its unity through time, and well beyond individual works, books and texts" (*AS*, 166). This sort of unity does not allow one to determine either the comparative truth value, the rigor, or the self-consistency of given discourses, or which of them was most fully realized or scientific. The identification of a discourse's positivity does, however, allow one to determine that a series of discourses are "talking about 'the same thing,' by placing themselves at 'the same level' or at 'the same distance,' by deploying 'the same battle field'" (*AS*, 166). The positive aspect of a discursive practice

is the common background that it shares with the other practices of a particular historical culture:

It defines a limited space of communication. A relatively limited space, for it is far from having the amplitude of a science taken it all its historical development [. . .]; but still a more extensive space than the play of influences that may have been exercised from one author to another. (AS, 166–7)

Positivity, as Foucault uses the notion, is a defined space of communication among discursive practices in that it serves as a way of conceiving of a medium of implicit and unconscious interaction among texts and authors of a particular discursive formation, one beyond the logical succession of propositions, the recurrence of themes or the persistence of a signification. In it discourses blindly “obstinately intersect” on a “track they do not master,” of which they have no sense of the whole, nor the scope of its breadth (AS, 167). The positivity of the practices that constitute a given culture define “a field where formal identities, thematic continuities, translations of concepts, polemic games can eventually be deployed” (AS, 167). This field, this shared conceptual space of communication and interaction between the discursive practices of a culture is the common site that is missing in the apocryphal Chinese culture to which Borges attributes the animal classification in a text that is cited by Foucault in the Preface to *Les mots et les choses*. Discursive positivity is functions as a shared background without which the unity among discursive practices that circumscribes a culture would, like in the case of Borges’ Chinese, be absent. This is what Foucault is referring to when he explains that “positivity plays the role of what might be called a *historical a priori*” (AS, 167).

The concept of an historical *a priori* first appears in print in Foucault’s writings a full decade prior to AS, in “La recherche scientifique et la psychologie” (1957). In this early article, one of Foucault’s very first published texts, a simpler version of the puzzling notion of an historical *a priori*, presented in a rich yet straightforward context, makes its later exposition more accessible. Here Foucault uses one of the critical functions of psychological research that he presents as the space of interaction of the science and the practice of psychology: in addition to fixing its forms of stability and arriving at a judgment concerning its possibilities of existence, research in psychology “sheds light on its conceptual and historical *a priori*.”⁵⁴ As part of a much broader historical-cultural event—“one of the most important cultural events of our history”—that was decisive in the

conception and the development of Foucault's own historical research, the shift of foothold in psychology from *science* to *research* leaves it outside of the dichotomy between a reflective and an experimental discipline (p.155). Research is not the condition of the development of psychological practice and theory, but "it forms,"—and here Foucault specifies *empirical* research, in case one has forgotten that there could hardly be another kind—"as empirical research, disengaged from any theoretic horizon, purified of speculation, stated on the floor (*au ras*) of its experimental research, the *a priori* of their existence and the universal element of their development" (p. 156). This historical *a priori* factor manifests itself in the fact that, by making itself a form of research, unlike other sciences, psychology does not pursue "*the path of its truth*," but instead, "from the outset, gives itself the *conditions of the existence of its truth*" (p. 156). Consequently, the analysis of a discipline should not inquire about "its truth at the level of its scientific rationality, not at the level of its practical results, but at the level of the *choice* it makes by constituting itself as research" (p. 156). By exercising a particular discursive practice, such as a particular practice or theory of psychology, a choice is made with respect to the common background that the practice occupies. In this context, Foucault emphasizes that this space of communication defines the concept of truth, *i.e.* determines what is accepted as true and what is rejected as false, for the practice that it forms. But as the example of Borges' classification illustrate, the historical *a priori* determines the conditions of intelligibility, of what can and what cannot be conceived, as the way of describing its conditions of truth.

The jarring juxtaposition of terms in the expression 'historical *a priori*' is not accidental. By provoking this effect, Foucault marks out what he considers to be a problematically Kantian element of the grid he develops to articulate experience: a factor that is formal and thus *a priori*, but that is also merely empirical, in the sense that its only ontological modality is its application, and its only possible application is to experience. The detailed description of this methodological factor in *AS* reads like a systematic, step-by-step, although implicit contrast to a certain understanding of Kant, one presumably endorsed by Foucault, but one that on the basis of the exposition of Kant presented here and in light of the conceptual practice of abstraction, is just as closely systematically questionable; at each step, further consideration consolidates rather than mediates the proximity of this *a priori* element to Kant's critical standpoint.

The first putative point of contrast concerns the role of argument. An historical *a priori* is, Foucault writes, "an *a priori* that would not be a condition of validity of judgments, but a condition of reality of statements" (*AS*, 167). The task of discovering this factor of positivity does not, as against

Foucault's understanding of a Kantian deduction of *a priori* concepts, aims not to "find what could make an assertion legitimate," but rather to "isolate the conditions of emergence of statements, of the law of their coexistence with others, of the specific form of their mode of being, of the principles according to which they subsist, are transformed and disappear" (AS, 167). Foucault's historical analyses aim to identify and describe formal features of experience within the defined space of positivity, as a way of determining what is and what is not intelligible within a given culture, but without attending to the question of the legitimacy of these formal factors. There is no elaborated argumentative procedure that establishes the stipulated form of experience as the necessary and sufficient conditions of legitimate judgments. There are two differences between the way that Kant and Foucault practice criticism that inform this resistance to the deduction of legitimacy; on the one hand, to introduce an issue that will be treated below, the structure of deductive argumentation is for Foucault associated with the unjustified privileging of the role of the subject in the constitution of experience, and on the other, the historical determination of the forms of experience that are analyzed by Foucault neutralizes the question of the legitimacy of the content of these experiences. The legitimacy that deductions aim to establish concerns a relation between the capabilities of the configuration of spiritual functions that comprise the mind and putative products of these mental capacities that takes the form of judgments that claim to be knowledge. Whereas in the context of Kant's criticism, this step is possible and required prospectively, in order to define a field of investigation in which knowledge is possible, in Foucault's historical context, it is neither: the thrust of the investigation is retrospective, it moves from a given content comprised of archived statements, things that were in fact said, to the cultural functions that account for the capability to say these things and not others. The aspect of *Rechtmäßigkeit* drops out. But this shift does not attenuate the formal, *a priori* character of the discursive practices that Foucault describes; surely the issue of how the formal elements of experience can be derived from experience can be distinguished from the *a priori* quality of these forms. Due to the retrospective purview of historical criticism, Foucault's analyses describe these *a priori* conditions not as result not of a deduction, but of figuring out how the concepts that form an experience function together in its structure. But this fact does not detract from the rationality of the forms of experience under description. The medium of Foucault's description is the conceptual dimension of empirical historical reality; from within a given form of experience, the factors described are not presented merely as the commitments so central to a culture's practice that they seem impossible to give up, but as the

rational factors that form the experience in question, that by articulating its conditions, account for the structure of objectivity and reality within in, and determine its determinate conceptual possibilities and impossibilities.

But the way that Foucault raises this point of consideration obscures this issue. He proposes that the *a priori* element of the positive, as against his understanding of the Kantian version, does not qualify “truths that could never have been said, or really given in experience,” but “history that is given, since it is that of the things that are effectively said” (AS, 167). This historical *a priori* accounts for “statements in their dispersion, in all of the faults opened by their non-coherence, in their overlapping and their reciprocal replacement, in their simultaneity that cannot be unified and in their succession that is not deductible” (AS, 167). The confusion intervenes at the level of the characterization of the Kantian model of deduction, described as involving a qualification of truths that could never have been said or given in experience. Surely this is an excessive and distorting way of conveying the idea that Kant’s deduction of legitimacy goes beyond actual experience to make a claim about the conceptual structure of all possible experience. Nothing from this standpoint suggests that what is being legitimated will not or cannot appear in experience; it is rather a claim about what can appear in experience. For Kant just as for Foucault, rationality, as the capacity for *a priori* cognition, is both wholly qualitatively distinct from the empirical, and can only be actualized in empirical contexts.

Now, in his *Foucault*, just prior to launching into his discussion of his highly idiosyncratic version of the strand of Neo-Kantian formalism in Foucault, Deleuze pauses on some “essential differences.”⁵⁵ This first issue Foucault raises concerning the non-deductive nature of the relation between the *a priori* and experience is one that he is particularly interested in, and his treatment of it is worth considering. In Deleuze’s terms, the contrast in question amounts to the fact that “the *a priori* conditions under which all ideas at a given moment are formulated” are “those of real experience, and not of all possible experience (statements, for example, supposed a determinate corpus).”⁵⁶ Of the dualist Kantian framework, Deleuze explains that these conditions are “on the side of the ‘object.’”⁵⁷ He identifies this objective valence with “the side of historical formations” in Foucault, as opposed to the priority Kant gives to “the side of a universal subject.”⁵⁸ Deleuze had already indicated that within Foucault’s analytic practice, the subject is “a set of variables of the statement,” a function, that is, “derived from what is primitive, or from the statement itself.”⁵⁹ Foucault’s reversal of the Kantian tendency toward the subject in the relation of co-constitution of subject and object in experience is for Deleuze the key to understanding the nature of the

restriction of the aim of the formal historical investigation from the deduction of the conditions of possibility to the isolation of the conditions of reality. He elaborates only by submitting that “the *a priori* is itself historical” and that they are all “forms of exteriority.”⁶⁰ This does little to resolve the issue, which is at the center of the difficulties of Kant’s criticism, and is directly involved in the way that Foucault’s thinking appears to resist association with Kant, most instructively in the passages under consideration in *AS*.

The contrast between conditions of possibility and conditions of reality maps onto Foucault’s contrast between the conditions of validity of judgments and the conditions of reality of statements. Three factors coalesce around this distinction: the conceptual significance of history, the role of deductive argument and the equilibrium between the subjective and the objective poles in the structure of experience. This last issue, which will be addressed in Chapter Five as the decisive structural shift in the practice of Kantian criticism between Kant and Foucault, intervenes in this context as a factor involved in Foucault’s ignoring the question of legitimacy, and through this role indirectly in the matter of the supposed distinction between two types of condition (of possibility and of reality). Foucault associates the deductive reasoning through which Kant guarantees the legitimacy of judgments with what is from the standpoint of Foucault’s discourse, an excessive structural emphasis on the subject and neglect of history, and this not on the strength of his own cleverness, but as the result of a broad historical development that issued in a particular configuration of thought, shared by Foucault’s discourse, which determines the recession of the concept of the subject from the structure of experience and the emergence of history as a formal factor. Indeed, in addition to the conditions of possibility of reality, according to Foucault, the historical *a priori* also accounts for “the fact that discourse has not only a meaning or a truth, but a history, and a specific history that does not carry it back to the laws of a foreign becoming” (*AS*, 168). It does not, unlike Foucault’s model of Kant, “escape historicity”: “it does not constitute, beyond events, and in a sky that would not move, a temporal structure,” but rather is defined as “the set of rules that characterizes a discursive practice” (*AS*, 168). Although it is accurate and pertinent to underscore the absence of the historical in Kant’s critical apparatus, as the reconstruction of the capacity to abstract in Chapter One has shown, it is misguided to attribute the view that *a priori* factors exist in a supersensible beyond; Kant’s rejection of abstractionist accounts of conceptual acquisition and his functional understanding of the conceptual generally make this assessment inevitable. Thus, Foucault’s claim that the rules that regulate experience “are not imposed on experience from outside,” but are “engaged in the very thing they connect,”

cannot be received as a genuine point of contrast with Kant (*AS*, 168). However, in addition to being inseparable from their use, the *a priori* factors in Foucault's reconstruction of the structure of experience both modify what they regulate, and—"in certain decisive thresholds"—are themselves modified: "The *a priori* of positivities is not only the system of a temporal dispersion; it is in itself a transformable system" (*AS*, 168). Although it is mistaken to attribute any kind of essentialism with regard to the conceptual to Kant, the integration of the historical into the sphere of the conceptual in contemporary culture does indeed reinforce the functional nature of the rules and concepts that form experience.

The truly striking juxtaposition is, however, not noted by Foucault, and it is understated with the insouciance of a happy slip: since its primary function is to make it possible, Foucault writes, "to grasp discourses in the law of their affective becoming," unlike "the formal *a priori* whose jurisdiction extends without contingency," Foucault's historical *a priori* is "a purely empirical figure" (*AS*, 168). The idea, then, is that one aspect of the *formal* dimension of experience is defined in terms of a variety of *a priori* discourse that is a *purely empirical* figure. In Kantian terms, which are clearly the ones to which Foucault has recourse in this context, the expression is an oxymoron: there is no reliable distinction in Kant's lexicon between the pure and the *a priori*. There is no doubt that the effect is designed, a trace of Foucault's sense of humor (responding to Kant's pleonasm with an oxymoron), in order to emphasize the distinction with the Kantian model as violently as possible. This enigmatic figure is what Foucault's the nerve of his historical criticism. His own elaborations in the chapter of *AS* under consideration serve as an instructive starting point for reflection on the difficult logic of this organizing notion, but they ultimately fall short of a satisfactory explanation.

Foucault begins by reinforcing the sense in which the historical *a priori* is indeed an *a priori* form: "it must account for the fact that a given discourse, at a given moment, can accommodate and make use of, or on the contrary exclude, forget or misjudge (*méconnaître*), a given formal structure" (*AS*, 168). Although it cannot account for such formal structures, by providing their cultural or psychological genesis, for example, it does allow to understand "how formal *a priori* can have points of anchoring, places of insertion, of irruption or immanence in history," as well as "how this history can be neither absolutely extrinsic contingency, nor necessity of form deploying its own dialectic, but *specific regularity*" (*AS*, 168–9; my emp.). He warns of the tempting mistake of mistaking this historical *a priori* factor for a formal *a priori* that is "in addition, endowed with a history," as though it were "a great immobile and empty figure that would one day come to the surface

of time, that would bring to bear an inescapable tyranny on the thought of man, only to disappear all at once in an eclipse to which no event would have given warning" (AS, 169). This would be "a syncopated transcendental, a play of blinking forms" (AS, 169). What Foucault confusingly refers to here as the formal, and the historical *a priori* function as distinct aspects of a practice, they "occupy two different dimensions" of discourse (AS, 169). Perhaps as a result of exoteric interference from its polemical aim, this analysis of the historical *a priori* displays a tendency to exaggerate its opposition to a Kantian *a priori*, which he often qualifies as formal. Now, this only compounds the obscurity of the idea of an historical *a priori*. The labeling of a non-historical *a priori* as formal is misleading, to the extent that the formal and the *a priori* are thematically aligned, as it were, by definition, by virtue of an analytic relation: notwithstanding the polyvalence of the form-content axis, within Foucault's theoretical armature, the idea of an *a priori* factor can only be understood in reference to a formal feature.

Notwithstanding the difficulties that Foucault's aversion to what he presents as what appears to be a Kantian model, it is possible to shed light on the idea of historical *a priori* and on the character of normative factors in Foucault by appealing to the role of abstraction in Kantian criticism, both in Kant's and in Foucault's version. As an alternative to Foucault's thematic association of deductive argumentation, the hegemony of the subject of knowledge, the neglect of the historical, and an empty fabulous formalism, Kant's field of *a priori* inquiry can be related to Foucault's historical *a priori* field along an axis of abstraction. Whereas Kant's critical analysis is practiced at a level of description defined by abstraction from all empirical features of experience in order to study the bare structure of empirical thought, the level of Foucault's historical analysis is defined by abstracting less from experience in order to study the structure of empirical thought in a more plenary state of consideration. In both cases, the form of reasoning is one that proceeds from the immediacy of theoretically unmediated experience to, by a process of abstracting from it, a field of formal or *a priori* analysis, in which it determines the normative factors that articulate the real possibilities and impossibilities for the experience in question. Thus the structural similarity of their thinking can be maintained without sacrificing attunement to the differences in their respective exercise of this conceptual practice. This sensitivity to the variation between Foucault's practice of criticism and Kant's own prototype can be translated into a discursive medium by inflecting Foucault's Kantian conception of experience into his own discursive practice, and defining the spatial facet of its form of receptivity. As a result of the temporal conceptual transformation

this Kantian form of reasoning underwent between Kant's original model and Foucault's version of it, the receptive dimension of forms of experience in Foucault's criticism is no longer delineated merely in terms of inner and outer modalities of sensibility, but terms fixed by less abstraction, terms that are unified around the notion of *literature*, Foucault's term of art for the aspect of the specifically contemporary philosophical discursive practice that this chapter has defined as the form of receptivity of experience.

Literature as a Formal Resource

I. INTRODUCTION

Foucault's criticism is a transitional form of the Kantian practice. He occupies a level of abstraction at which the form of experience is analyzed determinately, in terms of practices. From his standpoint, these are considered as forms, but forms analyzed in their empirical concreteness and their historically contingency, rather than at the purified level of their absolutely universal, necessary, and thereby immutable, atemporal features. They are considered, moreover, in terms of a form of receptivity in experience that itself fluctuates in response to the needs of what it receives and for which it hosts the formation into an objective reality. This limitation of the form of experience to the practice in which the experience takes place marks the possibility of practicing the criticism of practices of criticism. When Foucault's own historical grid is applied at this second order, the transformation the practice of criticism undergoes in his discourse reflects the transformation in the form of sensible experience that Foucault diagnoses as the discursive and epistemological specificity of contemporary culture; one in the midst of an important transformation. According to Foucault, there are clear early indications of a shift of this kind in certain forms of contemporary literary discourse. While the new form may well continue to adhere to the basic Kantian form of experience at the level of thought (*i.e.*, a combined exercise of spontaneity and receptivity punctuated by the use of basic rules, the discursive employment of which necessarily forms experience), a different description would be required of the forms of intuition and of the function of judgment. This chapter is in large part devoted to an examination of Foucault's analyses of this contemporary order of thought in the transitional, unbalanced state in which he found it, and an attempt to reconstruct a more developed outline

of the implication of the generalization of the aspect of the literary discourse in question to the form of thought itself.

The space question can also be described in terms of the formal effects of the transposition of level of abstraction the practice of criticism undergoes between Kant and Foucault. While this relocalization does not involve a modification of the aspect of the practice that regulates the analysis of the form of *thinking*, but of the aspect of the practice that regulates the analysis of the form of *receptivity*, *i.e.*, the aspect of the form of experience and the capacity that regulates the gift of material to thought. The plurality of forms of experience are always experienced at first hand by the one holding the historical discourse, and only indirectly by the agents in history, subjects of the various forms of experience. In Foucault's practice, a form that Kant leaves open as a mere possibility is actualized determinately: the use of the rules of a discourse that determine the material received by our forms of sensibility in relation to another form of intuition, in combination with another receptive capacity. Foucault describes the application of multiple sets of regulating factors to material through a single form of receptivity. By framing the proximity between Kant and Foucault in this way and by accounting for the difference between the two by appeal to the actual practice of criticism in Foucault's historical analysis, the following exposition focuses on the similarity of their exercises of the practice at a second order.¹ Foucault's position on the matter is characteristically helpful.

There is, as suggested above, a tension in Foucault's practice of criticism between the content of these analyses (articulated forms of experience) and the conditions of their authorship.² On the one hand, there is the problem of the relation between the present form of experience from which the historical analysis of forms of experience is being undertaken, and the past forms of experience analyzed by it. The fact that there is a multiplicity of forms of experience undermines the legitimacy of its purported access to the experience of past cultures. On the other hand, there is the problem of the nature of the constitution of experience. For both Kant and Foucault, the particular forms of experience under analysis are not ontologically prior to their being experienced. Access to a form of experience as a form of experience occurs through the examination and description of the mechanism of its constitution: this holds for the immediacy of experience of a certain form in a particular culture, but it is equally true of the access of the author and reader of the historical discourse that represents these forms of experience of the past. For an experience to take form as the experience of *something*, as objective, material must be organized by a synthesizing function produced by the agency for which the experience will make itself manifest. Within

the context of Foucault's practice of criticism, the existence of the historical forms of experience under analysis is realized in the present as part of the descriptive dimension of the practice of criticism. The guiding thread of the following discussion is the parallel between the act of practicing the history of thought critically and the form of receptivity in Kant's analysis of experience from a theoretical standpoint. In Foucault, the form of receptivity of a practice of thought and thus of a form of experience is determined as the semantic space of *literature*, and it functions as the formal aspect of experience that mirrors the form of receptivity in Kant.

During the 1960s, Foucault produced a series of dense, often confounding analyses of contemporary literary figures. He spoke of literature rarely thereafter, and referred to the early analyses much less frequently than his other work from the period. Without eliding the need for detailed consideration of each of the contexts in which these discussions of literature is found, the following analysis finds in them the material for a description of literature as a form of thought and experience, one that is indicative of a live and decisive historical-conceptual transformation. The level of analysis can be situated in relation to three distinct degrees of scope of Foucault's use of the term in this contemporary discourse, one broader than the ordinary use of the term, another one more narrow, and a third that preserves its scope: the receptivity of contemporary rationality, the avant-garde literature that he describes as providing the occasion for 'limit-experiences,' and literature ordinarily understood. This discussion, while calling attention to the conceptual significance of the relations between these uses of the term, is ultimately concerned with the broadest use of the term, according to which the significance of a certain kind of literary experience is extended to serve as a description of an aspect of form of the distinctively contemporary discursive experience. This level of Foucault's category of literature is in fact both broader and more narrow than the ordinary uses of the term suggests: it marks an analysis of a very limited family of literary discourses—that Foucault expressly distinguishes from literature in the general sense—as symptomatic of a cultural reconfiguration that extends far beyond literary practices. Reasoning metonymically, Foucault analyses the literary discourse of a number of his contemporaries—the Surrealists, Roussel, Blanchot, Bataille, Artaud, and Klossowski—as a way to articulate one of the decisive conceptual configurations operative in contemporary experience, which is, significantly, precisely the one that silently regulates and locates his own discourse.

Foucault's interest with Surrealism was encountered previously in this study, in the discussion of the affinities between the critical skepticism in Foucault and Greek and Hellenistic spiritual exercises (Chapter Two). Foucault

associates the Surrealists's practices with the contemporary literary discourse to which he felt the most attuned. In this context, Foucault's conception of the differences between Surrealist thought and his own orientation will help to define the latter. In a 1963 debate with members of the *Tel Quel* circle around the question of the *new literature*, Foucault engages Phillip Sollers on what he takes to be a point they have in common against the Surrealists, and proposes that the Surrealists situated the experiences that mattered to them "in a space that might be called psychological, which in any case were of the domain of the psyche," so that literary experiences aimed to discover "the *arrière-monde*, the beyond or beneath of the world that was for them the ground of all reason" (p. 338). Foucault's interest is to move from this psychological space, to that of the experience of thought, that is, to engage in *limit experiences*, and "to maintain them at the level of thought," which he describes as "an enigmatic level," that the Surrealists had "immersed into a psychological dimension" (p. 339). From this standpoint, the fundamental question is that of thought itself: "what is it to think," Foucault asks, "what is this extraordinary experience of thought?" (p. 339). The question of language marks a further point of divergence between Foucault and the Surrealists. According to Foucault, for the Surrealists, language was "nothing but an instrument of access or a surface of reflection for their experiences," the play of words was no more than "a half-opened door toward the psychological and cosmic background" (p. 339). With his literary contemporaries, Foucault understood language as rather "the thick space in which and from which these experiences take place; it is in the element of language—like in water or in air—that these experiences take place" (p. 339). The thinkers on which Foucault models his historical analyses³ "tear a series of experiences, that have their birthplace and their proper space in language, away from the psychological domain, to bring them back to the domain of thought" (p. 339). In thought, works are the result of "a trajectory in the volume of language that doubles it and makes appear inside this language a space proper to it, a space that is simultaneously full and empty" (p. 340). The problem from this standpoint, a problem that Foucault explicitly identifies as the problem of "present philosophy," is to "think *and* to speak well," so that the work generated from this standpoint finds itself at the boundary of the two, in the space of the conjunction, in "that space that is both empty and full, the space of thought that speaks, of speech that thinks" (p. 340). The suggestion at hand is that this concept of a linguistic space of thought is parallel 'in Foucault's criticism' to the forms of receptivity in Kant's criticism. It is the receptive aspect of the form of experience that is in Foucault's historical analytics produced by the actualization of a historical capacity.⁴

Foucault's practice aims to steer between these moments of complexity. On the one hand, in order to represent the forms of experience that have been in place in other cultures, they need to be constituted actively, to be realized objectively, as intelligible (they must be *true*); in effect, it is necessary as historians (authors and readers) to conduct the experiment of the constitution of these sorts of experience. On the other hand, this historical reconstitution is made problematic by the unearthed discontinuity across the historical and cultural forms of experience that it permits: given the structural estrangement of the present epistemological configuration from the ones in the past that are being analyzed, there is a question of how one can suppose that material given to be synthesized into the form of an experience can and will give itself to the capacities of the present, of the agent of the historical representation in a manner commensurate with how it is formed by the qualitatively distinct configuration of the past, its contemporary. This is indeed an important difference in the respective methodological circumstances of Kant and Foucault.

The strategy pursued here to assess the implications of this difference is to specify and elaborate a technical concept of literature, on the basis of the analysis of discursive practices undertaken in *MC*. These are treated as the discursive configuration of contemporary thinking, and thus as the informing dispensation of Foucault's own theoretical orientation. In other words, the conceptual space staked by Foucault's practice, its form of receptivity, can be usefully approximated by appealing to the account Foucault himself provides of the most distinctively contemporary form of experience, namely the experience of literature, whose primary practitioners are, for Foucault, Blanchot, Bataille, Klossowski, and Artaud. The dimensions of the practice of criticism that are transformed in Foucault are precisely ones that it shares with literary discourse. Specifically, the function of literature in Foucault mirrors space and time, as forms of receptivity in Kant's practice of theoretical criticism. The elements of Foucault's analysis of literature will therefore shed light on the practice of criticism in Foucault at a level of abstraction at which it parts paths with Kant's own practice. Foucault's historical analysis of contemporary literary practices can, therefore, serve not only as a characterization of the most prominent and representative threads of contemporary thought, but also as a description of the conceptual space of his own historical analyses, one more reliable and piercing than the theoretical discussions of his own work that are presented as such (these do not provide an account of the 'space' from which the discourse is conducted, i.e., of what involves the relation between the content of the discourse insofar as it concerns the context from which it is conducted, and the authority required to conduct

it). Subsequently, the specific theoretical commitments that this brings to the surface provide the grounds for a richer understanding of what is motivating and regulating the discursive practice (according to the internal awareness the discourse has of itself).

Foucault presents 'literature' as the capacity to adopt a standpoint in relation to the capacities whose actualizations form experience. The historical emergence of this capacity is connected in a philosophical register to the contestation of the role of the subject of cognition in the constitution of experience and to the submersion of problems of knowledge and experience into a space of language. Foucault situates the first stages of both developments historically at the end of the 18th century, and conceptually primarily in Kant's practice of criticism. The idea of a capacity of taking up a certain attitude with respect to the rules that regulate experience is a second-order integration of the form of a daily practice into an epistemological register. Part of the difficulty involved in Kant's conception of discursive capacity as essentially spontaneous was how to reconcile this with the absolute constraint the mind is under to exercise it always and in the same way in sensible experience. When this discursive practice is transposed into literature (as a space of thinking), the possibility of putting the exercises of understanding into question emerges. Foucault shows that there is some give (*du jeu*) in what has been an analytic relation between the sensible provocation of the discursive capacities and their exercise.⁵ In the form of experience that Foucault calls literature, it is really possible—difficult and still only under extreme conditions—to resist the conceptual capacities that form this very experience. Foucault describes the exercise of this second order capacity to take distance from and even resist the rules of its own form of experience in terms of a reinscription of the dynamics of social practices of resistance and transgression into the very process of the constitution of experience, specifically at level of the forms of receptivity. Foucault's suggestion can be assessed by situating this dynamic in relation to his diagnosis of the historico-conceptual predicament of contemporary thought. This conceptual context is closely connected to a ubiquitous theme in intellectual cultural since the middle of the 19th century: the attenuation of the importance of the subject, and of the dimension of the psychological more generally, in knowledge and experience.

In a 1969 interview with Madeleine Chapsal intended for a broad audience, Foucault alludes to the connection between the diminishing importance of the subject and the structural difficulty for contemporary thought in being reflective and explicit about the rules that guide one's own discourse. He describes an "anonymous system without a subject" that remains in the aftermath of the explosion of the "I" that can be witnessed

in modernist literature.⁶ Within this context, there is “the discovery of the ‘there is,’” of “one (*on*)” and not I or you, that he likens to a sort of return “to the point of view of the 17th century, with this difference: not putting man in the place of God, but an anonymous thought, knowledge without a subject, the theoretical without identity” (p. 515). This development is not merely of philosophical significance, for he maintains that, in every period of history, “the way that people reflect, write, judge, speak (right down to the streets, the most everyday conversations and writings) and even the way that people experience things, that their sensibility regulates, all their behavior is ordered by a theoretical structure, a system, that changes with the ages and societies—but is present in all ages and in all societies” (p. 515). In this context, a system is “a set of relations that are maintained, transformed, independently of the things they relate,” the “anonymous and constraining thought which is that of an epoch and a language;” for Foucault, not unlike for Kant, it expresses the theoretical conditions that make practice, including the practice of liberation, possible (p. 515).⁷ Every form of thought and form of language is regulated by its own set of rules, and the task of philosophy as Foucault conceives of it is descriptive, it is “to bring this thought prior to thought, this system prior to every system to the light of day” (p. 515). Tension is introduced when one attempts to be philosophically reflective about the nature of the constraint of the system, as Foucault’s uncommented paradoxical description makes plain: “In order to think the system, I was already constrained by a system behind the system, of which I have no cognition, and that will recede as I will discover it, as it will discover itself” (p. 515). It will be helpful to consider this predicament in connection to the related theme of the attenuation of the authority of the author, which Foucault addressed in detail in his familiar “Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur ?,” the text of a lecture in which his research crosses paths with both philosophical hermeneutics and structural analysis of literary texts, in which he draws the implications of one of the crucial manifestations of the shift of the Kantian dispensation from a site built around the subject to a site within which this priority is no longer observed is a transformation of the conception of the author.

In his introductory remarks to the lecture, Foucault explains what motivated his work on the question of the author, and how he came to the view that it had disappeared. He connects it directly to unresolved issues that presented themselves in the writing of *MC*, and describes his way of proceeding in that text as the attempt to analyze “verbal masses,” or “discursive layers (*nappes*)” that were not organized according to the usual units: books, works (*oeuvres*), authors.⁸ While the objects of his analysis were not formally writers or their works, but types of discursive practice (primarily,

the analysis of wealth, natural history, political economics), he concedes to having made constant recourse to the names of the authors, and in retrospect, this inconsistency generates troubling ambiguity in their function. Foucault notes two sorts of objection to which his approach left itself vulnerable, and admits both as legitimate. It was criticized for failing to recuperate the essential content of the discourse of a given thinker in the analysis of the discursive practice labeled by that thinker's name. It is also possible, Foucault admits, to impugn the "monstrous families" created by the analysis of *MC*, and by taking discursive practices as the unit of analysis, and recognizes that "the most visible play of natural relations and resemblances" is not appropriately reflected in the description. He submits, however, that these objections miss the point of the exercise, grounded as they may otherwise be. Thus in response to the first type of objection, Foucault allows himself to point out that he was attempting neither to describe a particular thinker, nor "to restore what they said or meant (*voulu dire*)," but rather "to discover the rules according to which they formed a certain number of concepts or theoretical sets found in their texts" (p. 791). In response to the second sort of objection, he points out that his goal was to establish neither "a genealogical table of individual spiritualities," nor "an intellectual daguerreotype of an 18th century scholar or naturalist" (p. 791). He claims to have in fact had no interest in the formation of any families at all, but more modestly to present "the conditions of functioning of specific discursive practices" (p. 791). This self-criticism nevertheless leaves open the question of the motivation of retaining authors' names at all, and Foucault considers the objection that, given his project in *MC*, he ought to have either forgone the reference to authors completely, or used them in the familiar way and taken responsibility for the theoretical implications, to be fully legitimate and relevant. His analysis of the concept of an author in "What is an Author?" is his attempt to confront this third sort of objection.

Foucault considers the concept of an author to be a perspicuous moment of individuation, traditionally and to the present day. When undertaking historical investigation of some sort, we tend to take units of discourse such as concepts, literary genres and types of philosophy to be secondary and weak in relation to the category of the author and the lifework. Foucault begins his analysis of the relation between the text and the author, and specifically how it seems to point toward its author as an exterior and antecedent figure, by laying down two themes. He describes them by borrowing a formula from Beckett: "What does it matter who is talking, someone said, what does it matter who is talking."⁹ This represents a sort of ethical principle for Foucault, in the sense that it is not a characterization of our

ways of speaking or writing, but functions as an attitude of indifference that functions as an “immanent rule” that is constantly incongruently taken up without ever being fully applied. Foucault transforms Beckett’s dictum into a principle that dominates writing as a practice and as an act, not as the result of a mechanical process, and develops its analysis in terms of two themes.

The first concerns the emancipation of *writing* from the theme of *expression* in contemporary discourse. Although writing in this context has come to refer exclusively to itself, Foucault resists the suggestion that it has become isolated, a captive of its own interiority, but instead structurally coincides with the exteriority that it generates. Writing, according to this understanding is both “a play of signs ordered less by its signified content than the nature of the signifier itself,” and a limit practice, one that is “always transgressing and inverting the regularity it accepts and uses (*dont elle joue*).”¹⁰ Foucault schematizes the practice of writing as “a game that unfailingly goes beyond its rules, and thereby passes outside” (p. 792). By contrast with the focus on expression, this practice is not structured by the manifestation or the exaltation of the gesture of writing, it does not involve nesting a subject into a language, but articulates a conceptual space in which the subject perpetually disappears.

The second theme concerns the problem of the relation between writing and death. Foucault traces the history of this relation to the Greeks, whose epics geared toward the perpetuation of the immortality of the hero, whose readiness to die young was motivated by the prospect of having his life, consecrated and magnified by this death, immortalized. In our culture, the notion of narrative or writing that conjures death has been transformed. Writing is connected to self-sacrifice, but this voluntary removal, Foucault maintains, “no longer needs to be represented in books, because it is accomplished in the very existence of the writer.”¹¹ The written work once had “the duty of giving immortality,” now it has “the right to kill, to be the murderer of its author” (p. 793). Moreover, this relation between writing and death manifests itself concretely in texts by the absence of “individual characteristics of the writing subject,” and by “the *chicanes* he establishes between himself and what he writes” in order to subvert all “the signs of his particular individuality” (p. 793). In contemporary written discourse, “the mark of the writer is no more than the singularity of his absence,” such that “he must play the role of the dead in the game of writing” (p. 793).

Foucault’s analysis shows that according to the forms regulating contemporary discourse, the author’s privileged status is under contestation in various registers. And yet, we still tend to give it the status it was afforded by forms of thought no longer our own. Foucault accounts for this unbalanced

common tendency by appeal to the fact that other operative concepts, such as the lifework and writing, maintain the excessive privilege of the category of the author while claiming to dispel it. In fact, the proper function of an author is to serve as principle for the classification of discourses. Foucault provides a detailed analysis of this function, whose characteristics involve the transformation of a discourse into an object of appropriation, a piece of property; a differentiated exercise in different types of discourse, scientific as against literary texts, for example; encompassing a complex function that “constructs a certain being of reason that is called the author,” such that we have a tendency to associate this being with the part of an individual that is thought of as profound, or as creative, as a project or as the original site of writing, while in fact, this amounts to a psychologizing projection into an individual of properly textual traits. Foucault strenuously maintains that the function of the author is not a “second hand reconstruction from a text considered as inert material.”¹² He reminds that grammarians have long held that texts always contain a multiplicity of signs that designate the author, such as personal pronouns, adverbs of time and place, and verbs conjugations. In the case of discourses that have an author-function, these signs are more complex and viable than when they do not. Notably, such discourses “always include a plurality of egos” (p. 803). Thus the function of the author cannot properly be defined by “the spontaneous attribution of a discourse to its producer, but only by way of a series of specific and complex operations,” so that it does not simply “refer to a real individual,” but can simultaneously generate “several egos, several subject-positions that different classes of individuals can occupy” (p. 804). The author from this standpoint is nothing other than “one of the possible specifications of the subject-function” (p. 811). Foucault’s analysis implies that the role of “original foundation” no longer belongs to the subject, and must be analyzed as “a variable and complex discursive function” (p. 811). In the attempt to grasp Foucault’s theoretical elusiveness with respect to the status of his own discourse, it is indispensable to retain this deflated conception of the author in the background.

II. KANT ON SETTING BOUNDARIES

Despite Kant’s emphasis on the universality and necessity of the *a priori*, and although he has been under indictment since his own day for unjustifiable extension of contingent and local conditions into universal and necessary ones, the issue of the plurality of conceptual fields is not absent from Kant’s work, albeit within a synchronic frame of reference, and one that was never fully worked out. It is at least partly at odds with the diachronic register in

which the insight is first taken up long before Foucault by pre-Hegelians such as Herder, and by countless others in between. In Kant however, the dynamic intervenes most perspicuously in the context of the distinction between the theoretical and the practical fields of experience.

In the Introduction to *KU*, Kant sketches a model for the division of “the set of all objects” as they relate to *a priori* concepts in the production of cognition of them, according to “the varying adequacy or inadequacy of our faculties for this purpose” (5: 174). What he provides is a complex terminological scheme in a vein similar to the ordering of types of representation in *KrV* cited in Chapter One, and frequently in lectures on logic and metaphysics. With respect to their relation to objects independently of the possibility of cognition of them, concepts have a field that is determined according to “the relation their object has to our faculty of cognition in general” (5: 174). Kant calls the part of a field in which cognition is possible “a territory (*territorium*) for these concepts and the faculty of cognition required” (5: 174). The part of the field in which they are “legislative” is “the domain (*ditio*) of these concepts and of the corresponding faculty of cognition” (5: 174). The objects of the cognitive faculty in general have two domains, defined respectively by the concepts of nature and of freedom. There is, however, a single territory on which the domain is established, namely, “the set of objects of all possible experience, insofar as they are taken as nothing more than mere appearances,” because this is the only conceivable territory of objects that can be legislated by understanding (5: 174). Each domain is marked by the exercise of a distinct faculty; in the domain of concepts, understanding legislates theoretically, whereas in the domain of freedom, reason legislates. These domains are both limited in terms of their “effects in the sensible world,” and they are irreducibly distinct, because, Kant reasons, “the concept of nature certainly makes its objects representable in intuition, but not as things in themselves, rather as mere representations, while the concept of freedom in its object makes a thing representable in itself but not in intuition” (5: 175). The theoretical sensible domain of the concept of nature and the practical supersensible domain of the concept of freedom are separated by “an incalculable gulf,” so that between them “no transition is possible” (5: 175). It is, he concludes, “just as if there were so many different worlds” (5: 176). The following discussion remains within the standpoint of his theoretical philosophy.

At this level, the problem arises in relation to the possibility of using the categories beyond sensible experience. Its schema is the image of determining the boundaries of the domain of the theoretical, and its form is defined in relation to the concept of a limit. Consider Kant’s confrontation, toward

the end of the Transcendental Analytic of *KrV*, of the question of the value of practicing criticism at all. The challenge is that since through the practice of criticism, “we learn nothing more than what we should in any case have practiced in the merely empirical use of understanding, even without such subtle inquiry,” it would certainly seem as though “the advantage that one will draw from it would hardly be worth the expense and preparation” (A238/B296). Kant’s response is that the unimpeachable advantage of critical investigation is that although an understanding occupied with its empirical use and not with the sources of its cognition “may get along very well,” there is one thing that it cannot accomplish, namely, “determining for itself the boundaries of its use and knowing what may lie within and without its whole sphere” (A238/B297). For this, “the deep inquiries” undertaken in the Analytic are required; and without these transcendental measures, that is, “if the understanding cannot distinguish whether certain questions lie within its horizon or not,” it cannot be certain of “its claims and its possession,” and “must always reckon on many embarrassing corrections when it continually oversteps the boundaries of its territory (as is unavoidable) and loses itself in delusion and deceptions” (A238/B297). The imagery alludes to the opening of the chapter, where Kant lets loose a barrage of geographical tropes. He declares that the “land” of the pure understanding “is an island, and enclosed in unalterable boundaries by nature itself,” which is “the land of truth” and it is, Kant writes:

. . . surrounded by a broad and stormy ocean, the true seat of illusion, where many a fog bank and rapidly melting iceberg pretend to be new lands and, ceaselessly deceiving with empty hopes the voyager looking around for new discoveries, entwine him in adventures from which he can never escape and yet also never bring to an end. But before we venture out on this sea, to search through all its breadth and become certain of whether there is anything to hope for in it, it will be useful first to cast yet another glance at the map of the land that we would now leave, and to ask, first, whether we could not be satisfied with what it contains, or even must be satisfied with it out of necessity, if there is no other ground on which we could build; and, second, by what title we occupy even this land, and can hold it securely against all hostile claims. (A236/B295)

These last issues, that Kant treated in the Analytic, depend on being able to determine the natural boundaries that delimit the secure ground from the surrounding ocean. The characterization of “deep inquiries” involved there

refer to the critical investigation of the *boundaries* of possible cognition, which cannot be empirically conducted through observation, but only “by getting to the bottom of (*Ergründung*) the primary sources of our cognition,” that is to say, by determining them “according to *a priori* grounds” (A758/B786). Kant calls this a scientific cognition of ignorance. But it is also possible to cognize its *limitation*—understood as “a merely indeterminate cognition of an ignorance that is never to be completely lifted”—completely *a posteriori*, “through that which always remains to be known even with all of our knowledge” (A758/B786). This only makes for a perception of ignorance. The distinction is one between the concept of a limit and that of a boundary. The concept of a limit figures prominently in the exposition of the transcendental ideal, and serves as a useful context to further examine its transcendental significance. There, Kant presents the argument that the presupposition of the idea of a fully determinate highest being is indispensable for the determination of all individual things. He reasons that in order to think determinately, the thought must be grounded in the opposed affirmation. A person who is blind from birth, for example, cannot form a representation of darkness, because he has no representation of light, nor can a savage be acquainted with poverty, because never been prosperous, just as an ignorant person can have no concept of his ignorance, because he has none of science. These examples illustrate that all concepts of negations are derivative, because it is “the realities that contain the data, the material, so to speak, or the transcendental content, for the possibility and the thoroughgoing determination of all things” (A575/B603). Thus Kant proposes that since “the thoroughgoing determination in our reason is grounded on a transcendental substratum, which contains as it were the entire storehouse of material from which all possible predicates of things can be taken,” the substratum is “the idea an All of reality (*omnitudo realitas*),” and “true negations are then nothing but *limits*, which they could not be called unless they were ground in the unlimited (the All)” (A575–6/B602–3). He concludes that a transcendental ideal is “the ground of the thoroughgoing determination that is necessarily encountered in everything existing, and which constitutes the supreme and complete material condition of its possibility, to which all thinking objects in general must, as regards the content of that thinking, be traced back” (A576/B604). Reason, that is, presupposes the idea of an *ens realissimum* “in order to derive from an unconditioned totality of thoroughgoing determination the conditioned totality, i.e., that of the limited” (A578/B606). The possibility of things, with respect to their synthetic content is considered to be derivative of “that which includes all reality,” in that “all negations (which are the sole predicates through which everything else is to be distinguished

from the most real being) are mere limitations of a greater and finally highest reality," so that they can be said to presuppose it, and to be derived from it in regard to its content (A578/B606). Consequently, the "manifoldness of things" amounts to "so many different ways of limiting the concept of the highest reality, which is their common substratum, just as all figures are possible only as different ways of limiting infinite space" (A578/B606). Kant is careful to note, of course, that if the idea is hypostatized by supposing the existence of a being corresponding to the ideal, its use becomes transcendent and dialectical.

In the context of the criticism of the use of understanding, Kant is careful to distinguish *limits* from *boundaries*. He describes an isomorphism between their relation and the one between skepticism and criticism. In connection with the question of ignorance, Kant describes the attitude of Humean skepticism as the *censorship* of reason; this results in doubt concerning the use of transcendental principles in general. The criticism of reason is instead the attitude toward ignorance based on well-grounded judgment, that "subjects to evaluation not the *facta* of reason but reason itself, as concerns its entire capacity and suitability for pure *a priori* cognitions," thereby proving from principles "not merely the limits but rather the boundaries" of the use of reason, *i.e.*, "not merely ignorance in one part or another but ignorance in regard to all possible questions of a certain sort" (A761/B789). By censoring some of the principles of understanding without investigating the capacity of understanding as such, the skeptic "merely limits our understanding without drawing boundaries for it," thereby producing merely "a general distrust but no determinate knowledge of the ignorance that is unavoidable for us" (A767/B795). The distinction is perspicuously drawn in the section on Determining the Boundary of Pure Reason in the *Prolegomena*, where Kant specifies that in extended things, boundaries "always presuppose a space that is found outside a certain fixed location, and that encloses that location," whereas "limits require nothing of the kind," for they are "mere negations that affect a magnitude insofar as it does not possess absolute completeness" (4: 353). This distinction mirrors a difference between mathematics and natural science, on the one hand, and metaphysics on the other. The former allows for the recognition of the limits, but not the boundaries of human reason: it "recognizes that something lies beyond it to which it can never reach, but not that it would itself at any point ever complete its inner progression" (4: 352). The case differs in metaphysics, in which the dialectical exercises of reason do, as function proper to it as a natural predisposition, lead to the boundaries of its own use. In this activity, the unavoidable and unrealizable transcendental ideas, precisely as a by-product of these qualities,

“serve not only actually to show the boundaries of reason’s pure use, but also to show us the way to determine such boundaries” (4: 353). Moreover, by contrast with limits, that only involve negations, boundaries always have a positive element, for example, “a surface is the boundary of corporeal space, yet is nonetheless itself a space, which is the boundary of a surface; a point is the boundary of a line, yet is nonetheless a space” (4: 354). Once the limits of cognition are established, and that there is something uncognizable beyond them, the question arises of how reason can “cope with this connection of that with which we are acquainted to that with which we are not acquainted, and will never be” (4: 354). Kant’s claim is that it is the “concept of the connection” between the known and the unknown that is “capable of being determined and brought to clarity” (4: 354). Kant illustrates this possibility by analogy to measuring the earth:

If I represent the surface of the earth (in accordance with sensible appearance) as a plate, I cannot know how far it extends. But experience teaches me this: that wherever I go, I always see a space around me in which I could proceed further; thus I cognize the limits of my actual knowledge of the earth at any time, but not the boundaries of all possible description of the earth. But if I have gotten as far as knowing that the earth is a sphere and its surface the surface of a sphere, then from a small part of the latter, e.g., from the magnitude of one degree, I can cognize its diameter and, by means of this, the complete boundary, i.e., surface of the earth, determinately and in accordance with *a priori* principles; and although I am ignorant in regard to the objects that this surface might contain, I am not ignorant in regard to the magnitude and limits of the domain that contains them. (A759/B787)

Similarly, the sum total of all possible objects of cognition appears to be “a flat surface” with as its horizon the rational concept of unconditioned totality, that is, “that which comprehends its entire domain” (A759/B787). It is inaccessible to empirical observation, and previous attempts to determine it *a priori* have failed. Nevertheless, “all questions of our pure reason pertain to that which might lie outside this horizon or in any case at least on its borderline” (A759–60/B787–8). The critical injunction “to avoid all transcendent judgments of pure reason” can be reconciled with the natural predisposition of reason to “proceed to concepts that lie beyond the field of immanent (empirical) use” by situating oneself at the point of “the *boundary* of all permitted use of reason” (4: 356). This boundary, which “belongs just as much to the field of experience as it does to that of beings of thought,” shows us

how the latter “serve solely for determining the boundary of human reason”: both that cognition must be bound so that it is not extended beyond possible experience, leaving only the world to cognize, and that this boundary must not be transgressed to judge things as things in themselves (4: 357). This standpoint is maintained, that of being at the boundary of the legitimate use of reason, “if we limit our judgment merely to the relation that the world may have to a being whose concept itself lies outside” cognition of the world (4: 357). Indeed, for Kant, reason is not like “an indeterminably extended plane, the limits of which one can cognize only in general,” instead it can be compared to a sphere, “the radius of which can be found out from the curvature on an arc on its surface (from the nature of synthetic *a priori* propositions), from which its content and its boundaries can be ascertained with certainty,” and outside which, as the field of experience, “nothing is an object for it” (A762/B791). Kant maintains that all of the concepts and the questions entertained by pure reason are not found in experience, and that their solution lies in the nature of things. But since “reason has given birth to these ideas from its own womb alone”—in itself, “they must be able to be comprehended” (A763/B791). The sensible world contains only appearances, not things in themselves, but understanding must assume the latter “for the very reason that it cognizes the objects of experience as mere appearances” (4: 360). Reason, therefore deals with both, and this presents the question of “how does reason proceed in setting boundaries for the understanding with respect to both fields” (4: 360). Sensible experience cannot set boundaries for itself; what determines them “must lie completely outside it, and this is the field of pure intelligible beings” (4: 360). To this end, reason “sees around itself as it were a space for the cognition of things in themselves, although it can never have determinate concepts of those things and is limited to appearances alone” (4: 352). Thus although this field must for a critical reason remain empty (wholly undetermined), “the boundary is itself something positive, which belongs as much to what is within it as to the space lying outside a given totality” (4: 361). Consequently, by extending to the boundary, reason “partakes of a real, positive cognition,” so long as it does not try to go out beyond the boundary, where there is nothing but an empty space in which it can “think the forms of things, but no things themselves” (4: 361). It can nevertheless fix the boundaries of the field of experience by appealing to the idea of something it cannot cognize, so that it is “neither locked inside the sensible world nor adrift outside it,” but rather “restricts itself solely to the relation of what lies outside the boundary to what is contained within” (4: 361). Kant calls this the *objective boundary* of experience: “the *relation* to something that cannot itself be an object of experience,

but which must nevertheless be the highest ground of all experience,” about which we can have no insight (4: 361).

This series of distinctions drawn from the theoretical standpoint in conjunction with the concept of the differentiation of unified domains of experience as in the passages cited at the beginning of this section, provides a frame for the elements of Foucault's discourse under examination. When the logic of conceptually bounded domains is isolated as the model for Foucault's conception of discursive practices, a question naturally presents itself for the latter about the relation between practices, as it did for Kant. As we have seen, in Kant's case this takes the form of the interaction between understanding and reason; for Foucault, it is the matter of the succession of discourses, the transformation of forms of experience. Specifically, the question comes into view for Foucault as the defining problem of his conception of philosophical and historical work, that is, the question of the limitation of our form of experience, of our discursive practice, and of the possibility and modalities of reaching beyond those limits. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, in terms of its aims, this approach mirrors the structure of Kantian criticism: there is a fairly clear homology between the critical motivation to define the boundaries of cognition and Foucault's aim of describing how types of knowledge are limited and internally legitimate in order to display our own epistemological contingency, thereby making room for different types of knowledge in Foucault. The level of similarity can be articulated by appealing to the construal of Kant's domains (of philosophy) as distinct (discursive) practices undertaken in Chapter Four. Specifically, this is accomplished by attending to the relation between the theoretical and the practical. Broadly speaking, Foucault isolates and describes an extraordinary form of experience that takes place at the boundary of possible discourse; this is what he calls literature, it involves a movement of transgression by thought of its own norms. It is a type of limit-experience that Foucault considers to be a specifically contemporary manifestation of criticism, and its mechanism is akin to the relation between practical experience and theoretical experience that is implied in Kant.

Chapter Three developed the suggestion that the conception of criticism as a theoretical disposition constitutively exercised as a form of activity is a perspicuous way of articulating the motivational nerve shared by the discourses of Kant and of Foucault. Moreover, there is a further segment of their background shared at the level of the relation between the determination of the set of rules that order a form of experience and the constitution of its objective reality (see Chapter Four), which resurfaces here in the context of the logic of determining conceptual boundaries of experience. This convergence is somewhat concealed by the tendency displayed in Foucault's

theoretical elaborations to focus—at times expressly by contrast with Kant’s practice of criticism—on its positive dimension: criticism establishes the limitations of types of knowledge as a *means*, in service of the subsequent task of thinking the modalities of *transgressing* those boundaries, of accessing different forms of experience, as providing, that is, a space of discourse for this positive aim. This aspect of Foucault’s orientation, where he seems to diverge from Kant most glaringly—to be sure, the aim of making room for faith is rigorously irreducible to Foucault’s focus on the transgression of limits—can be recast to bring the affinities between them into view more fully. However, if one accepts the theoretical solidarity between Foucault’s historical analyses and the discourses that he labels as literature, it becomes apparent that, paradoxically, the model for the conception of experience that distinguishes Foucault’s approach is, in Kant, the concept of boundaries of experience involved in the context of the limitation of one form of experience in order to make another possible. The guiding consideration is that experience has the structure of judgment, and so is regulated by a specifiable conceptual dispensation. This structure represents the form of the experience, and determines what is felt as necessary and universal within the experience. The dispensation that presides over the experience of physical objects (a subject’s relation to objects) is distinct from the one that orders the ethical experience (a subject’s relation to other subjects).

III. LITERATURE IN *LES MOTS ET LES CHOSES*

An adequately detailed examination of this series of issues requires consideration of the conceptual background of the idea of ‘literature’ as a form of experience in Foucault. The two central historical moments of conceptual displacement involved are (i) the emancipation of language from thought and experience and (ii) the shift within the study of language from signification to the sign. On Foucault’s account in *MC*, the Classical order that regulated the practices of the 17th and 18th centuries is marked by what he describes as “a profound nominalism”: according to the operative concept, language was the medium of generality itself, the first draft of the very order of representations (*MC*, 309). Language, transparent and neutral within this form of thought, is the indispensable, fundamental mode of representation of the world. Foucault puts the increased prominence of the question of language from the beginning of the 19th century—manifested by the reemergence of exegesis, the tendency toward formalization, and the constitution of a science of philology—in terms of a process of leveling objectification: language reflects back onto itself, and becomes “an object of cognition among so

many others: along side living beings, riches and value, the history of events, and humans" (*MC*, 309).¹³ As a result, it takes on the form of an object of investigation; it acquires the qualities of objects that Foucault describes by appealing to physical categories abstracted from their physical determinants: language has its own "depth," it has its own substance, its own volume. As an object of discourse itself, it deploys "a history, laws and an objectivity proper to it" (*MC*, 309). Considered independently, knowledge of language no longer, within modern conceptual configurations, brings one close to cognition itself, but rather merely applies general methods of knowledge in a specific domain of objectivity, the linguistic.

As part of a mechanism of historical transformation, Foucault identifies a series of conceptual factors of compensation for this leveling of language. The most significant and unexpected of these is the emergence of *literature*. He reserves this term for the name of a peculiarly contemporary form of thought and language whose distinguishing mark is precisely to be *literary in form*. There is a coextensive element of this single historical transformation. While language was being codified by its own form of knowledge in the discipline of philology and other efforts at formalization at the beginning of the 19th century, literature emerged as another, difficultly accessible specifically literary form of language. Its constitutive feature is that it turns back on, according to Foucault's figure, "the enigma of its birth," altogether oriented toward "the pure act of writing" (*MC*, 313). While this act and the significance of its purity remain obscure, Foucault gives precise formal indications: literature is both the "twin figure" and the "contestation" of philology: "it brings the language of grammar back to the naked capacity to speak, and there it encounters the savage and imperious being of words" (*MC*, 313). This represents the exercise of a discursive capacity to internally contest rules that constitutes language as an object of investigation that has its own integrity and modality of being. While the esoteric flavor of Foucault's prose in his descriptions of the form of literature suggests allusion to specific obscure authors in particular, and while he transposes concepts from the writers of the literary scene in which he participated, the heterogeneity of his examples—Foucault mentions the romantic revolt against ossified ceremoniousness in discourse, on the one hand, and Mallarmé's discovery of the powerless capacity of the word, on the other—implies, rather, considerable breadth. Literature bears a relation of contestation to the modern mode of being of language generally. Foucault enumerates six of its various effects: (i) literature progressively distances itself from the discourse of ideas to "lock itself into radical transitivity" (ii) it resists all possible Classical values: taste, pleasure, nature, truth; (iii) it constitutes, in a form of space all its own, "everything

to assure its playful denial (the scandalous, the ugly, the impossible)”; (iv) it breaks with categorization in terms of “genres,” to appeal as “the pure and simple manifestation of a language whose only law is to affirm—against all other discourses—its existence *escarpée*”; (v) it turns back on itself perpetually, “as though the only possible content of its discourse would be to say its own form,” either it refers to itself as “a writing subjectivity,” or it attempts to capture the essence of all literature by rehearsing, describing and constituting the limiting and forming movement in thought to which it owes its origin; and finally, as a result, (vi) literature is a discursive practice designed to exercise and describe on the finest possible grain, “the simple act of writing” (*MC*, 313). This is not an empiricist program; Foucault’s materialism here is as elsewhere formal, notwithstanding his frequent recording of the effects of the excesses in formalization, and despite the coherence of the register in which literature contests the leveling formalization of language. In this case, the simplicity or purity of the activity in question marks the formality of the level of consideration: “While the question of formal languages indicates the possibility or the impossibility of structuring positive contents, a literature dedicated to language indicates the fundamental forms of finitude in their empirical vivacity” (*MC*, 394). It is in this respect that literature has the character of a form of experience: an experience of death, of unthinkable thought, of repetition, and of finitude. Foucault’s analyses of literature simultaneously describe with minimal abstraction the conceptual relations that determine and regulate the practice of the literary, its central mechanisms and forms of deployment, and exemplify this form of thought in and through the very act of this description. His discourse on literature is deployed from the literary space it describes, the space for the constitution, through their expression of the laws, forms, limits, orders, structures, or any other thought units that are normative effective. This discursive space proper to language—one that Foucault locates in the implacable “elsewhere” of a Borgesian heteropia (see the Preface to *MC*)—provides the occasion to experience the formation, the regularization of language, in the course of a movement of thought that reverses the direction adopted by the codification of language as an object of knowledge, in philology, then in linguistics. The two discourses can only be understood as conceptually and historically simultaneous, opposing manifestations of a modern experience of language: at the very moment that language is leveled in the process of becoming an object of knowledge, it finds a new volume and modality of relief in the contestation of literature, where language is a “silent, precautionous deposition of the word on the whiteness of paper, where it can have neither sonority nor interlocutor, where it has nothing to say other than itself, nothing to do other than to scintillate in

the brightness of its being" (*MC*, 313). This solitary lack, *emptiness as content*, is being described as a particular type of negating, one that generates a positive mode in which nothing is posed, where Foucault's description itself takes on what its content describes as a volume of its own, a substance of its own, in its very negating. This dynamic requires further consideration, but what is perspicuous in this historical analysis of literary thought is its aim as a form: "A task thus gives itself to thought: to contest the origin of things, but to contest it in order to establish it, by recovering the mode according to which the possibility of time is constituted,—that origin without an origin or a beginning on the basis of which everything can arise" (*MC*, 343). The structure of the sentence is ambiguous, but on a conceptual basis, it is clear that the origin that this literary thought aims to recover is not an originless origin (the idea itself would in this context be inadmissible), but one whose only origin is the experience of its constitution through the recovery of the space in which one can describe it as conditioning form.

On this analysis, contemporary literature, in its fascination with the being of language, is neither "the sign of an end nor proof of a radicalization," but rather "a phenomenon whose necessity is rooted in the very vast configuration in which the whole nerve of our thought and our knowledge (*savoir*) is shaped" (*MC*, 393–4). While the practices of formalizing languages may legitimate, Foucault writes, "the possibility or the impossibility of structuring positive contents," a literature devoted to language legitimates "the fundamental forms of finitude in their empirical liveliness" (*MC*, 394). Thus, language experienced as language, as Foucault specifies, takes place "in the play of its possibilities stretched to their extreme point," at the edge of its limits "where death lurks, where thought is extinguished, where the promise of the origin indefinitely recedes" (*MC*, 394–5). Thus, in the writings of a series of authors that are particularly representative of what was the fine point of contemporary thought—writers such as Artaud, Roussel, Kafka, Bataille, Blanchot and Klossowski—in the course of the development of this new linguistic mode of being (literature), a space is discovered that receives varieties of forms of finite experience: of death, of the thought of the unthinkable, of repetition. This is not the result of an irruptive return to language, a reflection of thought back into itself, nor a literary narcissism where language is freed from what it has to say in order to be able to talk only about the fact that it is purified language. It is rather, according to Foucault, "the rigorous unfolding of Western culture according to the necessity that it imposed upon itself at the beginning of the 19th century" (*MC*, 395). The view that the 20th century tendency toward the formalization of language represents an ossification, "a rarefaction of thought

incapable of re-grasping the fullness of its contents” is mistaken (*MC*, 395). It is equally false to situate language, from the outset, at the cusp of a new form of thought and knowledge. Instead, within the conceptual frame of *MC*, “it is inside the highly defined, very coherent contour of the modern *episteme* that this contemporary experience finds its possibility; it is even this *episteme* that, by its logic, brought it about, constituted it thoroughly, and made it impossible that it not exist” (*MC*, 396). This configuration of discourse, instituted in the practice of the disciplines of economics, biology and philology, the “thought of finitude that Kantian criticism prescribed as the task of philosophy,” continues to “form the immediate space of our reflection”: “We think in this place” (*MC*, 396).¹⁴ In general then, Foucault’s category of literature is a contemporary form of thought that contests the forms of thought by locating itself in the space of the formation of thought, its conceptual sources, in order to rehearse their expression, to experience their coming into existence in thought.

Thus understood, literature functions as a form of criticism that not only assesses limits claims based on identification of its conditions, but restricts the existence of the transcendental and the normative generally (the recovered origin: capacities and powers, conditions, laws, rules, forms, structures, systems, types, categories, concepts, relations) to the discursive and experimental space in which the normative items are articulated, distinguished and described. This practice of criticism takes as illegitimate the attribution to form of any modality of existence other than the relation to the activity of expressing it. In this respect, Foucault’s conception is part of a practice of criticism, and a restaging of the second order scheme it deploys: the rules of thought, our concepts, categories, and capacities that are said to condition and form an experience are themselves the theoretical objects of a thought that recuperates and occupies the space defined by the functions of organization of that experience. Literature, finally, describes the space, one that Foucault will come to describe as a war zone, in which our forms of thought form and transform thought.

The treatment of literary thought in *MC* helps situate it in history and within its own culture, but leaves the specific distinctive features of this way of thinking difficult to grasp in its application. As a result of the esoteric quality of the object of analysis, *i.e.*, of the success of Foucault’s strategy to deploy an onomatopoeic style of description for the form of literary discourse—a modality of description that makes the content of discourse’s form sound like the discourse’s content—the experience of the literary is less accessible to the reader than other form of thought described by Foucault. It is significant, especially given the self-contained quality of literary thought,

that Foucault describes this form by appeal to Kant's judiciary idiom that describes the form-conferring activities of conceptual capacities by appealing to a typography of juridical acts. The following discussion considers a connection that Foucault suggests repeatedly but does not explore in any detail, and it is a particular case of the general Foucauldian idea introduced above that the organizing source of what is specifically actual about contemporary experience is literary thought, and that this form of thought functions as a transposition and adaptation of Kant's critical thought.

IV. LITERATURE AS A DISCURSIVE PRACTICE

Chapter Two examined what can now be identified as the function of literary discourse in general in Foucault's discourse, namely, as the agency of the skeptical provocation that plays an indispensable part in its genealogical motivation. At this stage, the exposition examines the various features of literature in detail, as well as the implications of this concept as it bears on contemporary thought as such, Foucault's own discursive practice, and the historico-conceptual transformations that have occurred since Kant. The immediate philosophical relevance of literature is suggested by Foucault's characterization of it in a late interview as "the language of thought itself."¹⁵ The resonance with Hegel's idea of logical discourse rings true in the texts of the writers that Foucault has in mind. It is quite true that the prose of Klossowski, Blanchot and Bataille, for example, undercuts distinctions between fiction, criticism and philosophical description. It is also true that they have a stake and a contribution to make in each register considered individually. But what makes this cast of discourse particularly important from Foucault's standpoint is that it functions at an excessively elevated level of abstraction. Its descriptions are of nothing more specific than the conceptual nerve centre of thought itself. In an early discussion, he describes literature as a network "in which neither the truth of speech, nor the series of history can function any longer, where the only *a priori* is language."¹⁶

The obvious disadvantage of this degree of conceptual density from the standpoint of an analytical interest is that it generates a discourse that is often all but impenetrable. Indeed, Foucault's texts that address literary figures resist philosophical exposition. His characteristic analytic exactitude is not missing from these descriptions, but the literary quality of their objects generates a flighty quality in Foucault's own prose. The historical analysis of psychiatric texts, for example, certainly provides a more sedate object of inquiry. Foucault seems unwilling to resist the contagiousness of the hyperbolic discourse whose historical-conceptual implications he undertakes to

describe. Although the generality and directness of the description of the function of literature helps orient reflection about it, it also threatens to mislead in its simplicity. The familiarity of the strategic terms invites one to pass over their implications too hastily. If one is aware, however, that such implications arise when the terms of the broad characterization are considered in the context of the theoretical armature of Foucault's historical analysis, the deceptive simplicity can serve as the frame for a reading grid of Foucault's conception of literature formally equipped to negotiate the play between the continuity and discontinuity of Foucault with his closest contemporaries (this interplay ought to map onto the relation between Foucault's belonging to a contemporary discursive configuration, and the position of privilege of his discourse within it on the basis of the fact that it actualizes the theorizing of that configuration as what it is (and of what a configuration is, and so on)). The elements of orientation readily provided by Foucault's description of the function of literature amount to a gloss on a very familiar set of ideas in post-war France, and the extent of their dissemination in various academic contexts since the time of Foucault's theorizing has given them the quality of platitudes; his characterization comes off as a cartoon of a particular take on a certain way of thinking about the subject and language. This approach to the question, generated in large part by dissatisfaction with the institutionalized Marxism of the period, formulates the aim as the discovery of a non-dialectical form of thought that becomes possible once the structural dominance of the subject of experience has receded.

In the round table discussion with members of the journal *Tel Quel*, in the course of trying to clarify his position, Foucault proposed an uncharacteristically direct statement of his way of seeing the general state of contemporary literary thought:

It seems to me, putting this in a very empirical way, that all literature that had humanist pretensions, during the post-war years, between 1945 and 1955 perhaps, was a literature of signification. What does the world, man, etc., signify? There was similarly a philosophy of signification—of which Merleau-Ponty was the representative. And then, now before us emerges something strangely different, which is resistant to sanctification, and is the *sign*, language itself.¹⁷

The insight into what Foucault refers to here as a *literature of the sign* corresponds to literature as a form of thought. By contrast to a phenomenological approach based on problems of signification, this other contemporary

discourse—one that “we are in the course of discovering now,” Foucault reports in 1964—occupies “the field of the signifier and the signified, the domain of the sign” (p. 371). Although Foucault does not make the link explicit, it seems clearly implied: just as for the humanist literature of signification there was a corresponding philosophy of signification, to the literature of the sign there corresponds a philosophy of the sign, and if the former had its Merleau-Ponty, the latter has, among others, its Michel Foucault. Foucault takes himself to be practicing the philosophical mode of discourse that corresponds to contemporary literature (in the technical sense). The importance of this correspondence is considerable, given the historical-epistemological insight he provides into contemporary literature, and how little he has to say about the conceptual dimension that regulates his own discourse. The correlation between the literature of the sign and Foucault’s philosophy can serve as the basis for a strategy to articulate the form of experience of Foucault’s discourse. This allows for an account of the modalities of the site (receptive form) into which the Kantian discursive practice is here transposed.

V. KANT, FOUCAULT AND THE SOURCES OF CONTESTATION

Chapter Four made a case for reading Foucault’s distinction of discursive practices in history as a direct application of Kantian criticism, specifically, considered as an adaptation of Kant’s transcendental logic that examines functions of thought and determines what is really, and not only logically, possible for that thought to think. In that context, the cornerstone is the concept of real possibility. When Foucault describes a form of experience in history, he is appealing to a unified set of regulating factors that determine in the given context what is a possible reality and what is not. This constitutive relation between the rules and the real possibilities within a discursive practice is the basic principle of Foucault’s historical analyses, and should be retained as the background against which the aspect of this way of thinking is situated. Here Kant’s distinction between the real and the merely logical is once again the historical point of reference, albeit in quite a different register. It is the ground of one of the central mechanisms of the cast of thought that Foucault calls literature, and by hypothesis of the form of receptivity of Foucault’s conception of experience, namely, the thought’s *contestation* of and the possibility of *transgressing* its own rules. This is a decisive aspect of the form receptivity of experience in which language is used within and against itself, by developing strategies to internally undermine its own rules.

a) Kant, Real Possibility, and Conceptual Transgression

A recurrent theme in this study has been that, despite Foucault's emphasis on the historical transformations that resulted in the marginalization of subjective mechanisms in the constitution of experience and in the emergence of forms of experience not organized around a subject, the method of isolation of discursive practices in history that allows him to arrive at this assessment itself functions as a practice of criticism. The analysis has aimed to define a level of description from which to consider Foucault's historical analysis in relation to its determining conditions as a practice of criticism: it examines the functioning of specific given exercises of thought in order to describe the capacities—powers in the sense of being-able-to—that determine what is *really*, and not only *logically*, possible for that thought to think in a particular culture. One of the organizing principles of this practice is the concept of real possibility. When Foucault describes a form of experience in history, he can be understood as giving expression to a unified set of regulating factors that determine in the given context what is and what is not a possible reality.

The Kantian way of thinking about the interplay between what is possible within an experience and the regulating factors (laws, concepts, rules, orders, types, etc.) that form it buoys the space of what Foucault considers to be the distinctive feature of the capacity of literature, considered as a receptive discursive form: namely, a thought's *contestation* of its own form, the possibility of *transgressing* its own rules. In this form of experience, to appeal momentarily to an idiom that will ultimately prove inadequate, language functions within and against itself through strategies that internally undermine its own rules. But the discursive attitude of contestation can only be understood by considering the constitutive relation between the rules and the real possibilities within a discursive practice. Indeed, the conceptual solidarity of regulating factors that impose form and possibilities, what can be done, is a basic conceptual commitment in Foucault's historical analyses: it functions as a silent aspect of Foucault's critical attitude that can be addressed as a particular way of thinking about thought and power, one that according to its own terms has a history and a specifiable point of emergence. This theoretical self-transparency is at its most highest in connection with the capacity of contestation.

Indeed, Foucault himself calls attention to both the formal affinity his discourse bears to literature in its contesting capacity, and of Kant's genealogical significance in this regard. In his well-known contribution to the issue of the journal *Critique* devoted to the work of Georges Bataille¹⁸, Foucault isolates Kant's distinction between the real and the merely logical as the indicative historical-conceptual point of reference. This opposition—a variety of

the relation of abstraction—is utterly decisive in Kant, where it functions as an element of a new way of thinking about possibility and impossibility, of the question of why we can experience things in the ways we can, and not in other ways. Of course, Foucault is certainly not the first to have called attention to the historical and conceptual significance of the distinction between real and purely formal logic, which with varying degrees of didactic rigidity had been available since Christian Wolff, and figures prominently in Kant's writings as early as the mid-1750s. While it plays a role at every decisive moment of the practice of criticism, in connection with contesting literature, consideration of its functioning in terms of the relation of negation will be most effective. The text Foucault refers to, a 1763 piece "On the Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy," includes an analysis of the concept of opposition in the course of which the real/merely logical distinction emerges in the form of two ways of addressing negation.

Kant describes *opposition* as the relation between two things whereby "one thing cancels that which is posited by the other" (2: 171). The relation of opposition takes two forms: the opposition can be "*logical through contradiction*," or it can be "*real*, [. . .] without contradiction" (2: 171). In logical opposition, "something is simultaneously affirmed and denied of the very same thing," and its consequence, based on the law of contradiction, is "*nothing at all (nihil negativum irrepraesentabile)*" (2: 171). In real opposition, "two predicates of a thing are opposed to each other, but not through the law of contradiction," and although "one thing cancels that which is posited by the other," in this case, "the consequence is *something (cogitabile)*" (2: 171). Real opposition is nevertheless "a true opposition": two tendencies are predicates of one and the same thing simultaneously, consequently, *nothing*, but nothing—Kant specifies—"in another sense to that in which it occurs in a contradiction (*nihil privativum, repraesentabile*)" (2: 172). There are two fundamental rules of real opposition: that (i) real conflict "only occurs where there are two things, as *positive grounds*, and where one of them cancels the consequence of the other," and that (ii) there is real opposition "wherever there is a positive ground and the consequence is nonetheless zero" (2: 175; 2: 177). The distinguishing mark of real opposition is the presence of a positive ground: "the cancellation of the consequence of a positive ground always demands a positive ground as well" (2: 177). Kant calls the negation that follows from this type of opposition "a *deprivation (privatio)*," as opposed to the negation that follows from logical opposition, contradiction, which is negation as "a *lack (defectus)*" (2: 177).¹⁹ Here real opposition and negation as deprivation function as one pole of a conceptual field around which Kant defines and exercises a practice of logical analysis that does not abstract from

the content of concepts, and thus makes it possible to think of negation in positive terms.

This emerges more fully in the discussion of the Transcendental Ideal in the Transcendental Dialectic of *KrV*, where Kant draws a distinction between logical and transcendental negation. In this context, Kant appeals to the category of the transcendental to define a field of investigation for the conceptual practice of describing the aspect of the content of a predicate that can be thought in it *a priori*, the *a priori* content, or the content of the form. In the consideration of the negation of predicates, this transcendental practice makes two theoretical possibilities intelligible; there are two types of possible negation: “through some a being is represented and through others a mere non-being,” depending on the modality of existence of what is represented (A574/B602). Considered merely logically, however, negation is “never properly attached to a concept, but rather only to its relation to another concept in a judgment,” so that it cannot designate the *content* of a concept, but signifies “a mere lack”: “where this alone is thought, the removal of every thing is represented” (A575/B602–3). In general, the practice of pure logic describes only relations between judgments, rather than relations between judgments and concepts, abstracting from even the content of the concepts that form the object of the predicate. In the case of negations, it is remarkable that this further exercise of abstraction to transpose the description from a transcendental to a purely logical field of analysis removes the ontological dimension from the structure of negating, by abstracting itself from the relation to the *a priori* content of the predicate, which is the only level at which the categories of existence and non-existence apply. The relation of actual existence, of reality, belongs to the transcendental, and not the logical. As a result, whereas negation for a transcendental analysis signifies conceptual content that, as a further question of modality, may or may not exist, negation for a practice of pure logic signifies nothing, its content is to-have-no-content, it is “mere lack.” This distinction between the transcendental and the logical as different critical micro-practices aligns with Kant’s earlier distinction between the possibilities of thinkable nothing and unthinkable nothing, and functions as an organizing principle of the pragmatics of Kant’s philosophy.

b) Foucault’s Principle of Contestation

In “Préface à la transgression,” Foucault isolates this Kantian distinction as the site of emergence of the concept of possibility around which the contemporary experience of literature is structured. He describes it as the discovery of a gap within the concept of negation that justifies the distinction between unthinkable nothing (contradiction, *nihil negativum*) and thinkable nothing

(deprivation, *nihil privativum*), between the corresponding activities of negation, and the fields and practices of analysis proper to each (in Kant: the purely logical and the transcendental or the real). Within the experience of literature, criticism of the relation of real negation takes the form of what Foucault calls “a philosophy of non positive affirmation,” which is defined around the “experience (*épreuve*) of the limit” (*DE.I*, 238).²⁰ It is based on what Foucault, after Blanchot and Bataille, calls the principle of *contestation*:

It is not a matter of a generalized negation, but of an affirmation that affirms nothing: in complete rupture of transitivity. Contestation is not the effort of thought to deny existences or values, it is the gesture that brings each of them back to their limits, and thereby to the limit where the ontological decision is made: to contest is to go to the empty heart in which being attains its limit and the limit defines being. There, in the transgression of the limit, the yes of contestation resounds, which leaves the hee-haw of the Nietzschean donkey without an echo. (*DE.I*, 238)

As a description of the activity of contestation, Foucault rehearses the mechanism of Kantian transcendental criticism of the relation of negation at the level of modality, with conceptual imagery that illuminates the stakes of critical activity itself. The transitive constitutive relation between the rules and the real possibilities of an experience makes the idea of being free or liberated from rules unintelligible (freedom, if it exists, can only be thought through the rules that determine the state, the experience at hand). The attitude of contestation and the activity of transgression are not of this order (Foucault is not suggesting that one break the laws of thought; his point is that the very idea is incoherent, and the question needs to be addressed at a different order of consideration). The transgression of the limit is the image Foucault uses to define the space in which to consider the question of limits itself, the practice of criticism most abstractly described. The transgression as contestation is a way of describing the effect of undertaking an evaluation of the real possibilities of an experience, and thus might be thought to be the contemporary manifestation of the discursive practices whose function was traditionally that of the philosophical.

In this register, Foucault’s conceptual imagery can be read as a recovery of Kant’s distinction of the real from the merely formal, and its redeployment at a lesser degree of abstraction, at a point at which the form of expression of the activity retains significance. In specifying that contestation does not “oppose anything to anything,” that it does not “seek to shake the solidity of foundations,” or to “make radiate the other side of the mirror beyond

the invisible and a line that cannot be crossed,” Foucault makes it clear that to transgress in thought is not an act of censure, of spectacular iconoclasm, or of prophetic vision, but of sober critical recovery (*DE.I*, 238). And yet, there is no negative dimension to the transgressive act of contestation: “it affirms limited being, it affirms that unlimited in which it springs in opening it to existence for the first time” (*DE.I*, 238). But on the other hand, there is nothing positive in this affirmation either: “no content can tie it, since, by definition, no limit can hold it back,” indeed, it should be dissociated from “everything that can remind one of the gesture of cutting off, or the establishment of a separation or the measuring of a gap, and only leave it that which can designate the being of difference” (*DE.I*, 238). In Foucault’s text, this redescription of the Kantian thinkable nothing is the primary conceptual mechanism of the activity of transgression in thought.

Further difficulty is posed by the fact that Foucault’s analysis invites one to inflect his description of literary thought, and to consider it as a characterization of his own mode of discourse, one for which, as he writes, “the play between transgression and being is constitutive of the philosophical language that reproduces and undoubtedly produces it” (*DE.I*, 244). This is a self-referential language, one that “refers to itself and folds itself back on a questioning of its limits” (*DE.I*, 244).²¹ The space of transgression, and the space of Foucault’s historical analysis itself, would be an experience in which the experience (the witness, description, and interrogation) of limits replaces the enveloping need for totality, and the gesture of transgression the dialectic of contradiction. As a matter of its “essential structure,” Foucault writes, philosophy is now “secondary with respect to language”: “it experiences itself and its limits in language and in the transgression of language” that leads it to “the weakening of the speaking subject” (*DE.I*, 249). It is a discursive practice in which one witnesses “the plunging of philosophical experience itself into language,” and in which one discovers that “it is only there and in the movement in which it says that which cannot be said that is performed an experience of limits such as philosophical, now, will have indeed to think it” (*DE.I*, 249). This discourse defines the space of an experience in which the subject who speaks, instead of *expressing* itself, *exposes* itself, and goes out, Foucault writes, “to meet its own finitude and beneath each word finds itself sent to its own death” (*DE.I*, 249). The transition to finitude occurs through the experience of the determinate forms of finitude that determine what, in a given time and place, it is to think and experience.

When undertaken as part of an attitude of contestation, historical analysis of specific practices of discourse represents, as Foucault puts it, “the history for a given moment of these limits” on thought and experience.²² For this practice of historical criticism, in a given culture, some limits have greater intensity

than others: *e.g.*, from history to language as organizing categories, and loci of, Foucault writes, “the play of limits, contestation and transgression” (p. 398). This is the space of the experience of literature: a form of thought that contests the application of the norms that regulate it by evaluating its limits. This critical practice directs us to an experience of the mechanism of limiting, itself: the formal rehearsal of the exercise of a configuration of conceptual capacities that specifically determine an experience. From the enigmatic space of this critical practice, Foucault writes, “nothing can declare the exteriority of being,” and so nothing points to “an *inner* and *sovereign* experience,” in which “one discovers its finitude as its secret and its light, the unlimited reign of the limit, the emptiness of this surpassing (*franchissement*) where it fails and is faulty” (*DE.I*, 235). Once this is recognized, inner experience is accessible only as an “experience of the *impossible*” when the impossible is understood as “what is experienced and what constitutes it,” that is, as what makes what is possible possible (*DE.I*, 235). For Foucault, the critical activity of transgression is “at the limits,” or in Kant’s more finely grained terminology, at the *boundary*, “of all possible language” (*DE.I*, 236). It is, Foucault writes, “a gesture that concerns the limit” in a strong sense of ‘concern’: the “thinness of the line” which is the boundary, is not only the site of its manifestation, but its origin and its only trajectory (*DE.I*, 236). This contesting drawing of boundaries through evaluating descriptions of condition of reality of an experience defines, as Foucault makes flamboyantly clear in a piece on the historical and conceptual precociousness of Gérard de Nerval: “the only way to be at the heart of literature,” he writes, “is to indefinitely carry oneself at its limit, and as thought on the outer edge of its escarpment.”²³ In this space, Foucault describes an obstinate play of limits and transgression: the latter “incessantly crosses a line that, behind it, immediately closes in a wave of little memory,” thereby receding to the horizon that cannot be crossed (*DE.I*, 237). The image of the line or the boundary that could be crossed as a way to think of limitation and possibility requires qualification, however. For Foucault, the play between boundaries and transgression is not a mere surface manifestation, but a relation of conceptual co-dependence forms the relation between real possibilities and the rules that determine them: “The limit and transgression owe each other the density of their being: non-existence of a limit that could absolutely not be crossed; the vanity conversely of a transgression that would only cross a limit of illusion or of shadow” (*DE.I*, 237). Kant’s concept of *nihil privatum* intervenes in Foucault’s discourse directly here:

Transgression is not therefore at the limit like black is to white, the forbidden to the permitted, the outside to the inside, the excluded to the protected space of the dwelling. Instead, it is tied to it in a spiral relation

that no mere break-in can exhaust. Something perhaps like the flash in the night [. . .] gives dense and black being to what it denies, illuminates it from the inside and thoroughly, nevertheless gives it its lively clarity, its harrowing and groomed singularity, loses itself in the space that it signs with its sovereignty and finally becomes silent, having given a name to the obscure. (*DE.I*, 237)

The transgressive activity of negating expression manifests itself in a scintillating, insistently affirmed world without shadows, without twilight, without resentment.²⁴ It is also without its own voice. Foucault describes the literary discourse that exercise this practice of contestation as diminished (*démuni*), practically reduced to muteness, “constrained to give voice to [. . .] extreme [skeptical] forms of language, in order to find their words for them” (*DE.I*, 240). He senses that the time is approaching when “the sovereignty” of these experiences will be recognized, when they will be welcomed, in order through them to “finally liberate our language” (*DE.I*, 240). But he describes the attitude of contestation as descriptive, preparatory, perhaps at the limit ascetic, but not liberating. Foucault’s historical analysis of contestation, as itself an exercise of it, proposes to “try to speak of this experience” by “making it speak” precisely from the place “where it has no words, where the speaking subject has just fainted” (*DE.I*, 240). Now, as a question of form, Foucault’s analysis of this contemporary discourse remains hesitant when it comes to describing its theoretical space from which it is held, from the disposition of the site from which the discourses of the present are practiced. The attitude of contestation and the discursive act of transgression, Foucault specifies, “does not find its model, its foundation, the very treasure of its vocabulary, in any form of reflection until now defined, in any discourse uttered” (*DE.I*, 241). He suggests that literature provides a language that would correspond to this thinking in the way that dialectics corresponds to contradiction, a language that would be adequate to negation as deprivation, one that promises to allow the language of philosophy to structurally detach itself from the dialectical.

VI. THE THOUGHT OF THE OUTSIDE

a) Kant and Beings of Thought as a Boundary Concept

The other dimension of literature as critical form of receptivity concerns the ambition to resist dialectical thinking that Foucault calls the thought of the outside. Once again, it will be instructive to approach the concept by appealing to a point of reference in Kant. One of the most important tasks of the Transcendental Analytic of *KrV* was to demonstrate that human understanding can

only determine objects in conjunction with sensibility. For Kant, the forms of understanding, the categories, have no objective use other than their use with the form of sensibility, and considered independently, they remain indeterminate forms of thought that mark merely “the logical capacity for unifying the manifold given in intuition in a consciousness *a priori*” (B305). If the intuition in which this manifold is given is removed, Kant makes explicit, “understanding signifies nothing at all” (B306). However, Kant shows that part of what the concept of beings of sense (*phaenomena*) marks is their opposition to “objects thought merely through the understanding” (B306). He explains that when in thought we “call an object in a relation mere phenomenon,” it “simultaneously makes for itself, beyond this relation, another representation” (B307). He calls these offspring of designation “beings of understanding (*noumena*)” (B306).

Beings of understanding are the representations of problematic judgments, considered as one of the basic logical functions. It is a function of modality that Kant defines as the judgments “in which one regards the assertion or denial as merely possible (arbitrary)” (A75/B100). A problematic proposition is one “which only expresses a logical possibility (which is not objective), i.e., a free choice to allow such a proposition to count as valid, a merely arbitrary assumption of it in the understanding” (A75/B101). Similarly, a problematic concept is one that “contains no contradiction,” but is “as a boundary for given concepts, connected with other cognitions, the objective reality of which can in no way be cognized” (A254/B309). The concept of a being of understanding is such a concept. However, it is more than merely a problematic concept, for not only is it not contradictory, that is “admissible,” but in fact, it is “even unavoidable,” for it has an indispensable role in criticism, namely, it is required “in order not to extend sensible intuition to things in themselves, and thus to limit the objective validity of sensible cognition” (A256/B311; A254/B310). The things outside the reach of sensibility are called *noumena* “just in order to indicate that those cognitions cannot extend their domain to everything that the understanding thinks” (A354–5/B310). But this is a problematical extension—as opposed to an assertorical employment—of understanding, one to which we can give no positive significance. Consequently, the concept of a being of thought must be considered to be “merely a boundary concept”; although it is not “invented arbitrarily,” it only has the negative function of limiting “the pretension of sensibility” (A255/B310). In this exercise, understanding becomes a *problem*²⁵: it “acquires a negative expansion” in that “it is not limited by sensibility, but rather limits it by calling things in themselves (not considered as appearances) *noumena*,” and it also “immediately sets boundaries for itself,

not cognizing these things through categories, hence merely thinking them under the name of an unknown something" (A256/B321). Thus Kant's concept of beings of understanding is not the concept of an object, but a problem, that of "of whether there may not be objects entirely exempt from the intuition of our sensibility," and as a problem is a question to which one can give "the indeterminate answer" that "since sensible intuition does not pertain to all things without distinction, room remains for more and other objects, and cannot therefore be absolutely denied" (A287–8/B344). In this space of the problem, the contemporary critical capacity to contest is exercised through the description of forms as creation of being of understanding, of beings of thought. Blanchot is the most decisive source for Foucault in this regard.

b) Foucault on Blanchot and the Dialectical

Foucault's study of Blanchot begins by suspending the conception of modern literature according to which it involves an intense attention to itself, by way of a mysterious form of self-reference that would have discovered a way to simultaneously achieve extreme interiorization, reduced to no more than the statement of itself, the manifestation of itself as the sign of its inaccessible existence. He proposes another conception of literature, one that only appears to involve interiorization at first glance, but is instead properly a process of exteriorization, a passage to the 'outside' through which language escapes the mode of representation, and a literary language, Foucault writes, "develops out of itself," thereby configuring "a network in which every point, distinct from the others, at a distance even from those closest to it, is situated in relation to them all in a space that both loges them and separates them" (p. 520). In the discourse of literature, language separates itself from itself, such that its being can be displayed only in a gap, not an act of self-reference. From Foucault's standpoint, the significance of this discursive practice lies in its implications for the role of the subject. In literature, according to this analysis, language resists the domination of the modern conception of the knowing subject. Where the 'I think' led to indubitable certainty of the subject and its existence, the 'I speak' recedes, dispersing this existence entirely, and leaving behind only an empty space. Against the grain of a tradition that has shown that thought about thought has led to the depths of interiority, this form of this literary speech about speech generates, Foucault's analysis indicates, the experience of an "outside where the subject who speaks disappears" (p. 520). This experience opens onto a gap that had previously remained invisible, the empty space left in the place that had been occupied by the function of the subject. The relation between the role of language in

literature with respect to the subject is more radical and complex than that of succession: the being of language is accessible only *as* and *in* the disappearance of the subject. With Blanchot, Foucault calls the still incipient form of the thought of the outside. Foucault's description flails in its attempt to fix the features of this configuration:

This thought that carries itself outside all subjectivity in order to make its limits show up as thought from the outside, to state its end, to make its dispersion scintillate and to collect only its invisible absence, and that would at the same time carry itself at the threshold of all positivity, not in order to grasp its foundation or its justification, but to find the space in which it deploys itself, the gap that serves as its place, the distance in which it constitutes itself and in which its immediate certainties escape as soon as one looks at them, this thought, in relation to the interiority of our philosophical reflection and in relation to the positivity of our knowledge (*savoir*), constitutes what can be called "the thought of the outside." (p. 521)

Unlike the discourse of Dionysian mysticism and negative theology to which one might be tempted to trace its historical precedent, the movement here is not one that passes outside itself in order ultimately to discover itself anew, collected in a rich interiority, full of "being and speech." Instead, the emergence of this discursive modality paradoxically occurs at the time of Kant and Hegel, at the conjunction of the writings of Hölderlin and the Marquis de Sade.²⁶ Foucault considers this historical coincidence paradoxical, insofar as the experience of the outside is strikingly misaligned with the movement of interiorization of the law, history and the world that had reached its most intense and radical point in the philosophy of the German idealists. Sade's discourse, by contrast, is markedly restrained: "Sade only allows the nudity of desire to speak, as the lawless law of the world" (p. 521). During the same historical period, similarly out of step with the dominant impulse to internalize, Hölderlin's poetry was making the absence of the gods brilliantly present, in a discourse that legislated the obligation of "waiting, undoubtedly to infinity, for the enigmatic help that comes from the 'lack of God'" (p. 521). Foucault suggests that this joint deposit of the distillation of desire and of the hopeless detours of the gods in the cracks of a doomed language inscribed in modern discourse is a manifestation of the still cryptic configuration of the experience of the outside. Through the first half of the 19th century, this form of experience hovered, as though in exile, external to the various manifestations of the imperative to internalize (the idealization of the world, the

annihilation of alienations, the dispelling of the *Enttäusserung*, the humanization of nature, the naturalization of man, the earthly recuperation of the former treasures of heaven, and so on). With Nietzsche, this experience recurs fully realized as experience of the outside, that is, in the medium of language understood as “the very sparkling of the outside” (p. 522). Nietzsche discovers that Western metaphysics itself is tied not only to its grammar, but to those who by holding discourse claim the right to speech. It is found in Mallarmé, where one witnesses “the movement in which the speaker disappears”; in Arnaud, in the form of a transformation of thought from “a loquacious interiority” to a spiritual energy; in Bataille, where a discourse of contradiction and the unconscious becomes one of limits, of transgression, of the rupture of the subject; and in Klossowski’s experience of the double, the exteriority of simulacra, and the theatrical and demonic multiplication of the self (p. 522). But, as suggested, above all, the experience of the outside is to be found in the discourse of Blanchot, whose writing, according to Foucault, represent for us this thought of the outside as such, “its real presence, absolutely distant, scintillating, invisible, the necessary lot, the inevitable law, the calm, infinite, measured vigor of this thought itself” (p. 523).

c) *Against Dialectics*

According to Foucault, the critical practice of describing the form of literature as a configuration of contemporary thought generates the problem of making the form explicit in a description that captures its exteriority without thereby distorting it, that is, in a non reflective discourse that avoids the threat of repatriating the thought of the outside back into the inner, into consciousness. This difficulty is a result of the specifics of *this* configuration, not—as in the case of the historical difficulty—of a tension between the standpoint and the object of study that belongs to all historical discourse that accounts for discursive discontinuity.

In his essay on Blanchot, Foucault draws attention to this conceptual problem and proposes a strategy in response. Since both purely reflective philosophical language and fictional language—in which literary conventions threaten to reintroduce the framework of interiority under the guise of fashioning an imaginary beyond—are unequipped to preserve the suspension of the inner-outer dualism that is enmeshed with the primacy of the conscious knowing subject, reflective language must be *converted*, not, as Foucault specifies, “toward inner confirmation” but rather “toward an extremity from which it must always *contest*” (p. 523: emp. added). Arrived at its own limits, language no longer can attend to its regulated content, but only “the void in which it will erase itself; and toward that void toward which it must go, by

accepting to undo itself in rumor, in the immediate negation of what it says, in a silence and is not the intimacy of a secret, but the pure outside from which words are indefinitely unfurled" (p. 523). It is easy to understand why there is no dialectical use of negation in Blanchot, on Foucault's analysis, for it implies that dialectical denial casts what it denies into "the anxious interiority of spirit" (p. 523). Foucault maintains that Blanchot's mode of denial is different insofar as it allows language to pass outside itself incessantly its self-denial, systematically releasing it "not only from what it has just said, but from the power to say it" (p. 523). These anti-dialectic features of literature constitute another aspect of the form of receptivity in Foucault. An unmentioned figure of Hegel, filtered through the complexities of the Marxist-humanist screen (Sartre, Garaudy) that would have been difficult to avoid in Paris at the time (c. 1962–8), is the silent respondent of the analysis.²⁷ The figure is analyzed by Foucault in oppositional terms:

Not reflection, but forgetting; not contradiction, but a contestation that erases; not reconciliation, but continual overturning (*ressassement*); no spirit after the laborious conquest of its unity, but the indefinite erosion of the outside; no ultimately illuminating truth, but the streaming and the distress of a language that has always already begun. (p. 523)

A recurrent theme in Blanchot's writings that inflects an ideal his discourse embodies is the ideal of a determination of language that is both more and less than speech, revolving from one to the other in the movement of *conversion*. For Blanchot, speech functions as a rumor of language: the shudder that is less than silence and than the void of emptiness; it the *fullness of emptiness* that symmetrically is converted back into emptiness.²⁸

Blanchot's discourse is produced at the conjunction of *reflective patience* and a mode of fiction that *cancels itself out in the void in which it untangles its images*. It is defined radically negatively: no conclusion, no images, no truth, no theatricality, no trials, no masks, no assertions, no center, no homeland. Its own space is constituted as 'outside,' as that toward which and from which it speaks. This is a sedulous narration of experiences, meetings, and improbable signs in which a form of language emerges that is external and attentive to what has already appeared and what has already been said, and to the void that, as Foucault describes, "circulates between these words," and to "the murmur that continually undoes it." Literature as thought of the outside is, for Foucault "discourse on the non-discourse of all language, fiction of the invisible space in which it appears" (p. 525). This feature appears particularly clearly in relation to Foucault's reading of Blanchot's

concept of attraction (*l'attrance*), which is the pure and most stripped-down experience of the outside. Attraction, Foucault explains, “does not support itself on charm, breaks no solitude, grounds no positive communication” (p. 525). Rather than finding oneself invited by the attraction of the outside, this is an experience of undergoing the presence of the outside and, related to this presence, the fact that one is “irremediably outside the outside (*hors du dehors*).” It is a form of attraction in relation to which the outside, which has no interiority, is shown to be vulnerable, defenseless, and unguardedly open. But since it cannot present itself as a presence, it manifests itself as an opening to which access is impossible. It is attractive in a teasing manner, as absence that distances itself from itself into an idiom that it makes so that one can approach it, as though it might be possible to reach it. But it can offer only the void that opens before the attracted to offer: the deaf call too insistent to resist, yet too equivocal to grasp and interpret definitively. Attraction’s discursive counterpoint is *negligence*, for, Foucault reasons, in order to be attracted, one must have an “essential negligence,” the attitude of taking what one is doing to amount to absolutely nothing, with the result that the negligent’s “past, its peers and all its other life that is thereby rejected into the outside, as nonexistent” (p. 526). Foucault suggests that it is the correlate of a zealous attitude in the “quiet, unjustified, obstinate” attention with which one allows oneself to be attracted, in “the aimless movement of attraction itself” (p. 526). The relation between the two determines that one is attracted only to that which neglects, thus zeal consists in neglecting the negligence, to become, Foucault writes, “courageously negligent concern (*souci*) that advances toward the light that is mere negligence, pure outside, the night that disperses itself like a candle on which is blown the negligence zeal that was attracted to it” (p. 528). The figures of negligence and attraction mark a modality of manifestation and of dissimulation of the law: “of manifesting the retreat where it dissimulates itself, of attracting it consequently in a day that hides it” (p. 528). Foucault casts this literary conception of the law in contrast to a radically internalized idealist and Romantic notion of it. In tune with his epistemological internalization of the relation between objects and our representations of them, Kant develops a Rousseauian idea of the law as inter-constitutive with conscience. In Romantic thinkers, the law is in the heart, immediately present, evident to the self, where, as Foucault turns it, “the law would no longer be the law, but the gentle interiority of conscience” (p. 528). By contrast to this subjectivism, the law might be taken to be found in texts, where it does not give itself to immediate and direct apprehension, but would require deciphering. If the law were immediately accessible and present to the heart, Foucault explains, it would not be the law, but “the soft

interiority of conscience,” and if, conversely, it were possible to “decipher it between the lines of book,” if “the register could be consulted,” it would have “the solidity of external things,” and one could obey or disobey it, but its power would be dissimulated, prestige that would make it venerable concealed (p. 528). But this construal of the law would have the solidity of things in the world, and could be obeyed or disobeyed, and the source of the authority of the law is inherently impugnable. In literary discourse, the binding presence of the first is transformed by the fact of the second: the law imposes itself precisely as a situation produced by its being masked, such that “the presence of the law is its dissimulation” (p. 528). The law is always already there, haunting our forms of experience, but independent of them, as thought from on high, sovereignly; it haunts cities, institutions, behaviors and gestures, whatever it is that one does, “no matter how great the disorder and the incurability (*incurie*), it has already deployed its strength (*puissance*)” (p. 528). It exists autonomously of the liberties one takes, or takes oneself to be taking. Although it may seem as though one is detaching oneself from it, ignoring or avoiding it, the only point of purchase to which one has access is askew: it results in dissemination and proliferation. In the process of what we take to be undoing ourselves from it in order to take stock of it from the outside, “at the moment we believe that we can read from afar its decrees that apply only to others, one is in fact closest to the law, one makes it circulate, one ‘contributes to the application of a public decree’” (p. 528). There is no interiority here, the law is not the principle of conduct, or its internal legislation; it is rather “the outside that envelops them,” it is “the night that limits them, the void that marks them off”; in the place of their singularity, it institutes “the grey monotony of the universal, and opening around them a space of unease, or dissatisfaction, and of multiplied zeal” (p. 529). This is a space of transgression:

How could one really know and experience (*éprouver*) the law, how could one constrain it to make itself visible, to exercise its powers clearly, to speak, if one did not provoke it, if one did not force it is its retrenchments, if one did not always go resolutely further toward the outside where it is always more withdrawn? How could its invisibility be seen if not turned over in the other side (*retournée dans l'envers*) of chastisement, which is after all merely the law attained (*franchie*), irritated, outside itself? (p. 529)

Its “perpetual manifestation” never sheds any light on its letter, on “what one says or what the law wants” (p. 529). It is the actualization of exteriority,

insofar as it does not function as the principle of forms of behavior, but the outside that envelops them, thereby allowing them to escape all interiority entirely. Foucault suggests that it is like “the night that binds them, the emptiness that surrounds them, turning without anyone knowing their singularity into the grey monotony of the universal, and opening around them a space of discomfort, of dissatisfaction, of multiplied zeal” (p. 529). It is easy to recognize that it is the space of transgression that is deployed by the law, for in order to “know the law and truly experience it,” and to “constrain it to make itself visible, to clearly exercise its powers,” one must “force it into a corner,” and “resolutely incessantly push further toward the outside where it is always further in retreat” (p. 529). For its invisibility to be seen, it must be “turned into the inversion of chastisement, which is after all merely the law transgressed, irritated, outside itself” (p. 529). But if chastisement could be provoked at the whim of those who break it, the law would be at their disposal. They would be in a position to manipulate it. They would be “masters of its shadow and of its light” (p. 529). This is why in the attempt to overcome the forbidden, transgression inevitably ends up being attracted by the ‘essential retreat’ of the law” (p. 529). Thus, Foucault describes ultimately as “the shadow toward which every gesture necessarily advances to the extent that it is the shadow of the gesture that advances” (p. 529). The figures of negligence and attraction, and their reflection in this literary conception of the law, form the experience of the muteness that precedes all speech, the constant stream of language that no one in particular speaks, in which the “subject is merely the trace of a grammatical fold” (p. 537). This form of language, Foucault writes, “resolves itself in no silence: every interruption forms only a white spot on this seamless blanket,” in which it “opens a neutral space in which no existence can take root” (p. 537). Thus, “the being of language is the visible erasing of the one who is speaking” (p. 537). Already in and limited by this anonymous language, the practice of critical contestation aims to be relieved of these limitations by describing them as determinate forms. It does so in the hope that the absence leaves a space for the descriptions themselves, creations of thought, to furl the enigma of its existence, open perpetually to rebirth in subsequent description of the content of forms, as critical capacities defined within a practice of description, use and contestation of misuse in relation to a determinate problem. This, in any case, provides a standpoint from which to understand Georges Canguilhem’s 1959 striking, enigmatic turn of phrase: “The *a priori* suits the anonymous.”²⁹

Conclusion

Contestation and Creating Beings of Thought

There are several ways to understand Foucault's decision to privilege literary discourse as the initial site of the impending general historical transformation of thought. In terms of the specificity of his practice of criticism, the decision is motivated by the effort to use supple, adaptable analytic grids—rather than fixed methods based on previously worked-out theories—in order to remain responsive to the needs of the historical reality it forms. With the emergence of every new form in Foucault's historical analysis, one expects to find a correlate, a new capacity of the practice of criticism to be learned. In Foucault's conception of the contemporary historical transformation, the practice of criticism learns the capacity required by attending to the specificity of the present problems at hand from literary, and not scientific discourse: in order to practice criticism today, one learns to do something in thought for which the distinctive capacity of the literary—the capacity to create beings of thought through the description of the forms that regulate it—is exemplary.

In terms of the history of thought, it is also possible to understand Foucault's decision to privilege the literary in contemporary thought against the background of Nietzsche's second order analysis. There the isolation of a moment of violence in the effect of the exercise of the capacities of thought generates the critical need for violent shock and its correlate, the capacity to be aroused from sleep. In this order of consideration, attention to the relation between Foucault's *practice* of criticism and the present historical *reality* to which it aims to remain responsive, helps dissolve the appearance of incongruity of the previous chapter's attempt to specify what is most distinctively contemporary in Foucault's practice of criticism by appealing to a series of Kantian capacities.

Contestation and the creation of beings of thought, the critical capacities proper to the form of literature, are fundamentally Kantian. And yet, they remain nugatory in Kant's own practice of criticism: for lack of a

historical problem to stimulate and orient their exercise, and correlatively, for lack of historical material for that exercise to determine as historical reality. On Foucault's diagnosis, pursuing Nietzsche's contamination of the level of formal description of perceptual and cognitive thought, the literary practice in question repeals the abstraction of the factor of *need* from consideration. The capacities of thought are described at a greater level of determinacy, as the elements of a practice of criticism whose aim is described in terms of cultivating receptiveness to the absolute by exercising the capacity to create beings of thought, rather than in terms of accounting for cognition of empirical reality. For Foucault, for Nietzsche, and for Kantian criticism as we can practice it, the description of forms of experience, including its epistemological forms, is a matter of *creating* and not of *knowing*. In making the rules of our thought explicit, criticism as ontology of the present creates beings in thought that we use to see real things as what they really are.

The idea of this creative capacity provides a way to think through the otherwise puzzling theme of the subject in Foucault. His claims in this register do not concern a biological or social being on point of going out of existence, but rather the form of philosophical discourse, described in terms of the critical capacities that regulate its practice. If something called 'the subject' or 'subjectivity' is destined to disappear in Foucault's analysis, what will disappear is its form, the validity of the configuration of concepts that constitutes the category of subjectivity, defined within a practice of criticism, rather than the empirical reality that it forms into the "I" or the "we" who empirically take up the philosophical voice, and that can be formed from the standpoint of indefinitely many practices of criticism. Consider Foucault's generalization that "the crumbling of philosophical subjectivity," or "the fracture of the philosophical subject," is "one of the fundamental structures of contemporary thought" (*DE.I*, 242–3). The specificity of the proposal lies in the qualification *philosophical* subjectivity, which limits the claims to the practice of philosophy: the subject is not considered in relation to itself, to other subjects, or to the world, but only in relation to the experience of thinking. Foucault's claim about function of the subject is a claim about the *philosopher* as "the sovereign and primary form of philosophical language" (*DE.I*, 242). His diagnosis is that the transformation of this language marks "the end of the philosopher" as a function, but not necessarily "the end of philosophy" as an activity (*PT*, 242). In the contemporary practice of criticism, the function of the philosopher as discursive subject is integrated into the exercise of a different capacity, where it is dispersed "inside a language that dispossesses it, but multiplies it in the space of its absence" (*DE.I*, 242). On this analysis, the space of the function of the subject is, or

will be, regulated by the capacity to exercise descriptive contestation of limits from multiple, mobile standpoints.

Here Foucault is struggling to formulate something that one must experience in order to understand an aspect of post-Hegelian philosophical discourse that has escaped systematic treatment, as a capacity indispensable to the practice of criticism. In Foucault's schema, in contemporary criticism, the place of the philosopher as subject of the discourse becomes a void in which fragments of subjectivity proliferate. The sources of this critical capacity are defined in terms of a process of cultivation: it is shocked into the awareness that "we are not all that there is," learns that it "does not inhabit the totality of its language like a secret and all-speaking god," discovers that there is "a language that speaks and of which it is not the master," and that "at the very moment of speaking it is not always lodged inside language in the same way" (*DE.I*, 242). Foucault's practice of criticism conceives of its task as the delimitation of the philosopher's language and form of subjectivity through the creation of beings of thought in the description of its rules. Thus this practice requires a capacity that is both descriptive and creative, one regulated by new forms of discourse, and that are dysfunctional in relation to the function of the subject as philosopher. In this respect, Foucault's vision of the contemporary practice of Kantian criticism draws from a form of language and of receptivity from literary discourses such as Bataille's, that Foucault describes as "a multiplicity of speaking subjects that connect, undo, combine and exclude themselves," in a "perpetual passage from one level of speech to another," by a "systematic detachment (*décrochage*) from the I that has just spoken, already ready to deploy it and to settle itself inside it" (*DE.I*, 243). For Foucault, the capacity is exercised as what would be another dysfunction in relation to the subject as philosopher, namely, from a standpoint that suspends the univocal omnipresence of the philosopher. It does so not in order to situate itself outside its own language—as Foucault puts it, "by an accident from the outside or by an imaginary exercise"—but to dive deep into it, to "the core of its possibilities," where it must carry itself as systematically multiple and self-absent, in order to exercise its capacity to describe the limits that form those possibilities (*DE.I*, 244). The categorization of the function of the contemporary critic as "the insane philosopher" may seem flip, but there is a serious idea here, and in fact Foucault is at this point at his most Hegelian: the capacity to transgress is defined in view of the awareness that the act of drawing a limit cannot be exercised from within the space it is delimiting (*DE.I*, 244). The critical problem can simply be repeated after Hegel's criticism, however, and Foucault explored the insight that this repetition is not dialectically regulated by a more comprehensive standpoint

that repeats the function of the philosopher, but is exercised as a “dedialecticized” language, “a non-dialectical language of limits” (*DE.I*, 243–4). This reintroduction of the idea of the dialectical provides the occasion to explore a question left suspended in the previous discussion, namely, the historical and conceptual question of what is at stake in Foucault’s emphasis on resistance to the dialectical. The level of implications considered the context of Nietzsche’s introduction of the relation of violence into the description of the sources of cognition surfaces in this connection.

Foucault’s subsequent second order analysis of the dialectical in the lecture course « *Il faut défendre la société* » (1976) develops this side of the problem. Here, the dialectical is analyzed as a strategic relation of violence through pacification. It finds both its schema and its source in the historical, economic, and political practice of European colonialism—dialectic as the dialectical (although Foucault would certainly prefer ‘genealogical’ here) form of colonization, and the dialectical capacity as colonialism in thought. This effect in thought cannot be resisted by interrogating the function of the subject, or, as some have taken Foucault to suggest, by acts of voluntary interpretive violence that aim to provoke local conceptual-insurrections, but through a regulated practice of accepting to, as it were, *get litigious*, and exercising capacities to make explicit the rules of practices in which their excessive, mistaken, irregular application is a problem, in order to prove the irregularity and to explore the problem. Throughout the 1976 lecture course, while Foucault insists on the decisiveness of a form of historical and political discourse that understands power essentially in terms of a scheme of war, he in the same breath gives indications of its limitations. On his analysis, the power-as-war schema was exercised with astonishing polyvalence from the end of the civil and religious wars of the 16th century, emerging as a “double contestation” of royal power by the aristocrats and the people, functioning entirely outside the operative juridical and philosophical traditions (“structurally held to the side,” Foucault writes of it), inventing different concepts, occupying different spaces, driven by different orders of motivation (*DS*, 50). This discourse, one that juxtaposes mythical pathos with the knowledge of fallen aristocrats and the ardor of popular demand, is the source of Foucault’s grid of analysis for understanding relations of power in terms of strategic and antipathetic capacities. In the conceptual dimension of thought, this has the effect of codifying a real practice into a grid for the formation of practices in further analysis.

Foucault is acutely aware that this formalizing appeal to the historical practices of contestation runs a risk that is perpetual for a discourse aiming to maintain the privilege of the part over the whole: the danger that Hegel can

be felt lurking in the background, ready to exercise the pacifying violence of the dialectical capacities, waiting to perform the requisite philosophical validation and re-conversion of the practice. In a lengthy aside to underscore the element of pacification that is indispensable to the dialectical capacity, Foucault reasons that since what we understand by dialectic is “the discourse of the universal and historical movement of contradiction and war,” the exercise of the capacity must involve “the codification of struggle, war, and battles in a logic, or a so-called logic, of contradiction” (*DS*, 50). Instead of a genuine validation of the historical practices of political contestation and the discourse of power as war, Foucault realizes with Nietzsche that the capacity to think dialectically is just another way to formalize the capacity to incorporate the matter it is given into a formal unity, utterly denaturing its reality, and leaving the form of discourse, empty, inoperative. Foucault occupies this space of analysis when he declares that Hegelian dialectic and all dialectical thought since Hegel is “the colonization and authoritarian pacification, by philosophy and the law, of a historico-political discourse that has at once been a report, a proclamation, and a practice of social war” (*DS*, 50). It functions as “the pacification, by philosophical order and perhaps by political order, of this bitter and partisan discourse of fundamental war” (*DS*, 50). Foucault’s conception of contestation as a critical capacity outlines a semantic field in which the dialectical capacity is attributed with a function of conceptual colonization, whereby it pacifies practices by insularly codifying them into a univocal and homogeneous form of thought. From the standpoint of Foucault’s analysis of power relations, this incorporation into a dialectic modality renders the form described inadequate to the warring relations of power that serve as the material on which it functions as analytic grid.

In the face of an effect of pacification Foucault suggests that through contestation one aims to produce an effect of violence in discourse. There is, however, a significant distinction to be drawn here, one that is marked in Foucault’s “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire” (1971):

If to interpret is to slowly illuminate a meaning hidden in the origin, then only metaphysics could interpret the becoming of humanity. But if to interpret is to seize, by violence or subreption, of a system of rules that in itself has no essential meaning, and to impose a direction on it, to fold it to a new will, to enter it into another game and to submit it to secondary rules, then the becoming of humanity is a series of interpretations. And genealogy must be its history: the history of morals, of ideals, of metaphysical concepts . . . as emergences of different interpretations.

Foucault's terminology here makes the distinction plain: there is the order of the practice of interpretation (whether one understands that practice in terms of the illumination of a hidden origin, or of the violence of deliberately misusing rules for exogenous purposes), on the one hand, and there is a second order of analysis that describes the rules of that practice, on the other. For Foucault, this second order analysis (calling it 'genealogy' at this level of abstraction seems needlessly restrictive) is a personal and an historical one; for Nietzsche, it takes many forms, the most effective, perhaps, is a kind of ethical standpoint, and in Kant, it surfaces only fragmentarily in his popular discourse and obscurely in his political writings. Foucault's various attempts to outline grids of analysis that mesh formal precision with empirical determinacy function as strategies to resist making his second order historical analysis into an interpretative form, when interpretation is understood as a relation of violence between the finality and the exercise of a rule, of a regulating form. There is no indication that Foucault attempted to respond to the passive violence of the dialectical by practicing analysis violently, then, quite the contrary. The valorization of violence is diagnostic, methodological, attributed to discourses in terms of what they do, and the second order discourse is invested in acquiring distance from this practice, from what it is describing, in order to perceive it as limited, and thus as doing something determinate, something that may attach to a first order problem. And so, while the emphasis on violence as an epistemological factor in Nietzsche and Foucault is concerning, this anxiety, properly framed, attaches to real historical practices, and only indirectly to the grids themselves that make them perceptible to us—the effect is a mark of the success, rather than of the dubiety of Foucault's Nietzschean second order analysis. The question of Foucault's mode of resistance to the violence of the dialectical remains, however. It is a problem he never settled on, but his hesitation is based on the recognition that war schema displays its limitations in the face of the problem of how to not merely repeat the form of the object of analysis at a second order, with analogous implications.

Without attempting to solve the problem, another face of it opens in connection with consideration of the capacity to contest that regulates the creative critical description of forms. In this context, describing practice of criticism in terms of the capacity to litigate provides a way to specify the limitations of the local insurrection model: rather than appealing to the figure of terror to specify the character of the conceptual violence involved, Foucault turns to the mode of contestation in its function of internal litigating. In relation to the abuse of a capacity and the correlative irregular application of a rule, contestation, through the description of the rule and the capacity

as functions of the unity of a practice, creates an idea, an existing being in thought. This is a practice of criticism that transgresses only in relation to the function of the philosopher as sovereign, and does so not by breaking its laws, or going beyond its limits, but by occupying the space of their constitution. As the mobile site for the description of the real possibilities of determinate practices, this space serves as a stage for the dramatization of the exercise of capacities in relations of power, in a creative discourse in which the content is exhausted by the description of the content of its own form.

A decade subsequent to his rich, if often only suggestive analyses of literature around the attitude of contestation, Foucault provides a historical frame of reference in which to situate the critical capacity to contest. In "Truth and Juridical Forms" (1974), he analyzes contestation as a juridical form: to *contest* is to *litigate*. As a final thought, it is difficult to resist associating this form of contestation as a juridico-epistemological method to attain the truth with the capacity of contestation that constitutes the particularly contemporary dimension of the practice of criticism. In Foucault's sketch of the history of the juridical forms of the search for the truth—the *épreuve* is replaced by the enquiry, which gives way to the examination—contestation is the way to pursue truth on the pre-Oedipal, Homeric model of the *épreuve*. In this form, juridical truth is established by being produced or created in the legal game of challenging (*jeu d'épreuve*), rather than by being recovered by appeal to a witness. If one is challenged by a litigious act of contestation, one must either accept the risk and take the challenge, or renounce to the claim to the truth. If the challenge is accepted, the responsibility of establishing the truth, of discovering the ultimate truth, belonged to the gods. By pushing the one bearing false witness, Zeus manifests the truth with his wrath. From this standpoint, criticism contests an aberrant practice by bringing its rules into existence explicitly, as beings of thought. This generates a juxtaposition between the way the practice seems when it is practiced, and the way it seems when it is practiced *as* a determinately regulated practice, *i.e.*, between the problematic reality of the practice, and the ideal reality of its rules that criticism creates as forms of thought. For Foucault's practice, transposing a dimension of the Homeric model of the search for truth as a legal *épreuve*, this criticism is exercised in the experience of accepting the challenge of the voice of pathological and bellicose conceptual litigiousness.

Notes

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Le pur et l'impur* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1960), p. 5–6.
2. Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la Clinique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. xi-xii.
3. Léon Brunschvicg, “L’idée critique et le système kantien” (1924), *Écrits philosophiques I. L’humanisme de l’occident. Descartes—Spinoza—Kant* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951), p. 206.
4. Brunschvicg, “L’idée critique et le système kantien” (1924), p. 224. Brunschvicg’s distinction is surely in the background of Deleuze’s strategic presentation of Kant’s thought as a *doctrine* of the faculties; more recently, see also Vuillemin and Bouveresse.
5. Exceptions include Cutrofello, Fimiani, and Han.
6. Foucault, “Une histoire restée muette” (1967), *DE.I* (n°40), 546.
7. Roger Caillois, “L’énigme et l’image,” *L’art poétique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), p. 154.
8. Details from Foucault’s intellectual biography are based on “Chronologie,” *DE.I*, 13–64.
9. The 1953–4 semester stands out in this regard, during which he teaches both a course on transcendental reflection and anthropology, and Kant’s *Anthropologie* in a seminar at the École normale supérieure. See Kant, *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique*, trans. and notes by M. Foucault (Paris: Vrin, 1964).
10. Foucault, “Une histoire restée muette” (1967), *DE.I* (n°40), 546–7.
11. George Steiner, “The Mandarin of the Hour: Michel Foucault,” *The New York Times Book Review*, 8, Feb. 28 1971.
12. Foucault, “Les monstruosités de la critique” (1971), *DE.II* (n°97), 221–2.
13. In §82 of *KU*, Kant uses the term *archaeology of nature*, by contrast to the *archaeology of art*, to mark what is literally meant by the descriptions of natural history (*Naturbeschreibung*), namely “a representation of the ancient

condition of the earth—about which even though there is no hope for certainty, there is reasonable ground for making conjectures” (5: 428). In the *Anthropology*, Kant associates the term with the Swedish naturalist and taxonomist Carl von Linné, and describes “Linné’s hypothesis about the archaeology of nature” (7: 323n). Foucault was thoroughly acquainted with Kant’s *Anthropology*, but he was also a student of Linné’s *Systema Natura* (see his account of Linné’s participation in the Classical form of experience in the history of the human sciences: *MC*, 144–158) from which Foucault may ultimately be recuperating the term.

14. Foucault, “Les problèmes de la culture. Un débat Foucault-Preli” (1972), *DE.III* (n°109), 371–3.
15. See Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004).
16. Foucault, “Préface à l’« Histoire de la sexualité »” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°340), 579.
17. Foucault, “Entretien avec Madeleine Chapsal” (1966), *DE.I* (n°37), 514.
18. Foucault, “Entretien avec Madeleine Chapsal” (1966), *DE.I* (n°37), 514.
19. Foucault, “Titres et travaux” (1969), *DE.I* (n°71), 842.
20. Foucault, “Titres et travaux” (1969), *DE.I* (n°71), 843.
21. Foucault, “Entretien avec Madeleine Chapsal,” (1966), *DE.I* (n°34), 515.
22. Foucault, “Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*,” (1966), *DE.I* (n°34), 504.
23. Foucault, “Le style de l’histoire,” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°348), 654.
24. In reference to his work with Farge, Foucault explains: “What interests us is the history of thought. We do not believe that there is, on the one hand, the analysis of behaviors, and on the other, the history of ideas; for us, thought is everywhere.” Foucault, “L’âge d’or de la lettre de cachet” (1982), *DE.IV* (n°322), 351.
25. Foucault, “Est-il donc important de penser ?” (1981), *DE.IV* (n°296), 180.
26. Foucault, “Préface à l’*Histoire de la sexualité*” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°340), 579–580.
27. Foucault, “Préface à l’*Histoire de la sexualité*” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°340), 580.
28. Foucault, “Titres et travaux” (1969), *DE.I* (n°71), 842–3.
29. Foucault, “Interview de Michel Foucault” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°353), 693.
30. In an 1982 interview, Foucault described his various objects of research in terms of different techniques or “matrixes of practical reason.” There he specifies that his overarching objective has been “to outline a history of the different ways that men in our culture develop knowledge of themselves,” in the context of an outlook for which what is essential is not “to take this knowledge at face value, but to analyze these alleged sciences as so many ‘truth games’ that are tied to specific techniques that men use in order to understand who they are”; he enumerates four types of techniques: i) techniques of production; ii) techniques of systems of signs; iii) techniques of power; iv) techniques of the self, which “allow individuals to carry out,

alone or with others, a certain number of operations on their bodies and their souls, their thoughts, their behaviors, their modes of being; to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault, “Les techniques de soi” (1982), *DE.IV* (n°363), 784, 785).

31. The aim of Foucault’s analyses is treated comprehensively in Chapter Three. It is helpful in this context to introduce two central aspects: their conceptual motivations and the rhetorical instruments at their disposal for the deployment of the strategies to carry them out. The first aspect fixes the objectives of the analysis. At a certain level of abstraction, these remain remarkably constant throughout the fluctuations in Foucault’s thinking. They are arranged around the ultimate goal of acquiring the liberation that results from coming to grips with the finitude and the contingency of experience. This two-stepped process—becoming aware that (i) our experience is formed by determinate possibilities, and (ii) that these possibilities have not always been the same—unfolds an interstice between the experience and the one whose experience it is. At its broadest point of articulation, Foucault’s theoretical motivation is to generate this distance. The second aspect of the critical attitude concerns its appeal to the rhetorical devices. Here Foucault’s grid provides a discursive mechanism for the deployment of the figure of curiosity. The form of the capacity is that of a practice that compels one to turn back on oneself in the effort to establish distance between oneself and one’s environment objects, including oneself, by transforming one’s perception in such a way that familiar things appear to us as though for the first time, by providing the occasion for us to free ourselves from the familiar and the ordinary in order to open a space for the strange and the unusual. The figure of curiosity and the device of estrangement function together in orienting Foucault’s practice. This type of historical investigation is specific in its aim to manifest the contingency of one’s own way of thinking by making experience enigmatic, thereby provoking one’s own thought to unlock itself from itself in order to see itself—its own circumstances, its own form of experience—in a new way, from a new standpoint. By responding to being confronted with the mysteriousness of one’s ordinary experience, of one’s actuality (the task of the strategic side of the critical attitude is to cast this confrontation), with a historical ‘exercise’ of different forms of experience, the contingency of our own form can be loosened.
32. It would be a considerably more complicated undertaking to conduct a comprehensive comparative exercise that would include consideration of Foucault’s political or ethical fields in relation to Kant’s practical philosophy and aesthetics, because neither corresponds clearly as the respective fields of knowledge do.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. See Léon Brunschvicg, "L'idée critique et le système kantien" (1924), p. 206, and the discussion above.
2. Jean-Luc Marion has made a case for this affiliation, in the spirit of restoring what is rightfully a Cartesian heritage from the hands of what is received as Kantian. See "Constantes de la raison critique. Descartes et Kant," in *Questions cartésiennes II. Sur l'ego et sur Dieu* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), pp. 283–316.
3. J.G. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*.(1894–5) *J.G. Fichte-Gesamtausgabe der bayerischen Akademie Wissenschaften I* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1962), p. 27 [J.G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, trans. by P. Heath & J. Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970)]. Translation modified in text; references to the Ak. edition.
4. Fichte, *Grundlage*, 448 (my emp.). One who, Fichte explains, "performs this act of freedom will come to be aware of it, and lay out, as it were, a new field in his consciousness: for one who does not perform it, that which the act conditions does not exist at all." (*Grundlage*, 448) To illustrate the point, Fichte recalls the Kantian model that, as will be shown below, is crucial for an understanding of the role of abstraction in *KrV*: "The chemist synthesizes a body, say of certain metal, from its elements. The ordinary man sees the metal familiar to him; the chemist, the union of these specific elements. Do they then see different things? I should think not! They see the same thing, though in different ways. What the chemist sees is the *a priori*, for he sees the individual elements: what the common man sees is the *a posteriori*, for he sees the whole.—But there is this difference here: the chemist must first analyze the whole before he can compound it, since he is dealing with an object whose rule of composition he cannot know prior to the analysis; but the philosopher can synthesize without prior analysis, because he already knows the rule that governs his object, reason." (*Grundlage*, 448) The contrast between the philosopher and the ordinary man was a thoroughly pervasive theme in German idealism and romanticism and was in various registers incorporated into Hegel's conception of phenomenology, e.g., as the poles of the trajectory of spirit (that is, from the implicit and potential to the explicit and realized, or from natural consciousness to absolute spirit). A rudimentary form of the distinction was at work in Kant's critical framework as the difference between perception and cognition.
5. *Grundlage*, 244. Fichte also argues that abstraction is the source of self-consciousness. He reasons in this fashion: Through this act of abstraction, "everything objective is eliminated," and one is left with "what *determines itself*, and is *determined by itself*, the self or the subject" (*Grundlage*, 244). Since for Fichte, subject and object are strictly co-determining, nothing is

this situation of mere self-determination can be determined beyond the self, which is “determined as that which remains over, after all objects have been eliminated by the absolute power of abstraction; and the not-self as that from which abstraction can be made from this same abstractive power: and thus we now have a firm point of distinction between object and subject” (*Grundlage*, 244). Consequently, this capacity to abstract is “the manifest source of all self-consciousness” (*Grundlage*, 244).

6. Nietzsche described the post-Kantian search for capacities the “honeymoon of German philosophy,” in which “all the young theologians of the Tübingen seminary ran off into the bushes—they were all looking for ‘capacities’” (*JGB*, §11/24).
7. Consider, *e.g.*, the methodological articulation of analytic and dialectic, the distinction of two registers of empirical formality, of two logics, of two standpoints from which to consider objects, etc.
8. Kant identifies and dissects abstraction as a capacity in §3 of the *Anthropology*, where it is counterposed with perception as the two acts of thought through which one can become conscious of one’s sense impressions (see 7: 131). Although abstraction is not presented as a capacity explicitly outside the *Anthropology*, the following aims to show that the mechanism of the uses of the concept in Kant’s criticism generally is most perspicuously understood in these terms.
9. In this passage, and throughout this study, “reason” is used in the broad Kantian sense of the term, referring to the higher capacity of cognition in general that subsumes all the other cognitive capacities, *i.e.*, to the capacity of *a priori* cognition (by contrast with the narrow Kantian term, which brings the matter organized by the understanding to the highest unity of thought).
10. In the Introduction to the second edition of *KrV*, Kant explains that from a critical standpoint, metaphysics “does not deal with objects of reason . . . but merely with itself, with problems that spring entirely from its own womb, and that are not set before it by the nature of things that are distinct from it but through its own nature; so that, once it has become completely familiar with its own capacity in regard to the objects that may come before it in experience, then it must become easy to determine, completely and securely, the domain and the bounds of its attempted use beyond all bounds of experience” (B23).
11. It will become apparent in what follows that the further characterization “in thought” will serve to ward off a possible misunderstanding of the context and the goal of this capacity of thought in the context of Kant’s critical philosophy.
12. The instability of Kant’s distinction between *a priori* and pure cognition (an inconsistently observed distinction between cognitions “that occur independently of this or that experience,” as opposed to those that, as Kant

- pleonastically puts it, “occur *absolutely* independently of all experience,” B1-B3) further suggests the conceptual significance of the imagery of purification.
13. This generality of the operative idea of purity within Kant’s framework is concealed by his tendency in *KrV* to use ‘pure’ and ‘*a priori*’ as interchangeable adjectives.
 14. This association of purity with simplicity is by no means exclusive, and this way of presenting the stakes risks being reductive. There is, for example, a conceptually rich historical-cultural and anthropological line of analysis in relation to which the significance of Kant’s emphasis on purity that should be considered.
 15. Kant illustrates the point by working out the following example in the second *Critique*: “When an analyst adds alkali to a solution of calcareous earth in hydrochloric acid, the acid at once releases the lime and unites with the alkali, and the lime is precipitated. In just the same way, if a man who is otherwise honest (or who just this once puts himself on the place of an honest man) is confronted with the moral law in which he cognizes the worthlessness of a liar, his practical reason (in its judgment of what he ought to do) at once abandons the advantage, unites with what maintains in him respect for his own person (truthfulness), and the advantage, after it has been separated and washed from every particle of reason (which is altogether on the side of duty), is weighed by everyone, so that it can enter into comparison with reason in other cases, not only where it could be opposed to the moral law, which reason never abandons but unites with most intimately.” (5: 93)
 16. See Mai Lequan, *La chimie selon Kant* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 108. It is worth noting that during the time between the *Metaphysical Foundations* and *Opus Postumum*, there were considerable developments in the experimental sciences, including chemistry. Michael Friedman notes: “Kant is increasingly aware of developments in the theory of heat and chemistry through which these disciplines are in fact becoming genuine sciences (and no longer mere empirical ‘aggregates’) after all.” Michael Friedman, *Kant and the Exact Science* (Cambridge & London: Harvard UP, 1992), p. 265.
 17. Alternative, that is, to *KrV*’s account that the understanding works on sensations “through the subsumption of the sensory (pure or empirical) intuitions under the categories which, as concepts of things in general, must be wholly grounded *a priori* in the pure understanding” (8: 215).
 18. Cited by Kant from Eberhard, *Philosophisches Magazin* at 8:215.
 19. Of course, this much might be thought to be independently clear from Kant’s justification for the methodological need for a transcendental deduction of the categories in *KrV*. Cf., *e.g.*, A91/B124: “If one were to think of escaping from the toils of these investigations by saying that experience constantly offers examples of a regularity of appearances that give sufficient

occasion for abstracting the concept of cause from them, and thereby at the same time thought to confirm the objective validity of such a concept, then one has not noticed that the concept of cause cannot arise in this way at all, but must either be grounded in the understanding completely *a priori* or else be entirely surrendered as a mere fantasy of the brain.”

20. See Peter Geach, *Mental Acts* (London & New York: Routledge, 1960), chapters 6–9. This is his target under the label “abstractionism.”
21. It also seems likely, however, that a practice of abstraction that had an important role in the Academy, Neo-Platonism and early Christian theology as a form of what is usually referred to as negative theology or apophatic discourse is also in the background here. Regardless of the precise object of Kant’s allusion to “Scholastic precision,” however, this broader part of the history of abstraction may shed light on the distinction with which Kant marks out the use of abstraction that will have a role in the practice of criticism and the one that will not, and its salient features will be noted below.
22. Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. by R.D. Hicks, 429a10–2 (my emp.).
23. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on De Anima*, in *Aristotle’s De Anima*, trans. by K. Foster and S. Humphries (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1951), pp. 402–410; 413–421.
24. As suggested above, however, there is a tradition broader than the immediate Aristotelian context to which Kant may also be alluding, namely, the current of thought known as ‘negative theology.’ The inappropriateness of this label for the various discourses that enact spiritual procedures that aim for transcendence through negative assertion is plain: the term ‘theology,’ discourse on God, has no point of application in relation to a method of thought that strives to conceive God through the attribution of propositions that deny all conceivable predicates, presumably not excluding divinity. Either ‘apophatic discourse’ or ‘mystical thought’ are less problematic alternatives. But in a masterful survey of these currents of thought, Pierre Hadot argues that, especially in its initial and decisive stage, the appropriate name for this style of thought is *aphaeresis*, or the intellectual capacity to abstract (Pierre Hadot, “Apothatisme et théologie négative,” *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), p. 240). The basis of the device is the Aristotelian idea: “in the Academy as well as in Aristotle, *noesis* consists of the intuition of a form or an essence, and this grasp of the form implies a severing of what is not essential: being able to effect this separation is what is proper to thought”; according to Hadot, “this method of separation and of severing is precisely abstraction” (p. 240). Philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition primarily used the procedure in the definition of mathematical ideas, such as defining surface by abstracting depth from it, the surface from the line and the line from the point. This method of abstraction, which in mathematics allows for the definition of mathematical quantity and the determination of a hierarchical relation among mathematical entities, can in

a logical register be thought of as a negation, as the severing of what is added in the attribution of a predicate to be subject. When incorporated into a discourse on the divine, the process of abstraction retained this methodological structure. By contrast to the univocally negative scope of the later apophatic thinking as conducted by Damascius and the later Neoplatonists, Hadot describes this aphaeretic method as a “genuine mode of cognition,” a “rigorous method of definition and intuition that allows to go from sensible cognition to intellectual cognition”: “One severs and one denies a ‘plus’ that has been added to a simple element. Thus, in this analysis one moves from the complex to the simple and from visible reality—the physical body—to the invisible and purely thought realities that ground its reality. [. . .] The ascension thus has a negative aspect: the subtraction of these additions, and a positive aspect: the intuition of simple realities. This method allows one to rise from an inferior ontological plain to the superior ontological plains through a progressive hierarchy.” (p. 241) Thus in the first centuries of our era, in both pagan and Christian thought, what had been primarily a mathematical method was in various ways integrated into systematic theologies as one of the paths of access to the divine. These thinkers—Clement of Alexandria, Albinus, Maxim of Tyr, etc.—used abstraction to attain God in the same way that it had been used to attain the surface by abstracting from depth, or the line by abstracting from width, or the point by abstracting from extension. In both cases, the result is not “abstractions”: the negations, as negations of negations or the removing of what has been subtracted, ultimately have the form of affirmations, which can “lead to the intellectual intuition of a concrete fullness” to which nothing can be added (p. 243). All further additions or determinations take the form of negations that amount to degradations. In this tradition, there is thus paradoxically nothing irrational about the method of abstraction. It is a way of letting thought arise from sensible cognition to the intellectual knowledge of simple principles, and to think its object in this dimension. Hadot suggests that if knowledge is the isolation of the essence and the form of things, abstraction can be thought of as “the exercise of thought *par excellence*” (p. 244).

25. See the logic lectures at 16: 900, where Kant discusses relative value of abstract and concrete use of concepts in relation to the art of popularity.
26. The transposition of this insight into Kant’s idealist frame of reference adds a dimension of complexity, without distorting its basic structure. The reality that in a Kantian context is left unaffected by the act of abstraction is itself regulated by the rational capacities of the thinking subject and the concepts employed in the ordering of experience. This presents a difficulty in distinguishing the objects of possible abstraction within a Kantian frame of reference (*i.e.*, of determining what can be abstracted in thought without thereby denaturing the real whole, an experience, of which it is a part, without

- implying an alteration) that is less tractable than in the Aristotelian context. This difficulty is addressed below.
27. The *Jäsche Logic* provides supplementary material: “There is a distinction between *not knowing* something and *ignoring* something, i.e., *taking no notice of it*. It is good to ignore much that is not good for us to know. *Abstracting* is distinct from both of these. One abstracts from a cognition when one ignores its application, whereby one gets it *in abstracto* and can better consider it in the universal as a principle. Such abstraction from what does not belong to our purpose in the cognition of a thing is useful and praiseworthy.” (9: 45)
 28. In other words, the ones that in the process of transcendental reasoning are postulated as the capacities that form of objective experience, as opposed to the ones that carry out theoretical reflection, e.g., the postulation mentioned.
 29. Abstracting, in a given experience, space and time from sensible form, for example.
 30. For example, abstracting, in a given experience, sensible form from intellectual form.
 31. At the level of the pragmatics of reading Kant, a generalized application of the distinction that regulates the capacity to abstract (between first and second order thinking) to the descriptions of elements of experience in the course of analysis may be an effective way to isolate the stakes of a piece of analysis and to fix the appropriate frame of reference for evaluating it, e.g., by coupling acts of abstraction with the occupation of specific theoretical points of reference: critical standpoints that determine theoretical practices with their own rules and fields of use.
 32. The question of Kant’s relation to skepticism is surprisingly complex, and it is not under consideration here directly. The concept of skepticism is in question in the present exposition only to the extent that Kant develops a constitutive aspect of criticism in response to his conception of Hume’s skepticism by introducing a specifically *critical* conception of skepticism. This leaves Kant’s relation to skepticism as a general question almost entirely untouched. Any responsive treatment of the issue would have to include discussion of the relation of the Humean and critical concepts of skepticism to other entirely different positions. Henceforth references to Hume’s skepticism will be expressly so labeled, and skepticism *tout court* will be used to refer to the critical use of the skeptical method as a form of the practice of criticism in Kant and in Foucault. This measure is expedient in light the inconsistency of the distinction between skepticism and the skeptical method in Kant’s texts.
 33. Notwithstanding the fact that, as Kant notes, Hume retains the name for his own skeptical philosophy (see 4: 258n).

34. Note that this is not to say that Kant assimilated Humean skepticism about the possibility of metaphysics to the sort of skepticism expressed in the notion of an antinomy of pure reason, which has affinities with Ancient Pyrrhonian skepticism, in so far as it compels the suspension of judgment by setting up opposing arguments to generate undecidability.
35. From a critical standpoint, the antinomy is diagnosed as being generated by the confusion between objects of experience and things considered in themselves: "If in using principles of the understanding we apply our reason not merely to objects of experience, for the use of principles of understanding, but instead venture also to extend these principles beyond the boundaries of experience, then there arise sophistical theorems, which may neither hope for confirmation in experience nor fear refutation by it; and each of them is not only without contradiction in itself but even meets with conditions of its necessity in the nature of reason itself, only unfortunately the opposite has on its side equally valid and necessary grounds for its assertion." (A421/B449)
36. The method of argumentation of the antinomies proceeds by establishing the thesis by assuming the antithesis in the body of the proof, then showing that it is false; then it in turn assumes the thesis in the body of the proof of the antithesis, and shows that it is false as well. Both thesis and antithesis, in this manner, are established by way of indirect proof. Thus, in the *KU*, Kant explains: "The resolution of an antinomy amounts merely to the possibility that two apparently conflicting propositions do not in fact contradict each other, but can be compatible with each other, even though the explanation of the possibility of their concept exceeds our faculty of cognition. That this semblance is also natural and unavoidable for human reason, and thus why it exists and remains, although after the resolution of the apparent conflict it no longer deceives, can also be made comprehensible on this basis." (*KU*, 216) There is direct precedent for this way of reasoning in the Clarke-Leibniz Correspondence; see Leibniz's 4th letter, §§16–7; 5th letter, §65. G.W. Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, *Correspondence* (Hackett: Indianapolis, 2000).
37. In his response to Eberhard, Kant helpfully retraces the logic of the relation between dogmatism and skepticism, and the difference between the latter and criticism's use of the skeptical method, in terms of the *success* or *failure* of metaphysics (see 8: 226 and 226fn).
38. In the *Anthropology*, Kant isolates contrast (*Abstechung*) as one of the causes of increased sensory perception: "Contrast is the juxtaposition, commanding our attention, of mutually opposite sense ideas under one and the same concept." (7: 162)
39. For example, the first volume of De Vleeschauer's epic *La déduction transcendente dans l'oeuvre de Kant* (Paris: Édouard Champion, 1934).
40. This approach can be understood as an exercise of Foucault's 'ontology of actuality' that finds its source in Kant's popular essays such as "What is

Enlightenment?” and “What is Revolution?.” This is discussed below in chapter 3.

41. Henri Allison, “Introduction to *On the Progress of Metaphysics in Germany*,” in Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy After 1881*, p. 341.
42. The precise character of indifferentism in Kant, and the question of who it alludes to remains opaque. In the *Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason*, Kant refers to “indifferentists” as partisans of neutrality in morals (6:22). Vaihinger maintains the existence of a sect of “Indifferentists.” (See Hans Vaihinger, *Kommentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Stuttgart: W. Spemann, 1881), p. 99).
43. Consider, e.g., Kant’s characterization of what he imagines to be the motivation for Hume’s skepticism: “If one were to ask the cool-headed David Hume, especially constituted for equilibrium of judgment, “What moved you to undermine [. . .] the persuasion, *so comforting and useful for humans*, that the insight of their reason is adequate for the assertion and determinate concept of a highest being?,” he would answer: “Nothing but the intention of bringing reason further in its cognition of itself, and at the same time a certain aversion to the coercion which one would exercise against reason by treating it as great and yet at the same time preventing a free confession of its weaknesses, which become obvious to it in the examination of itself.” (trans. modified; my emphasis; A745/B773)
44. This is the sense in which Kant describes the skeptical stage as a *standstill* in *The Progress in Metaphysics*: “The skeptical standstill, which contains no skepticism, i.e., no renunciation of certainty in the extension of our rational knowledge beyond the limits of possible experience, is now very beneficial; for without it we should have either had to abandon man’s greatest concern, which metaphysics treats as its greatest goal, and confine our use of reason merely to the sensible, or been compelled, as has happened for so long, to fob off the enquirer with untenable pretensions to insight: had there been no intervention from the criticism of pure reason, which by dividing the legislature of metaphysics into two chambers has redressed both the despotism of empiricism and the anarchical mischief of unbridled philodoxy.” (20: 329; trans. mod.)
45. “This antinomy of reason not only throws it into an uncertainty of mistrust towards the one as much as toward the other of these claims, which would still leave open the hope of a judgment this way or that, but *casts it into a despair of reason itself*, to abandon all claim to certainty, which we may call the state of dogmatic skepticism.” (20: 327; my emp.)
46. Gilles Deleuze, *La philosophie critique de Kant (La doctrine des facultés)* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, coll. Initiation philosophique, 1963). The text is presented as an introduction to Kant (Initiation philosophique was a series of capsule texts on various philosophical themes). Although it is too inaccessible and unbalanced to effectively serve as such, it remains a dense but enduringly insightful reflection on the logic of the faculties in Kant.

47. Deleuze, *La philosophie critique de Kant (La doctrine des facultés)*, p. 4.
48. This ontological reach of the category of relation for theoretically motivated considerations remains implicit in much of the book, but is more explicit in the conclusion of the book, "Les fins de la raison." See Deleuze, *La philosophie critique de Kant (La doctrine des facultés)*, pp. 93–103.
49. Other aspects have been the focus of a rich array of fairly recent studies, e.g. by Ameriks, Pippin. What is proposed in this study is a vast oversimplification of the complexity of the broader issue; the question of the relation between these registers, for example, will not be addressed. While acknowledging its selectiveness, the present reconstruction focuses on the mind considered in terms of the description that can be given of it as *a priori* conditions of experience, which is a level of explanation that can function independently of Kant's other commitments to concepts of the mind or the soul or the self.
50. This turns out to be one of the more considerable impediments to recognizing the relation between the two at the level of their conceptual practices, quite independently of Foucault's reading of Kant's critical idealism at the surface. A similar way of reading Kant is at the center of other approaches that attempt to rectify a perceived bias on the side of the subject, such as in Adorno's negative dialectics.
51. In *MC*, Foucault maintains: "It is undoubtedly not possible to give transcendental value to empirical contents nor to move them over to the side of a constituting subjectivity, without giving rise, at least silently, to an anthropology." (*MC*, 261).
52. In setting the program of criticism of reason as a question imposed by the requirements of the historical age, Kant provides an initial indication of the scope of the role of experience in the critical thinking that he will deploy in response. The criticism of pure reason is to serve a judicial function in reason's two-sided project of self-knowledge, that is, as a court in which "reason may secure its rightful claims while dismissing all its groundless pretensions, and this not by mere decrees but according to its own eternal and unchangeable laws" (Axii). This practice targets "the faculty of reason in general, in respect of all the cognitions after which reason might strive independently of all experience, and hence the decision about the possibility or impossibility of a metaphysics in general, and the determination of its sources, as well as its extent and boundaries" (Axii). In order to ensure a coincidence, in other words, between reason's claims and its capacities, a principled examination is required, one that limits these claims to and legitimates the value of claims made in relation to experience. This poses the question of the meaning of Kant's conception of experience with great urgency: the stakes of his critical philosophy rests therein.
53. The nature of Kant's conception of experience and its role in his critical project is both unambiguously important and irreparably ambiguous. As a

- result, it has generated copious amounts of critical attention that offers little hope of anything like consensus on the matter. The following exposition avoids these difficulties by restricting its scope to the specific understanding of Kant's notion of experience that played the specific historical and conceptual role to which the present study draws attention.
54. The complexity of the concept of experience in Kant's theoretical philosophy demands that a comprehensive account of its use requires at least two registers. In one, the use of the term would be situated on an axis that has actual and possible experience as poles. In the other, it would be located within a vector articulated by (i) ordinary experience, (ii) pure, un-formed, un-ordered, pre-conceptual experience, and (iii) scientific experience.
 55. The distinction can be expressed as: ". . . independently of experience, but yet not independently of all relation to the form of an experience in general" (A222/B269); cf. B166.
 56. Experience, "far from the only field to which our understanding can be restricted," can only tell us "what is, but never that it must necessarily be thus and not otherwise" (A1; cf. A2/B3, etc.).
 57. *Metaphysics Mrongovius* is once again helpful in this connection: "Yet there must be a rule of the connection of the perceptions through which experience is possible. Now this rule cannot again be *a posteriori* for it must precede all experience, thus *a priori*. There will thus have to be an *a priori* rule of the unity of perceptions which makes experience possible. There will be synthetic *a priori* propositions which contain the principles of the possibility of experience, given that experience is [not] an aggregate of perceptions but rather a unity of perceptions ordered according to certain rules" (29: 795).
 58. Cf.: (1) "Experience is empirical cognition, but cognition (dependent as it is on judgments) requires reflection (*reflexio*), and consequently consciousness of activity in arranging the multitude of ideas according to a rule of unity, that is, a concept; and, finally, it requires thought as such (which makes it different from sense perception)." (7: 141); (2) "Experience is nothing other than a cognition of an object through sensible representations." (28: 550); (3) "Thus, to our experience belongs, first, intuition, second, thinking, which does not belong to the senses. To intuit does not mean to have experience. Experience is a cognition that we have of an object of intuition. Thus that requires thinking, which can be considered separately." (29: 800)
 59. "If, therefore, we say: The senses represent objects to us as they appear, but the understanding, as they are, then the latter is not to be taken in a transcendental but in a merely empirical way, signifying, namely, how they must be represented as objects of experience, in the thoroughgoing connection of appearances, and not how they might be outside of the relation to possible experience and consequently to sense in general, thus as objects of pure understanding." (A258/B313)

60. "The understanding has been explained above only negatively, as a non-sensible faculty of cognition. Now we cannot partake of intuition independently of sensibility. The understanding is therefore not a faculty of intuition. But besides intuition there is no other kind of cognition than through concepts. Thus the cognition of every, at least human, understanding is a cognition through concepts, not intuitive but discursive." (A68/B92–3)
61. In what Kant refers to as "the proper sense," although given what had just been said, it is not altogether clear with what this means to contrast, one can assume that it is the possibility of an intuitive cognition that is stake.
62. "With respect to the state of its ideas, my mind is either active, and shows a capacity (*facultas*) for accomplishment, or it is passive, and continues in a receptive capacity (*receptivitas*). Cognition contains a union of both states of ideas. The possibility of having such a cognition bears the name of cognitive faculty, a term derived from its most important part, namely, the activity of the mind in combining or separating ideas." (7: 140)
63. A more comprehensive account would include an explanation of the distinction between subjective and objective unity involved here.
64. The logic of determination is perspicuously presented in the *New Elucidation*: the ground is "that which determines a subject in respect of any of its predicates" (1: 392); it "converts things which are indeterminate into things which are determinate" (1: 392); "to determine is to posit in such a way that every opposite is excluded"; "the term 'determine' designates that which is certainly sufficient to conceive the thing in such and such a way, and in no other" (1: 393); "And since all truth is generated by the determination of a predicate in a subject, it follows that the determining ground is not only the criterion of truth; it is also its source" (1: 392).
65. "Space is nothing other than the form of all appearances of outer space, i.e., *the subjective condition of sensibility*, under which alone outer intuition is possible for us" (A26/B42; my emp.).
66. The following passages from the *New Elucidation* bear consideration in this connection: "The principle of contradiction, which is expressed by the proposition: *it is impossible that the same thing should simultaneously be and not be*, is in fact nothing but the definition of the *impossible*. For everything that contradicts itself, i.e., to say, everything thought of as simultaneously being and not being, is called impossible. But in what way is it possible to establish that all truths ought to be referred to this definition as to a touchstone? For it is neither necessary that every truth be guaranteed by the impossibility of its opposite, nor, if the truth be told, is it in itself sufficient, either. For the transition from the impossibility of its opposite to the assertion of its truth can only be effected by means of the maxim: *Everything, of which the opposite is false, is true*. And thus, as we have already shown above, this proposition shares power with the principle of contradiction." (1: 391); "Possibility is only definable in terms of there not being a conflict between

certain combined concepts; thus the concept of possibility is the product of a comparison. But in every comparison the things which are to be compared must be available for comparison, and where nothing at all is given there is no room for either comparison, or, corresponding to it, for the concept of possibility. This being the case, it follows that nothing can be conceived as possible unless whatever is real in every possible concept exists and indeed exists absolutely necessarily. (For, if this be denied, nothing at all would be possible; in other words, there would be nothing but the impossible.)” (1: 395)

67. The basic insight is aptly rearticulated in Kant’s lectures on rational theology given in the early 1880’s, in which it also plays a central role: “Of course in the logical sense possibility always precedes actuality, and here I can think the possibility of a thing without actuality. Only we have no concept of real possibility except through existence, and in the case of every possibility which we think *realiter* we always presuppose some existence; if not the actuality of the thing itself, at least an actuality in general containing the data for everything possible. Hence every possibility presupposes something actually given. For if everything were merely possible, then the possible itself would have no ground. Consequently this ground of possibility must itself be given not merely as possible, but also as actual.” (Kant, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, p. 68.)
68. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Guyer & Wood, p. 321.
69. In his theology lectures, Kant points out that “the fact that there is nothing contradictory in my concept of a thing proves that it is the concept of something possible, but it does not yet prove the possibility of the object of my idea” (Kant, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, p. 56; trans. mod.).
70. Kant draws a parallel distinction between real and logical *definition*: “. . . we cannot give a real definition of a single one of them [the categories and their principles], i.e., make intelligible the possibility of their object, without immediately descending to conditions of sensibility, thus to the form of the appearances, to which, as their sole objects, they must consequently be limited, since, if one removes this condition, all significance, i.e., relation to the object, disappears, [. . .]” (A240–1/B300); “I mean here the real definition, which does not merely supply other and more intelligible words for the name of a thing, but rather contains in itself a clear mark by means of which the object (*definitium*) can always be securely cognized, and that makes the concept that is to be explained usable in application. A real definition would therefore be that which does not merely make distinct a concept but at the same time its objective reality.” (A241–2n)
71. The relevant passages from Kant’s May 12, 1789 correspondence with Reinhold are instructive in this regard: “Whatever is thought as necessarily connected with a concept, but is not thought through identity, is thought through something necessarily connected with, but *distinct* from, the

essence of the concept, that is, connected with the essence through some ground.”(11: 34); “. . . the logical relation of ground and consequent is mistaken for the real relation. A ground is (in general) that whereby something else (distinct from it) is made *determinate* (that which being posited *determines something else*). A consequent (*rationatum*) is that which is not posited unless *something else* is posited. The ground must thus always be something distinct from the consequent, and he who can provide no ground but the given consequent itself shows that he does not know (or that he does not have any ground! Now this distinction of ground and consequent is either merely *logical* (having to do with the manner of representation) or *real*, that is, in the object itself. [. . .] But it is *real* distinctness that is required for a synthetic judgment. When logic says that all (assertoric) judgments must have a ground, it does not concern itself with this real distinction at all. Logic abstracts from it, because this distinction relates to the content of cognition. If, however, one asserts that every *thing* has a ground, one always means by this the real ground.” (11: 35); “Since it is impossible (for us human beings) to have pure intuitions other than merely of the representations, that is, his capacity to be affected by objects, the reality of synthetic a priori propositions is itself sufficient to prove that these propositions concern only sensible objects and cannot transcend appearance. This is shown even without our having to know that space and time are those forms of sensibility and that the a priori concepts to which we relate our intuitions, in order to make synthetic a priori judgments, are categories.” (11: 38); “Here he [Eberhard] talks of necessary laws, and so on, without noticing that in *KrV* the task is just this: to show which laws are objectively necessary, and how they can possibly be synthetic and yet *a priori*. For otherwise we are in danger (like *Crusius*, whose language Eberhard uses here) of taking a merely subjective necessity (based on either habit or on our inability to imagine an object any other way) for an objective necessity.” (11: 41)

72. Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, trans. by A.W. Wood & G.M. Clark (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978).
73. In the *Prolegomena*, Kant implies an association of cognition with objective judgment and thought with merely subjective judgment: “To sum this up: the business of the senses is to intuit; that of the understanding, to think. To think, however, is to unite representations in a consciousness. This unification either arises merely relatively to the subject and is contingent and subjective, or it occurs without condition and is necessary or objective. The unification of representations in a consciousness is judgment. Therefore, thinking is the same as judging or as relating representations to judgment in general. Judgments are therefore either merely subjective, if representations are related to one consciousness in one subject alone and are united in it, or they are objective, if they are united in a consciousness in general, i.e., are united necessarily therein.” (4: 304)

74. Kant's marginal note translated in *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by P. Guyer & A.W. Wood, p. 338; cf. A247/B304.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. The cultural currency of the image extends beyond the classrooms of two centuries of unimaginative pedagogy and weak caricature. It marks a recognizable moment in a broad contemporary reality. Consider the opening lines of science fiction author Philip K. Dick's impressive "Drugs, Hallucinations, and the Quest for Reality" (1964): "One long-past innocent day, in my prefolly youth, I came upon a statement in an undistinguished textbook on psychiatry that, as when Kant read Hume, woke me forever from my garden-of-Eden slumber." Philip K. Dick, *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings*, ed. and introduction by L. Sutin (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), p. 167.
2. See Foucault, "Philosophie et psychologie" (1965), *DE.I* (n°30), 438–448 for the text version of the interview with Foucault; a transcription of the round table discussion is published as "Philosophie et vérité" (1965), *DE.I* (n°31), 448–464.
3. Foucault, "Philosophie et psychologie" (1965), *DE.I* (n°30), 448 ; my emp.
4. Foucault, "Philosophie et psychologie" (1965), *DE.I* (n°30), 439.
5. Foucault, "Foucault étudie la raison d'État" (1979), *DE.III* (n° 272), 801–2.
6. Charles Taylor's "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," is the most thoughtful examination of the question available, and it remains the most imaginative, convincing, and pertinent version of this order of criticism, despite the fact that it predates the publication of Foucault's Collège de France lectures and was written without access to the two final volumes of *L'histoire de la sexualité*.
7. Foucault, "Sur les façons d'écrire l'histoire" (1966), *DE.I* (n°48), 599.
8. In a characteristically quixotic essay, Carlo Ginzburg identifies and accounts for the philosophical and spiritual origins of a literary device that he identifies in Tolstoy's short stories, which aims to generate an experience of estrangement. While this valuable study identifies striking precursors of this literary strategy, the presentation of estrangement under this aspect considerably limits the scope the insight that makes it valuable as a form of experience, and excludes much of the conceptual domain in which the valorization of estrangement has been undertaken: the standpoints that can be aligned as discourses of estrangement integrate this dynamic in ways that can by no means be reduced to a literary devise. As a result, Ginzburg makes no attempt to account for the conceptual structure of estrangement as a form of experience. See Carlo Ginzburg, "Making it Strange: The Prehistory

- of a Literary Device,” *Wooden Eyes*, trans. by M. Ryle & K. Soper (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 1–27.
9. More broadly, the disassociation of aesthetic value from the agreeable has been a decisive factor in the formation of contemporary critical practices, one whose emergence in philosophical discourse can be traced to the distinction between beauty and sublimity as distinct forms of experience in Kant’s *KU*. In historical-conceptual terms, the isolation of a discrete aesthetic dimension of experience, for example by contrast to the ethical and the merely sensible, has made it possible to think of experiences of pain or discomfort as sources of aesthetic value.
 10. Ginzberg connects Greek practices of spiritual exercises and estrangement by way of Marcus Aurelius read through the French historian of Ancient philosophy Pierre Hadot’s interpretation of Late Antiquity and Early Christianity, built around the concept of ‘spiritual exercises.’ Ginzberg suggests that the literary device of estrangement is a relatively recent event in the lengthy history of the type of practice identified by Hadot as spiritual exercises. He writes: “Moral self-education requires of us above all that we erase mistaken representations, reject seemingly obvious postulates, and refuse the familiar recognitions that have become trite through repetition, thanks to our habits of perception. In order to *see* things, we must first of all look at them as if they had no meaning, as if they were a riddle.” (Ginzburg, “Making it Strange: The Prehistory of a Literary Device,” p. 7.)
 11. François Jacob, *La logique du vivant. Une histoire de l’hérédité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).
 12. Foucault, “Croître et multiplier” (1970), *DE.II* (n°81), 99.
 13. “La vérité et les formes juridiques” (1974), *DE.II* (n°139), 550. The parenthetical notes in the text in the remainder of the section refer to this piece.
 14. It is a remarkable grammatical peculiarity in this context that both the genetic act and the product are called “an invention.”
 15. These two senses in which knowledge is according to Nietzsche an invention are thematized in the following reconstruction as the second order of consideration of the origin of knowledge.
 16. *JGB* §6/9. In fact, the expectation that philosophical discourse is to be conducted in isolation from questions of morality is proper to the preponderance of the epistemological in post-Cartesian philosophy. Moreover, Nietzsche has precursors even within this Modern context, notably Kant’s criticism, in which the priority of the practical is as it were a concealed cornerstone. The manifestation of this priority of the practical in terms of the irreducible personal dimension of a text was in the air in the middle of the 19th century. Samuel Butler’s contemplation, for example, resonates unmistakably: “It is with books, music, painting and all the arts as with children—only those live that have drained much of their author’s own life into them. The personality of the author is what interests us more than his

work. When we have once got well hold of the personality of the author we care comparatively little about the history of the work or what it means or even its technique; we enjoy the work without thinking of more than its beauty and of how much we like the workman. ‘Le style c’est l’homme’ [. . .] and we care more about knowing what kind of person a man was than about knowing of his achievements, no matter how considerable they may have been. If he has made it clear that he was trying to do what we like, and meant what we should like him to have meant, it is enough; but if the work does not attract us to the workman, neither does it attract us to itself.” *Selections From the Note-Books of Samuel Butler* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930), pp. 54–5.

17. This point of approach brackets a series of questions about the details of the passage: what hangs on the qualification ‘every *great* philosophy’? What is the operative conception of the formal relation between the author and the philosophy? Between philosophy and text? What is at stake in the qualification ‘strangest *metaphysical* claims’?
18. To make matters still more complex, this orientation is diverted by the ambivalence of Nietzsche’s presentation of philosophical conviction, which seems to introduce tension between form and content.
19. Here Nietzsche draws on a conceptual image prominent in post-Kantian idealism (*e.g.*, it generates the principle of one of the aspects of the development of spiritedness in Hegel’s *PhG*). This connection is reinforced by the appeal in Nietzsche’s guideline itself to the image of the living seed growing into the plant.
20. It should be remarked that Nietzsche considers there to be a danger that comes with the organic growth into a conviction, namely, that the conviction risks sinking to the level of an axiom, the unquestioned ‘brick’ to which Nietzsche attributes the inability to learn and describes as brutish stupidity.
21. *N* 35[24]/20. The formidable issue of Nietzsche’s use of quotation marks is tackled by Eric Blondel in “Les guillemets de Nietzsche : Philologie et Généalogie,” in *Nietzsche aujourd’hui ?* (Paris: Editions U. G. E., 1973), vol. 2, pp. 153–178.
22. The temporal question is left undetermined in this context: there is no indication of the form of the narrative of a life of philosophy. It seems reasonable at a glance to consider it implied that the Nietzschean philosopher of the present would have at one time lived in the world, just *experiencing*, before moving on to do philosophy. However, the fact that the matter is not posed in temporal terms (in terms of stages in the life of a philosopher: first lie for a while in order to experience the world, then philosophy) suggests that this dichotomy itself is part of what is being circumvented here: the very opposition between a hermetic philosophical life and a socially involved, pre-reflective non-philosophical life. Life as such, for Nietzsche, is philosophical, and to live philosophically means nothing more specific

- than to be alive in the relevant sense (cf. his concept of “life”). It is also possible to think of the two forms of life as moments in a genealogical account, wherein the recognition of the limitation of the dichotomy is only accessible once one has lived through it.
23. The notebook entry under discussion closes with an implacable proposal: “The man with the widest experience, compressing it into general conclusions: ought he not be the most powerful?” (*N* 35[24]/20). As usual in Nietzsche, the interpretive anxiety clusters around the need to unequivocally and definitively attribute a position that is represented in the text to the author. In this case, there are at least a couple of snags. On the one hand, the idea of compressing the widest possible experience into general conclusions rings off key. On the other, the very idea of *being the most powerful* is extremely difficult to make sense of within the context of the meta-cultural speculations about the nature of the concept of power, and of the world essentially understood as actualizations of acts of willing power.
 24. *JGB* §211/105–6. The following exposition of the most thoroughly integrated manifestation of the project of philosophical laboring avoids addressing the project of the “true philosophers” in a positive register. In this context, they are described as commanders and legislators, who “reach for the future with a creative hand and everything that is and was becomes a means, a tool, a hammer for them,” such that their “‘knowing’ is *creating*, their creating is a legislating, their will to truth is—*will to power*” (*JGB* §211/106).
 25. In *JGB* §211, Nietzsche had begun by insisting that, with respect to the scholar and the philosopher, “people be strict about giving “each his due” and not too much to the one, and much too little to the other” (*JGB* §211/105).
 26. This is also only one of several possible philosophical sources for a framework within which to unearth the conceptual environment of estrangement as a rhetorical device and a psychological moment (*e.g.*, Hegel’s conception of the dynamic of alienation and Ricœur’s hermeneutic distantiation).
 27. It is significant that Kant gives the same form to both his autobiographical narrative of his experience of metaphysics and the historical transformations of metaphysics.
 28. Kafka himself provides an apt description of the structure of this concept of parables, which with characteristic perspicacity preserves the indeterminacy required of a model: “Many complain that the words of the wise are always merely parables and of no use in daily life, which is the only life we have. When the sage says: ‘Go over,’ he does not mean that we should cross to some actual place, which we could do anyhow if the labor were worth it; he means some fabulous yonder, something unknown to us, something too that he cannot designate more precisely, and therefore cannot help us here in the very least. All these parables really set out to say merely that the

- incomprehensible is incomprehensible, and we know that already. But the cares we have to struggle with every day: that is a different matter.—Concerning this a man once said: Why such reluctance? If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables and with that rid of all your daily cares. —Another said: I bet that is also a parable. —The first said: You have won. —The second said: But unfortunately only in parable. —The first said: No, in reality: in parable you have lost.” Franz Kafka, “On Parables,” *Parables and Paradoxes*, bilingual edition (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1961), p. 11.
29. The same form is also presented as the model for auditory perception of music (“It is awkward and difficult for the ear to hear something new; we are bad at listening to unfamiliar music.” *JGB* §192/81) and of a foreign language (“When we hear another language, we involuntarily try to form the sounds we hear into words that sound more comfortable and familiar to us” *JGB* §192/81).
 30. “*Belief in the senses*. Is a fundamental fact of our intellect, which receives from the senses the raw material that it *interprets*. This way of treating the raw material offered by the senses is, considered *morally*, *not* guided by an intention to truth but as if by a will to overpower, assimilate, consume. Our constant functions are absolutely egoistic, Machiavellian, unscrupulous, subtle. Commanding and obeying pushed to the extreme, and so that it can obey perfectly, the individual organ has much freedom.” (*N* 34[67]/5–6)
 31. *N* 2[90], 7. The entry elaborates on this sort of willing by identifying it as a mode of the will to power: “On the understanding of *logic* :: *the will to sameness is the will to power*.—the belief that something is thus and thus, the essence of *judgment*, is the consequence of a will that as far as possible it *shall* be the same.”
 32. This section is from Book 5, entitled “We Fearless Ones.”
 33. *N* 5[10]/107; my emp. By associating fear with the foreign Nietzsche provides the elements for a particularly rigorous theoretical grid through which to address a familiar theme in various registers of 19th century resistance to certain aspects of the culture of modernity. With respect to the socio-political consequences of the democratic equality of American individualism, for example, Alexis de Tocqueville warns of the risk of experience being stultified, flattened, narrowed and impoverished as a result of the obsessive self-concern that such individualism permits and encourages. The need to provide a viable alternative to discredited pre-modern moral-metaphysical hierarchies without relinquishing the freedom their loss had purchased was already a basic driving force in Hegel. Nietzsche’s analysis of knowledge serves as a conceptual foothold around which these strands can be unified.
 34. *N* 34[131]/9. The relation between fear and consciousness in Nietzsche belongs to a rich series of considerations that place his analysis of knowledge

- in the line of inheritance of Kantian transcendental apperception as a condition of experience.
35. Nietzsche makes a parallel diagnosis in relation to truth and the will to truth: “The most courageous among us does not have courage for what he really *knows* . . . The point where a man comes to a halt or does not *yet* do so, where he judges ‘Here is the truth,’ is decided by the degree and strength of his valour; more, at least, than by any keenness or dullness of eye and mind.” (N 9[52]/151)
 36. Nietzsche’s commitment to the ontological continuity between the spiritual and the organic makes this, perhaps inevitably, a somewhat inadequate way of expressing the relation.
 37. “[. . .] But we are beings who are difficult to feed and have everywhere enemies and, as it were, indigestibles—that is what has made human knowledge *refined*, and ultimately so proud of its refinement that it doesn’t want to hear that it is not a goal but a means, or even a tool of the stomach—if not itself a kind of stomach!” (N 38[10]/38)
 38. The curious part is what follows: “I don’t want to denigrate it—on the contrary, let’s proceed with both, both take courage: some are for finding, the others—*we* others—for putting in!” (N 2[174]/94). There are resonations with childishness as a genealogical attribution.
 39. Charles Taylor provides terms of access to the model in question with the framework of his own genealogical accounts of the self and society. See “Against Epistemology,” in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995) and *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989) for this depiction of Cartesian foundationalism.
 40. *FW* §355/214; “. . . for example sound method demands that we start from the ‘inner world,’ from the ‘facts of consciousness,’ because this world is *more familiar to us*.”
 41. *FW* §355/214: “The great certainty of the natural sciences in comparison with psychology and the criticism of the elements of consciousness—with the *unnatural* sciences, one might almost say—rests precisely on the fact that they take the *strange* as their object, while it is nearly contradictory and absurd even to *want* to take the non-strange as one’s object . . .”
 42. Nietzsche’s view on this must be addressed with care; the sort of restraint involved cannot be assimilated to the attitude of renouncing questioning that he describes as the bad faith displayed by a lack of moral conscience in intellectual matters. The sort of attitude of restraint that can be attributed to Nietzsche’s standpoint, intervenes rather at the level of the relation of the genealogist to the results of her inquiry, as a way of dealing with what Nietzsche calls “his own kind of injustice.” (See *FW* §2.)
 43. Nietzsche offers the suggestive, abortive speculation that the decisive factor in the alignment of knowledge and the resistance to and hostility toward “*a*

feeling of newness and transforming the apparently new into something old” is that the process of knowledge itself is “how we come to feel that we *already know* something.” *N* 34[244]/14.

44. The point is thrown into relief by a rough distinction between three varieties of Kantian formalism. According to Kant’s own model, experience is formed by regular mental activities that are distinguished, isolated and described as normative factors (laws, rules, concepts, values). These express the universal, necessary conditions under which experience is possible. No account of the genesis of these regulated capacities is provided; their universality buys ahistorical value. On a second model, this Kantian standpoint is immersed into a historical frame of reference. This diachronic-Kantian formalism does involve reflection on the sources of these necessarily binding normative factors, and it displays them to be historically contingent forms of thought and experience around which multiple successive historical periods are delimited and defined. Their universality on this model is at a higher degree of abstraction confined to a particular stretch of history and to a specific culture. Nietzsche’s model is a diachronic-Kantian formalism of a particular type.
45. This genetic account makes plain the difficulties involved with understanding Nietzsche’s cultural analysis as a form of “hermeneutics of suspicion” (cf. especially Paul Ricoeur, e.g., *Soi-même comme un autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1990): the only sort of suspicion that can be countenanced from this standpoint is one that cannot issue in an act of unmasking the object toward which the suspicion is directed.
46. *FW* §354/214. In his notebooks Nietzsche elaborates on the point and provides an incisive, deftly spun example: “The logic of our conscious thinking is only a crude and facilitated form of the thinking needed by our organism, indeed by the particular organs of our organism. For example, a thinking-at-the-same-time is needed of which we have hardly an inkling. Or perhaps an artist of language does: reckoning back with the weight and the lightness of syllables, reckoning ahead, and at the same time looking for analogies between the right of thought and the phonetic, or physiological, conditions of the larynx: all this happens at the same time—though not consciously.” (*N* 34[124]/8–9)
47. The world as becoming, in this respect bears, a striking structural resemblance to one of the facets of Kant’s conception of a thing considered in itself. A true consideration of the affinity would have to take into account Nietzsche’s various expressions of hostility toward this notion, such as this reflection from his notebooks: “The ‘thing-in-itself’ [is] absurd. If I think away all the relationships, all the ‘qualities,’ all the ‘activities’ of a thing, then the thing does not remain behind: because thingness was only a *fiction added* by us, out of the needs of logic, thus for the purpose of designation, communication, *not*— (to bind together that multiplicity of relationships, qualities, activities).” (*N* 10[202]/206)

48. Nietzsche considers that the metaphysical status of the world is homologous in this relation to that of the mind: "That the mind has become and is still becoming; that among countless ways of inferring and judging, the one now familiar to us is somehow the most useful to us and has been passed down to us because the individuals who thought that way had better prospects; that this proves nothing about 'true' and 'untrue,'—" (*N* 34[81]/6)
49. It is worth noting that in this context, Nietzsche does not undertake the challenge of describing a non-subjective form of experience. The question will be addressed in the concluding remarks below as a question of the possibility of an alternative practice of philosophy, one suited to the becoming of the world.
50. "Even when *language*, here as elsewhere, cannot get over its crassness and keeps talking about opposites where there are only degrees and multiple, subtle shades of gradation; even when the ingrained tartuffery of morals (which is now part of our "flesh and blood," and cannot be overcome) twists the words in our mouths (we who should know better)" (*JGB* §24/25–6)
51. *FW* §354/212. It is worth recalling that Nietzsche's training and academic appointment was in philology. In a more comprehensive account, this factor might serve as the point of access to Nietzsche's views about language, knowledge and thought. This would bring the dialectical nature of language into play, and would provide a space of application for a concrete appreciation of the implications of the structure of the conceptual from a genealogical standpoint. The dialectical form of language aligns with the fact that the recognition and exposition of values or concepts that have been integrated into our organism is not a condition sufficient to render it inoperative or ineffective. For example, the use of quotation marks is a pervasive strategy used in Nietzsche's writing as a way to make use of a concept with directed indeterminacy without either endorsing fully endorsing it or directly opposing or rejecting it.
52. The distinction between the general and the tyrant as the model for the knower marks the give, the space of negotiation, at which the hope for the efficacy of philosophy might be directed. Given the historical psychological fact that the only activity of knowledge available to us has the structure of a power relation of domination, the degree of mendacity of the subjectivation is still to some extent malleable: in a Socratic mood, one might consider that to know, one must be a general, but perhaps not necessarily a tyrannical one.
53. Foucault, "Est-il donc important de penser ?" (1981), *DE.IV* (n°296), 181–2.
54. Foucault, "L'intellectuel et les pouvoirs" (1981), *DE.IV* (n°359), 747–8.
55. Foucault, "Entretien avec Michel Foucault" (1978), *DE.IV* (n°281), 41–2.
56. Foucault, "Préface à l'« Histoire de la sexualité »" (1984), *DE.IV* (n°340), 584.

57. Foucault, "Vérité, pouvoir et soi" (1982/8), *DE.IV* (n°362), 777.
58. Foucault, "Entretien avec Michel Foucault" (1978), *DE.IV* (n°281), 43.
59. In Chapter 3, this element of Foucault's writings is analyzed as part of what he calls an *ontology of the present*. He also associates the relation to the present with the sense in which his works are *genealogies*, the analyses of the basis of present problems. As discussed in the Introduction, the genealogical aspect of Foucault's grid concerns the aim of his analyses, which is described in terms of the actual and its contingency. It engages the level of relations between the historical analysis and the question of who we are, what we can do, and what we can think or know. It will "bring out the from the contingency of what made us what we are the possibility of no longer being, doing or thinking that which we are, do or think." (Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières" (1984), *DE.IV* (n°339), 574.)
60. Foucault, "L'intellectuel et les pouvoirs" (1981), *DE.IV* (n°359), 748.
61. Foucault, "Conversation avec Michel Foucault" (1971), *DE.II* (n°89), 183.
62. *Groupe d'information sur les prisons*, an investigatory organization that aimed to disseminate information about the state of prisons.
63. Foucault, "Entretien avec Michel Foucault" (1978), *DE.IV* (n°281), 43.
64. In a gesture that Foucault would undoubtedly have resisted, Merleau-Ponty associates this attitude with phenomenological thinking: "A good part of phenomenological or existential philosophy consists in being astonished by this inherence of the self in the world and of the self in the other, in describing this paradox and this confusion to ourselves, to make one *see* the relation of the subject and the world, of the subject and others, instead of *explaining it*, like the classics did, by way of a few appeals to the absolute spirit." (Merleau-Ponty, "Cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie," p. 74)
65. Foucault, "À propos de la généalogie de l'éthique" (1983/4), *DE.IV* (n°344), 638.
66. Foucault, "La philosophie analytique de la politique" (1978), *DE.IV* (n°232), 540–1.
67. Foucault, "Entretien avec Michel Foucault" (1978), *DE.IV* (n°281), 44.
68. Foucault, "Le philosophe masqué" (1980), *DE.IV* (n°285), 110.
69. Foucault, "Le souci de la vérité" (1984), *DE.IV* (n°350), 675.
70. Foucault, "Le souci de la vérité" (1984), *DE.IV* (n°350), 676–7.
71. Foucault, "Polémique, politique et problématisations" (1984), *DE.IV* (n°), 593.
72. Foucault, "À propos de la généalogie de l'éthique" (1983/4), *DE.IV* (n°344), 612.
73. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières ?" (1984), *DE.IV* (n°339), 577.
74. Foucault, "Usage des plaisirs et techniques de soi" (1983), *DE.IV* (n°338), 545. Cf. the following from the Introduction to *UP*: ". . . what I am held to—what I've wanted to hold myself to for many years—is an enterprise to bring out certain elements that could be used for a history of truth.

A history that would not be of what might be true in knowledge, but an analysis of “truth games,” games of the true and the false through which being is historically constituted as experience, that is, as being able to and needing to be thought.” (*UP*, 13)

75. “. . . what I am attempting is not a history of solutions. I believe that the work that there is to do is a work of problematisation and of perpetual reproblematisation. What blocs thought is to implicitly or explicitly accept a form of problematisation, and to look for a solution that can be substituted for the accepted one. Now, if the work of thought has a meaning—other than the one that consists in reforming institutions and codes –, it is to reconsider at the root the way that man problematise their behavior (their sexual activity, the punitive practices, their attitude toward madness, etc.)” (Foucault, “À propos de la généalogie de l’éthique” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°344), 612.)
76. Foucault, “Le souci de la vérité” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°350), 670.
77. Foucault, “Interview de Michel Foucault” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°353), 688.
78. Foucault, “À propos de la généalogie de l’éthique” (1983/4), *DE.IV* (n°344), 612.
79. Foucault, “Le philosophe masqué” (1980), *DE.IV* (n°285), 110.
80. See Foucault, “Introduction, in Binswanger (L.), *Le Rêve et l’Existence*” (1954), *DE.I* (n°1), 67ff.
81. Foucault, “À propos de la généalogie de l’éthique” (1983/4), *DE.IV* (n°344), 611.
82. Foucault connects this conception of experience that is exercised with Baudelaire’s understanding of the modern: “For the attitude of modernity, the high value of the present is indissociable from the determination to imagine it, to imagine it other than it is and to transform it not by destroying it, but by capturing it in what it is. Baudelairian modernity is *an exercise in which extreme attention to the real is confronted with a practice of freedom that both respects this reality and violates it.*” (Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières?” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°339), 570; my emp.)
83. Foucault, “Entretien avec Michel Foucault” (1978), *DE.IV* (n°281), 44.
84. Foucault, “Les techniques de soi” (1988), *DE.IV* (n°363), 784.
85. Foucault, “À propos de la généalogie de l’éthique” (1983/4), *DE.IV* (n°344), 630.
86. Foucault, “Entretien avec Michel Foucault” (1978), *DE.IV* (n°281), 44.
87. There is a second order question about this affectation itself in relation to the form of experience to which it belongs; it is unquestionable and relevant that it is an element of the form of contemporary experience at which the analysis takes aim, but presumably, it is also an element of past historical forms of experience to whose strangeness the analysis appeals in order to affect the disaffection from our contemporary form of experience; as such, it is a candidate for an axis of continuity among the successive forms of experience:

some degree and quality of epistemological attachment to one's own form of experience—a presumption that it is the form of experience, instead of a historically-contingent one among many—would be a feature of the structure of experience generally, although the assumption that the affectation is a historical constant may ultimately be too heavy.

88. Foucault, "Entretien avec Michel Foucault" (1978), *DE.IV* (n°281), 44.
89. This relation is complicated by the description of his work as "the enterprise of setting forth a few of the elements that can be used in a history of truth. A history that would not be of what truth there may be in knowledge (*connaissances*); but an analysis of 'games of truth,' of games of the true and the false through which being (*l'être*) is historically constituted as experience, that is, as that which can and must be thought." (*UP*, 2–3)
90. In a characteristically quixotic essay, Carlo Ginzberg draws the connection made above between Greek practices of spiritual exercises and skeptical estrangement by imbedding this device in a discursive tradition that extends to late Antiquity, specifically, to Marcus Aurelius, read through Pierre Hadot's interpretation of Greek philosophy. The keystone of this approach is the concept of 'spiritual exercises.' Ginzberg suggests that the literary function thematized as the device of estrangement is a relatively recent event in the lengthy history of the type of practice identified by Hadot as spiritual exercises. He writes: "Moral self-education requires of us above all that we erase mistaken representations, reject seemingly obvious postulates, and refuse the familiar recognitions that have become trite through repetition, thanks to our habits of perception. In order to *see* things, we must first of all look at them as if they had no meaning, as if they were a riddle." (Ginzburg, "Making it Strange," p. 7)
91. Ian Hacking, "Michel Foucault's Immature Science," *Historical Ontology*, p. 94; "The Archaeology of Michel Foucault," *Historical Ontology*, p. 75.
92. Viktor Shklovski, *Theory of Prose* (1929), trans. By B. Sher (Normal: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990).
93. Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, p. 6.
94. Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, p. 5. He goes on to speculate: "If someone were to compare the sensation of holding a pen in his hand or speaking a foreign tongue for the very first time with the sensation of performing this same operation for the ten thousandth time, then he would no doubt agree with us."
95. Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, p. 5.
96. Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, p. 5.
97. Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, p. 6.
98. Maurice Merleau-Ponty makes this point specifically in relation to Cézanne: "We live in a milieu of objects constructed by men, among utensils, in houses, in streets, in cities and most of the time, we only see them through the human actions for which they can serve as points of application. We

- habituate ourselves to think that all this necessarily exists and is unshakable. Cézanne's paintings suspend these habits and reveal the background of inhuman nature into which man settles himself. This is why *his characters are strange and as though seen by a being of a different species*. [. . .] It is a world with no familiarity, in which one is not well, which forbids all human effusiveness." (Merleau-Ponty, "Le doute de Cézanne," *Sens et non-sens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), pp. 21–2.) Cf. "The artist is the one who fixes and makes accessible to the most 'human' of men the spectacle to which they involuntarily belong." (p. 24) And: "A painter like Cezanne, an artist, and a philosopher must not only create and express an idea, but also awaken the experiences that will root it in other *consciences*. If the work is a success, it has the strange power to teach itself." (p. 25)
99. Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, p. 6.
 100. Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, p. 61.
 101. "And indeed, it is easier to walk with music than without it. Of course, it is just as easy to walk while talking up a storm, when the act of walking disappears from our consciousness. In this sense, the rhythm of prose is important as a factor leading to *automatization*. But such is not the rhythm of poetry. There is indeed such a thing as 'order' in art, but not a single column of a Greek temple fulfills its order perfectly, and artistic rhythm may be said to exist in the rhythm of prose *disrupted*. [. . .] we are dealing here not so much with a more complex rhythm as with a disruption of rhythm itself, a violation, we may add, that can never be predicted. If this violation enters the canon, then it loses its power as a complicating device." Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, p. 14.
 102. Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, p. 62.
 103. Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, p. 62.
 104. Among the contexts in Foucault that share this experiential structure but will not be described here one would have to include the experience of serial music, and the contrast of visual experiences of paintings that function within different historical practices (e.g. Manet and Magritte).
 105. Foucault, "L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté" (1984), *DE.IV* (n°356), 709.
 106. *Les mots et les choses* contains Foucault's historical analysis of a series of discourses about the ordering of words and things since the 16th century. It discovers striking parallels in the conceptual transformations of disciplines that are ordinarily considered to be independent from each other. These unsuspected affinities and resonances open a new horizon of consideration—what he calls the field of the archive. Regularities show up where there have seemed to be breaks, and discontinuities where none had been apparent. The decisive stretch of history spans the last decades the end of the 18th century, when a series of simultaneous shifts are unified to mark the emergence of the organizing principle of a new way of thinking.

107. He describes this standpoint in his notebooks: “The viewpoint of ‘value’ is the viewpoint of *conditions of preservation and enhancement* in regard to complex structures that have relatively lasting life within becoming: [. . .]—‘formations of a rule’; the sphere of what rules continually growing or else periodically waxing and waning; or, under favorable or unfavorable circumstances (nourishment -)—‘value’ is essentially the standpoint for the waxing or waning of these ruling centers (‘multiplicities,’ at any rate, but there’s no such thing as ‘unity’ in the nature of becoming) . . .” (N 11 [73]/212)
108. According to Nietzsche, there is an organic continuity between the psychological state (empirically available, through self-observation and observation) and the form of experience it exemplifies. The latter gets its content as the result of what Nietzsche describes as a process of “spiritualization,” an atavistic historical-conceptual immersion of observables into a purely mental medium. The two levels brought into genetic relation here correspond to the empirical-transcendental dualism of standpoints in Kant (the historicization of conceptual abstraction).
109. For Nietzsche, the proclivity to resist the association of knowledge and the serious is a specifically contemporary cultural trait: “We are the first age to be educated *in puncto* of ‘costumes,’ I mean of morals, articles of faith, artistic tastes, and religions, and prepared as no age has ever been for a carnival in the grand style, for the most spiritually carnivalesque laughter and high spirits, for the transcendental height of the highest insanity and Aristophanean world mockery. Perhaps it’s that we still discover a realm of our *invention* here, a realm where we can still be original too, as parodists of world history or buffoons of God, or something like that,—perhaps it’s that, when nothing else from today has a future, our *laughter* is the one thing that does!” (JGB §223)
110. This is by no means the only list of this kind in Borges’ writings. *The Total Library*, for example, contains an equally perplexing heteroclitic taxonomy: “Everything would be in its blind volumes. Everything: the detailed history of the future, Aeschylus’ *The Egyptians*, the exact number of times that the waters of the Ganges have reflected the flight of a falcon, the secret and the true name of Rome, the encyclopedia Novalis would have constructed, my dreams and half-dreams at dawn on August 14, 1934, the proof of Pierre Fermat’s theorem, the unwritten chapters of *Edwin Drood*, those same chapters translated into the language spoken by the Garamentes, the paradoxes Berkeley invented concerning Time but didn’t publish, Urizen’s books of iron, the premature epiphanies of Stephen Dedalus, which would be meaningless before a cycle of a thousand years, the Gnostic Gospel of Basilides, the song the sirens sang, the complete catalog of the Library, the proof of the inaccuracy of that catalog, Everything: but for every sensible line or accurate fact there would be millions of meaningless cacophonies, verbal farragoes, and babblings, everything: but all the generations of mankind could pass

before the dizzying shelves—shelves that obliterate the day and on which chaos lies—ever reward them with a tolerable page.” J.L. Borges, “The Total Library,” *Selected Non-fiction*, trans. by E. Weinberger (New York: Viking, 1999), p. 216.

111. Foucault suggests a connection between this effect and the inability to communicate, but does not follow up on the idea: “The confusion that makes one laugh when reading Borges is undoubtedly related to the deep malaise of those whose language is ruined: to have lost what is ‘common’ of the place and the name. Yet Borges’s text takes another path . . .” (*MC*, 10).

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Conversely, it seems clear that the obvious negative thrust of Kant’s position is answerable to a more substantively positive dimension than its respondent in Foucault, one that functions beneath the surface of Kant’s epistemology. This reversal might be carried out by an exposition of the role of conceptual otherness in Kant’s theoretical framework.
2. One of the least obvious unfolds in connection with intellectual biographical considerations, specifically, as a factor contributing to Foucault’s philosophical formation. Certain well-documented intellectual biographical factors involved in the orientation and formation of Foucault’s theoretical tendencies leave traces of a conjunction between exposure to Kant and an incipient version of the attitude that Foucault will come to thematize as Kantian criticism. The relevant facts have to do with the context in which Foucault came to the study of Kant, and a number of implications that emerge when considered in connection with the eccentricities of his intellectual personality.
3. A term used technically in Foucault to refer to the empirical material of historical cognition in his criticism, which takes the form of the documents to which historical analysis has access. See Chapter 4 for a full account.
4. It is worth noting at the outset that this understanding of Kant’s philosophy of history, as the ensuing discussion shows, is quite distant from the way that Kant presents it, namely, as an investigation into the question of the rational object of hope appended to his moral theory.
5. Cf. two synoptic passages that are discussed in Chapter 4, and that from different angles lay out the outline of this figure admirably: (i) “The motivation that guided me was rather simple, but I hope that it will satisfy at least some of you: it is curiosity,—the only kind of curiosity worth practicing with any obstinacy, in any case, not the curiosity, that is, that sets out to assimilate itself to what is appropriate to know, but one that allows one to undo oneself from oneself” (*UP*, p. 14); (ii) “Curiosity is a vice that has been stigmatized in turn by Christianity, by philosophy,

and even by a certain conception of science. Curiosity, futility. The word, however, pleases me; it suggests something quite different to me: it evokes “care (*souci*)”; it evokes the care (*soin*) that we take of what exists and what could exist; a sharpened sense of the real, but one that is never immobilized before it; a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and singular; a certain relentlessness in the effort to undo ourselves from what is familiar to us and to look at the same things in a different way; a fervor for seizing what is happening and what passes; an aloofness in regard to the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental.” Foucault, “Le philosophe masqué” (1980), *DE.IV* (n°285), 108.

6. See Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ?” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°339), 574.
7. Perhaps it is worth noting that there are ample historical and philosophical grounds to resist this association of the Modern with the separation of being and representation, which is a theme already prominent in certain Ancient and Early-Modern discourses such as Sextus Empiricus, Montaigne, and Descartes.
8. Two consequences of this shift from the classical to the modern epistemological formation, from the pre-critical to the critical configurations, complicate the picture considerably and deserve to be marked. First, from this standpoint, Foucault isolates a confluence and codependence of the deployment of a transcendental field and the constitution of new positivist empirical domains (critical-metaphysics of the object-positivities triangle), such that even positivist sciences share the critical epistemological formation. Second, in the process of this transformation, the classical project of unification is dissolved, and replaced by the analysis of identities and differences and the universal possibility of ordering. The importance of these implications will make itself felt below.
9. Foucault, “Une histoire restée muette” (1966), *DE.I* (n°40), 547.
10. See Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ?” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°351), 687–688. Consider another helpful text: “The question that arises at the end of the eighteenth century, I think, is: What are we in our own actuality? You will find the formulation of this question in a text written by Kant. I don’t pretend that the previous questions about truth, knowledge and so on have to be put aside; on the contrary, they constitute a very strong and consistent field of analysis, what I would like to call the formal ontology of truth. But I think that a new pole has been constituted for the activity of philosophizing, and this pole is characterized by the question, “What are we today?” And that is, I think, the field of the historical reflection on ourselves. Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Nietzsche, Max Weber, Husserl, Heidegger, The Frankfurt school, have tried to answer this question. What I am trying to do, in relation to this tradition, is to give very partial and provisional answers to this question through the history of thought or, more precisely,

- through the historical analysis of the relationships between our thought and our practices in Western society” (“La technologie politique des individus” (1971), *DE.IV* (n°364), 813–4.
11. By contrast with most of the other characterizations of this relation, which tend to associate the attitude involved in criticism with its aim specifically.
 12. Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ?” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°351), 562.
 13. Foucault, “Le sujet et le pouvoir” (1982), *DE.IV* (n°306), 231.
 14. See Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ?” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°351), 679–680.
 15. Foucault, “Le sujet et le pouvoir” (1982), *DE.IV* (n°306), 231.
 16. Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ?” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°351), 679. Foucault points out that Kant also deploys this type of interrogation in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, this time with the French revolution as its object (see pp. 682–686).
 17. Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ?” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°351), 568.
 18. Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ?” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°351), 572–3.
 19. Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ?” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°351), 574.
 20. Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ?” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°351), 575.
 21. Foucault, “Structuralisme et poststructuralisme” (1983), *DE.IV* (n°330), 449.
 22. Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières” (1971), *DE.II* (n°84), 567.
 23. Foucault, “Radioscopie de Michel Foucault” (1975), *DE.II* (n°161), 799; 799–800.
 24. Foucault, “Structuralisme et poststructuralisme” (1983), *DE.IV* (n°330), 448–9.
 25. Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive exposition of this concept in Foucault.
 26. Foucault, “La philosophie stucturaliste permet de diagnostiquer ce qu’est « aujourd’hui »” (1967), *DE.I* (n°47), 581–2.
 27. Foucault, “Michel Foucault, « *Les mots et les Choses* »” (1966), *DE.I* (n°34), 504.
 28. Foucault, “« Qui êtes-vous, professeur Foucault ? »” (1967), *DE.I* (n°50), 605.
 29. Foucault, “Foucault répond à Sartre” (1968), *DE.I* (n°55), 665.
 30. As Foucault puts it in “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx” (1967), *DE.I* (n°46), 568: “For Nietzsche, philosophy consisted in a series of acts and of operations that came from diverse domains.”
 31. Foucault, “« Qui êtes-vous, professeur Foucault ? »” (1967), *DE.I* (n°50), 606.
 32. See Foucault, “Réponse à une question” (1968), *DE.I* (n°58), 674.
 33. This particular activity is closely related to Foucault’s figure of Nietzsche as *le bon fouilleur des bas-fonds*. See Foucault, “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx” (1967), *DE.I* (n°46), 568.

34. Foucault, “ « Qui êtes-vous professeur Foucault ? » ” (1967), *DE.I* (n°50), 613.
35. Foucault, “ « Qui êtes-vous professeur Foucault ? » ” (1967), *DE.I* (n°50), 613.
36. Foucault, “ Sur les façons d’écrire l’histoire ” (1967), *DE.I* (n°48), 597–8.
37. Foucault, “ Michel Foucault, « Les mots et les Choses » ” (1966), *DE.I* (n°34), 500.
38. This emerges clearly in the character of Foucault’s resistance to Kant’s legal model. Consider his answer to the question: “Should we hold the trial of ‘reason’? Nothing would be more sterile: (i) neither guilt nor innocence is in question in this domain, (ii) it is absurd to invoke “reason” as the contrary entity of non-reason, and (iii) such a trial would trap us by obliging us to play the arbitrary and boring role of the rationalist or the irrationalist.” (Foucault, “ « Omnes et singulatim » : vers une critique de la raison politique ” (1981), *DE.IV* (n°291), 135.)
39. Foucault, “Préface à l’« Histoire de la sexualité » ” (1984), *DE.I* (n°340), 580.
40. These issues are addressed in Chapter 5.
41. In terms of the type of epistemic claims this shift is likely to involve, one might suggest that whereas Kant’s critical attitude is formed around the need to legitimate scientific knowledge that was manifested in the problems generated by the relation between objects and mental representations, Foucault’s critical attitude in its positive stage where it reflects on the possibility of thinking otherwise, is formed by the need to present the possibility of non-scientific forms of knowledge (see III, p. 166). This suggestion will be developed at greater length in the chapter on method.
42. Foucault, “Entretien avec Michel Foucault,” *DE.IV* (n°281), 46.
43. This issue should not be confused with the related question of the nature of the *object* of his investigations, which, along in axis of the interaction between the practical and the theoretical, is also a matter of importance for Foucault. See, e.g., Foucault, “Michel Foucault, « Les mots et les choses »,” *DE.I* (n°34), 498–499. Consideration of this distinction is pursued below.
44. In the course of a theoretical reorientation in the Introduction to *UP*, Foucault tosses-off a characterization of a standpoint that would address his analyses at the level of their *pragmatics* (*UP*, p. 15). It will be taken up as the label for its elaboration as a regulating segment of Foucault’s practice.
45. The structure of this segment of Foucault’s posture resembles that of the conceptual dynamic referred to as the hermeneutic circle or the circle of understanding. A central element in the history of hermeneutics since Ast and Scheiermacher, brought to its apex in conceptual and ontological tenor by Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur.
46. Foucault, « Sur les façons d’écrire l’histoire » (1967), *DE.I* (n°48), 585–6.
47. This relation is conspicuous in one of Foucault’s explanations of his attitude toward structuralism: “What I have tried to do is to introduce analyses of the structuralist style into disciplines that had not been penetrated to that point, that is, in the domain of the history of ideas, the history of knowing

- (*connaissances*), the history of theory. To this extent, I was brought to analyze in terms of the structure of the birth of structuralism itself. This is the extent to which I have had a relation of both distance and doubling (*redoublement*). Of distance, since I speak of it instead of practicing it directly, and of doubling (*redoublement*), since I do not want to speak of it without speaking its language.” Foucault, “La philosophie structuraliste permet de diagnostiquer ce qu’est ‘aujourd’hui’” (1967), *DE.I* (n°47), 583.
48. Foucault, “ Sur les façons d’écrire l’histoire” (1967), *DE.I* (n°48), 597–8, 586.
 49. Foucault, “La philosophie structuraliste permet de diagnostiquer ce qu’est ‘aujourd’hui’” (1967), *DE.I* (n°47), 581.
 50. Foucault, “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire” (1971), *DE.II* (n°84), 136–7.
 51. Foucault, “Le sujet et le pouvoir” (1982), *DE.IV* (n°306), 223–4.
 52. Foucault, “Entretien avec Michel Foucault” (1971), *DE.II* (n°85), 158; see also *AS*, 26–27.
 53. “When I begin a book, not only do I not know what I will think at the end, but I don’t very clearly know what method I will adopt. Each one of my books is a way to delineate an object and to forge a method of analysis. Once my work is done, I can, with a sort of retrospective look, extract a methodological reflection from the experience that I have just had, one that lays out the method that the book ought to have followed.” Foucault, “Entretien avec Michel Foucault,” *DE.IV* (n°281), 46, 42.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. In stark contrast to Kant’s practice of criticism, in relation to the importance of the deductive mode of reasoning, Foucault does not typically attempt to demonstrate this indispensability in the course of his historical analysis of forms of experience, but rather presents the results of the reasoning that takes place in the context of archival work, a process of recognizing in a diversity of materials, patterns that represent unified forms of experience. As discussed below, the fact that Foucault’s access to the experience from which this reasoning begins is indirect (it is not an experience immediately available to the analyst, it is not her experience but the experience of another historical culture), that it requires a certain creative or imaginative reconstructive process, forecloses the possibility of establishing the indispensability of the formal to the given by way of a Kant-style deductive argument.
2. It is an axis of comparison that is bound to remain at a relatively high level of abstraction, if only as a result of the absence in Foucault’s studies of the explicit argumentative steps that articulate the links of indispensability. From Foucault’s standpoint, no value is ascribed to the argued deduction of the formal factor of experience. The reasoning, however, has the form

of a silent *reduction ad absurdum*: without the formal elements of thought that are isolated as the structure of an experience, features of that experience would not be possible.

3. Cf. *e.g.* Gilles Deleuze et Felix Guattari, *Kafka : Pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1986).
4. Deleuze calls these ‘strata’; Foucault has a variety of more or less consistently distinguished terms such as positivities, discursive formations, epistemological configurations, *epistemes*, forms of experience, practices, etc. .
5. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 55.
6. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 67.
7. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 67.
8. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 67.
9. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 68.
10. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 74.
11. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 75.
12. See Deleuze, *Foucault*, 57.
13. This category of practices will be referred to as ‘ipseic.’
14. Foucault, “Les intellectuels et le pouvoir” (1971), *DE.II* (n°106), 308.
15. Foucault, “Qu’est-ce que les Lumières ?” (1984), *DE.IV* (n°351), 693.
16. Foucault, “Titres et travaux” (1969), *DE.I* (n°71), 842–3.
17. Foucault, “Naissance de la biopolitique” (1979), *DE.II* (n°274), 819.
18. With the exception of Georges Canguilhem’s review of *MC*, this essay is reputed to be the only piece of secondary literature on Foucault that he endorsed himself. (See *e.g.* “La poussière et le nuage,” (1980) *DE.IV* (n° 277), 19; “Table ronde du 20 mai 1978,” (1980) *DE.IV* (n° 278), 34.) More recently, Veyne has supplemented this paper with another substantial contribution, a second lengthy and dense methodological exposition entitled “Un archéologue sceptique” in *L’infréquentable Michel Foucault*, D. Eribon (ed.) (Paris: Epel, 2001).
19. Paul Veyne, “Foucault révolutionne l’histoire” (1978) *Comment on écrit l’histoire, suivi de Foucault révolutionne l’histoire* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1971/8), p. 211.
20. Paul Veyne, “Foucault révolutionne l’histoire,” 211.
21. Paul Veyne, “Foucault révolutionne l’histoire,” 216.
22. Paul Veyne, “Foucault révolutionne l’histoire,” 216.
23. It culminated, of course, in the events of May 1968. Foucault explains more than a decade later that these were “preceded by a disproportionate exaltation of Marx, by a generalized hyper-Marxization, for which what I had written was not tolerable” (Foucault, “Entretien avec Michel Foucault” (1980), *DE.IV* (n°281), 70).
24. Foucault, “Michel Foucault, “« Les Mots et les Choses »” (1966), *DE.I* (n°34), 499.
25. See Foucault, “L’intellectuel et les pouvoirs” (1981/4), *DE.I* (n°359).

26. See Foucault, "L'intellectuel et les pouvoirs" (1981/4), *DE.I* (n°359), 747.
27. See Nietzsche, *BGE* §6/8, and the discussion of the passage in Chapter 2 above.
28. See *e.g.* Foucault, *DE.I*: 498–9, 583, 662–3.
29. Indeed, all of these elements, thus the insipient conceptual importance of the idea of a practice in Foucault's approach, can be identified from the time of his very first publications, for example in the emphasis on psychological research in "La recherche scientifique et la psychologie" (1957), *DE.I* (n° 3), 137–158.
30. Foucault remains eminently conventional in this regard. For example, in *La morale et la science des mœurs*, Lévy-Bruhl had written that a practice "designates the rules of individual and collective conduct, the system of duties and rights, in a word, the moral relations between men."
31. Foucault, "À propos de la généalogie de l'éthique" (1984), *DE.IV* (n°344), 635.
32. Paul Veyne, "Foucault révolutionne l'histoire," 212.
33. Paul Veyne, "Foucault révolutionne l'histoire," 212–3.
34. Paul Veyne, "Foucault révolutionne l'histoire," 217.
35. Paul Veyne, "Foucault révolutionne l'histoire," 219.
36. "But one always gets to what is essential by going backwards; the most general things appear last. This is the ransom and the reward of all work in which the theoretical stakes are elaborated on the basis of a particular empirical domain." (Foucault, "Le souci de la vérité" (1984), *DE.IV* (n°350), 669.)
37. The details of this analogy are developed below.
38. This matter is discussed below in the context of the exposition of Foucault's concept of a historical *a priori*.
39. Paul Veyne, "Un archéologue sceptique," 20–2.
40. This can be done, as it were, against the grain of the letter of Veyne's caution, that is, while investing great conceptual confidence in *AS*, and more generally, while remaining committed to reading Foucault as his own most perspicacious reader.
41. Paul Veyne, "Foucault révolutionne l'histoire," 214.
42. In 1980, Foucault relates that *AS* is the product of his concern to provide his own account of what was involved in his previous studies, most immediately for the benefit of critics of these works who "did not really know what they were talking about": "Thus I myself attempted to indicate how my works revolved around a set of problems of the same order; namely, to know how it is possible to analyze the particular object that is discursive practices in their internal rules and in the conditions of appearance." (Foucault, "Entretien avec Michel Foucault" (1980), *DE.IV* (n°281), 72.)

43. Substantial parts of this response were subsequently integrated into the lengthy introduction to *AS*.
44. Foucault, “Réponse à une question” (1968), *DE.I* (n°58), 685.
45. Foucault, “Réponse à une question” (1968), *DE.I* (n°58), 685.
46. On this question of subjectivity and discourse as non subject-centric practices, see *AS*, pp.182–3.
47. Foucault, “Préface à l’édition anglaise” (1970), *DE.II* (n°72), 12–3.
48. Foucault, “Réponse à une question” (1968), *DE.I* (n°58), 687. The obscure notion of a practice that *obeys* rules is addressed below.
49. Foucault, “Michel Foucault explique son dernier livre” (1969), *DE.I* (n°66), 776. This shift of focus is motivated by the broad skeptical factor in Foucault’s criticism that was described in Chapter 2: “one wants, in effect, to do away with ‘things.’ [. . .]. To conjure their rich, weighty and immediate plenitude, of which one is accustomed to make the primitive law of a discourse that would only stray from it by error, forgetting, illusion, ignorance, or the inertia of beliefs and traditions, if not the perhaps unconscious desire not to see and not to say. To substitute the enigmatic treasure of “things” by the regular formation of objects that only take shape within it. To define these *objects* without reference to *the ground of things*, but by relating them to the set of rules that allow for them to be formed as objects of a discourse and thus constituting their conditions of historical appearance.” (*AS*, 65)
50. “When one describes the formation of objects in a discourse, one attempts to locate the setting into relations that characterize a discursive practice [. . .] as the location in which an overlapping plurality of objects—both superimposed and lacunary—are formed and deformed, appear and recede.” (*AS*, 65)
51. Foucault, “Réponse à une question” (1968), *DE.I* (n°58), 693, 692.
52. It is worth noting that the therapy for these difficulties that will be developed below in relation to the capacity to abstract would also be a promising path of approach to negotiate the difficulties of Kant’s conception of experience considered independently.
53. The ensuing account can be supplemented by the more extensive discussion of Foucault’s conception of space in the author’s “La conception foucauldienne de l’espace” (unpublished).
54. Foucault, “La recherche scientifique et la psychologie” (1957), *DE.I* (n°3), 155.
55. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 67.
56. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 67.
57. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 67.
58. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 67.
59. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 62.
60. Deleuze, *Foucault*, 67.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. This concept of literature as a discursive practice has a transitive function, when considered from the standpoint of Foucault's discourse considered generally: it is the result of a work of historical analysis of discursive practices, as well as a theoretical factor involved in the deployment of such analysis. This functional over-determination is a by-product of its actuality, its 'contemporaneity': its object of characterization is the system of thought that regulates contemporary discourse, including the one that serves as the framework within which that description is generated.
2. The problem of the relation between the historical discourse and the content of that discourse in history is built in to the idea of the historical. It is intensified in a historiography that tends to accentuate the discontinuity of historical transitions. Much has been written about this issue in Foucault. The favorable—and some of the hostile—interpretations tend to attempt to elide the question of the coherence by seeking refuge for Foucault in a more or less sophisticated Nietzschean rejection of the priority of the standards of rationality that call for the alignment of the status of the historical discourse and its authority to put past discourses into discourse. The following discussion works with the premise that this approach to Foucault's analysis is mistaken, and proposes an alternative.
3. In this case he mentions Francis Ponge and Georges Bataille.
4. This enigmatic concept of space as at once full and empty that is the medium of thought is given a more detailed exposition in a lecture delivered by Foucault some years later to a group of architects. See the author's "La conception foucauldienne de l'espace" (unpublished).
5. It is remarkable that this is fundamentally the only conception of freedom allowed in Foucault's framework.
6. Foucault, "Entretien avec Madeleine Chapsal" (1966), *DE.I.* (n°37), 515.
7. Foucault's conception of freedom is one of the more obscure aspects of his work. Although it bears a philosophically interesting relation to Kantian freedom (it generates a Kantian type of compatibilism, for example), it also contrasts with it strikingly, as the following specification about the form of thought of a period of history makes obvious: "It is the background against which our "free" thought emerges and scintillates for an instant" (p. 515).
8. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur ?" (1969), *DE.I.* (n°69), 791.
9. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur ?" (1969), *DE.I.* (n°69), 793.
10. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur ?" (1969), *DE.I.* (n°69), 792.
11. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur ?" (1969), *DE.I.* (n°69), 791.
12. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur ?" (1969), *DE.I.* (n°69), 803.
13. To the extent that it intervenes in what follows, the beginning of the nineteenth century marks the period of transition from Classical to Modern historical-conceptual configurations.

14. See Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, Texas: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976), pp. 28–9 on the distinction between *vox* and *littera* as a possible backdrop for Foucault's conception of literature.
15. Foucault, "Entretien avec Michel Foucault" (1980), *DE.IV.* (n°218), 43.
16. Foucault, "Distance, aspect, origine" (1963), *DE.I.* (n°273), 279.
17. Foucault, "Débat sur le roman" (1964), *DE.I.* (n°22), 370.
18. Foucault, "Préface à la transgression," (1963), *DE.I.*(n°13), 238.
19. In *KrV*, the distinction between the thinkable *nihil privatium* as the consequence of real conflict and the unthinkable *nihil negativum* as that of logical conflict is incorporated into a fourfold analysis of the concept of an object in general (A290/B346). There are four ways in which an object can be nothing. The most direct is the *nihil negativum*, an empty object without a concept, that is, the "object of a concept that contradicts itself" (A291/B348). Such an object is nothing because "the concept is nothing, the impossible, like a rectilinear figure with two sides" (A291/B348). Within the framework of the simple distinction between real and logical opposition of *NM*, this is the only brand of nothing that would be a consequence of logical opposition thus, the exposition of *KrV* represents a refinement of the concept of real opposition, one that shows that the *nihil negativum* is not the only possible consequence of such a conflict. Consequently, an object is nothing in a second way when there is an empty concept without an object (*ens rationis*). This is a "thought-entity," but it is like the *nihil negativum* an empty concept, insofar as it "may not be counted among the possibilities because it is a mere invention (although not self-contradictory)" (A292/B348). Another way that an object can be nothing is if there is an empty intuition without an object (*ens imaginarium*). In this case, the "mere form of intuition, without substance," does not comprise an object, but only "the merely formal conditions of one" (A291/B347). Kant describes this way of not being an object as "empty *data* for concepts" (A292/B349). Finally, an object is nothing when there is an empty concept with no object (*nihil privatium*). This is negation as nothing by contrast with reality as something, that is to say, "a concept of the absence of an object, such as shadow or cold" (A291/B347). Like the previous type of nothing, Kant qualifies it as "empty *data* for concepts," explaining that if "light were not given to the senses, then one would also not be able to represent darkness" (292/B349).
20. Kant's distinction between *Grenze* and *Schranken* is not observed by Foucault; however, the philosophical content of *limite* corresponds to the latter. *Épreuve* is the experience of a challenge, a test, or a trial (as in "trial of strength"), one in which one must prove oneself.
21. See Foucault analysis of Bataille's figure of the eye at pp. 244–7.
22. Foucault, "Débat sur la poésie" (1964), *DE.I.* (n°23), 398.
23. Foucault, "L'obligation d'écrire," (1964) *DE.I.*, (n°29), 437.

24. Until a recent point in history—and this reference to a time of transition is typically left vague by Foucault referring sometimes to Nietzsche and other times to his contemporaries—everything has turned us away from this space of thinking, but as though only to draw us back to it, but he locates its emergence in Kant, with the new path he opened when “he articulated, in a still very enigmatic way, metaphysical discourse and the reflection on the limits of our reason” (*DE.I*, 239). Kant himself closed the door he had opened by engulfing it in an anthropological question. After him, “dialectics” have substituted the interrogation of being and of limits with the play of contradiction and totality. A barrage of provocative factors was needed to rouse this state, and at first not many were affected: “To wake us from the slumber composed of dialectics and anthropology, it took the Nietzschean figures of the tragic and of Dionysius, of the death of God, of the philosopher’s hammer, of the overman who approaches with dove steps, and of the Return” (*DE.I*, 239).
25. In his logic lectures, Kant specifies that by contrast to a postulate (which cannot be proved), a problem a “proposition that is provable practically” (16: 280). Or a practical proposition “that requires a solution” (16: 88). Consider also: “A problem involves (1.) the *question*, which contains what is to be accomplished, (2.) the *resolution*, which contain the way in which what is to be accomplished can be executed, and (3.) the *demonstration* that when I have proceeded thus, what is required will occur.” (16: 114); and: “*Problems (problemata)* are demonstrable propositions that require a directive, or ones that express an action, the manner of whose execution is not immediately certain.” (16: 114)
26. Foucault situated the work of de Sade, contemporary of the shift from language to literature, at a strange limit that it constantly transgresses by removing from itself the space from which it speaks, only to take it back in a “gesture of appropriative repetition”; it evades not only its meaning, but its very being: “the indecipherable play of the equivocal in it is nothing other than the sign, extraordinarily acute (*grave*), of the contestation that forces it to double all language (that it repeats as it burns it) and of its own absence (that it constantly manifests). It could and in the strict sense, it should continue without stopping, in a murmur that has no other ontological status than that of such a contestation” (p. 257). Foucault’s account of the historical emergence of “literature” can be found at pp. 254–5, 260.
27. This admittedly leaves Foucault’s admiration for Jean Hyppolite, his former professor, unaccounted for. Hyppolite was a scholar of Modern philosophy whose immense contributions to the study and popularizing of Hegel were conducted independently of the contemporary Marxist-humanist ideological skewing. Of course, his important works had been published two decades prior to Foucault’s resistance to the dialectical. (See *OD*, Foucault’s

inaugural lecture at the Collège de France (where Foucault was taking up Hyppolite's chair, for a more favorable characterization of Hegel).

28. Foucault cites a case of this process from Blanchot's novel *Celui qui ne m'accompagnait pas*: "Not an utterance, barely a murmur, barely a chill, less than silence, less than the abyss of emptiness: the plenitude of emptiness, something that cannot be quieted, occupying all of space, the uninterrupted, the incessant, a chill and already a murmur, not a murmur but an utterance, and not just any utterance, but a distinct one, just (*juste*), within my reach" (Blanchot, *Celui qui ne m'accompagnait pas*, p. 125 cited at p. 524).
29. Canguilhem, Georges. "Médecine" (1959). In *Études d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences*. (Paris: Vrin, 1975), p. 390.

NOTES TO THE CONCLUSION

1. This way of making the distinction may exaggerate the independence of the forms, insofar as the relation of the subject to the experience of thought conditions the description of its relations to anything else.
2. After all, he wrote the book on madness: a massive history of madness published two years prior. See Foucault, *Histoire de la folie* (Paris: Plon, 1961).
3. Foucault, "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire," (1971), *DE.II*, (n°84), 146.
4. See Foucault, "La vérité et les formes juridiques," (1974), *DE.II*, (n°139), 538–646.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Foucault

AS: L'archéologie du savoir. Paris: Gallimard, 1969.

DE.I: Dits et Écrits I (1954–1969). Paris: Gallimard, 1994.

DE.II: Dits et Écrits II (1970–1975). Paris: Gallimard, 1994.

DE.III: Dits et Écrits III (1976–1979). Paris: Gallimard, 1994.

DE.IV: Dits et Écrits IV (1980–1988). Paris: Gallimard, 1994.

DS: « Il faut défendre la société ». Cours au Collège de France. 1976. Paris: Gallimard et le Seuil, 1997.

GSA: Genèse et structure de l'anthropologie de Kant, thèse complémentaire pour le Doctorat ès Lettres. Directeur d'études : J. Hyppolite, Université de Paris, Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, 1961.

HS: L'herméneutique du sujet. Cours au Collège de France. 1981–1982. Paris: Gallimard et le Seuil, 2001.

MC: Les mots et les choses. Paris: Gallimard, 1966.

QLC: "Qu'est que la critique ?," Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie 84 (1990), 35–63.

UP: L'histoire de la sexualité II. L'usage des plaisirs. Paris: Gallimard, 1984.

KANT

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KrV: Kritik der reinen Vernunft.

KU: Kritik der Urteilkraft.

NIETZSCHE

Translations often modified in the text.

FW: Die fröhliche Wissenschaft. In *Kritische Studienausgabe*, Bd. 3, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988. English translation: *The Gay Science*, B. Williams (ed.), J. Nauckhoff & A. Del Caro (trans.). Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

JGB: Jenseits von Gut und Böse. In *Kritische Studienausgabe*, Bd. 5, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988. English translation: *Beyond Good and Evil*, R. Horstmann (ed.), J. Norman (ed. & trans.). Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

N: Nachlaß 1884–9. In *Kritische Studienausgabe*, Bd. 11–13, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988. English translation of selections: *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, R. Bittner (ed.), K. Sturge (trans.). Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

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