

FOUCAULT'S FORGOTTEN HEGELIANISM

James Muldoon

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the history of the interpretation of the work of Michel Foucault a number of different thinkers have been associated with Foucault's ideas. While earlier interpretations focussed on the connection between Foucault, Nietzsche and Bataille,¹ more recent comparisons have been made with Kant and Heidegger.² But rarely is Foucault's work put into a meaningful dialogue with one of the most important and influential philosophers of the continental tradition: G. W. F. Hegel.³ On the one hand, it is not difficult to view Hegel and Foucault as diametrically opposed thinkers. Hegel is the arch-modernist, system builder, conservative and closed thinker of "absolute knowledge." Foucault is the post-modernist, sceptic and nominalist who turned against systematic philosophy and universal knowledge claims. It first appears that never could two more radically divergent thinkers be found. However, there are many striking similarities and points of contact of their respective projects. Placing the two in conversation reveals interesting parallels in their conceptualisations of political freedom, philosophical methodology and modernity. I argue that Foucault can be located within a Hegelian tradition of thought, as one of its most interesting variants, rather than as an anti- or non-Hegelian thinker. This has serious implications for how we conceptualise Foucault's work and its relation to critical theory today.

This is not to claim that Hegel's project is equivocal to Foucault's or to overlook the many glaring differences between the two. Their obvious differences, i.e. Hegel's celebration of reason, his philosophy of logic, his claims regarding absolute knowledge, versus Foucault's critique of regimes of rationality, his critique of logic and radical nominalism, are well known and documented in the history of philosophy. Rather, it is to say that both thinkers share certain common traits and take part in a similar tradition of post-Enlightenment critical philosophy. The strong influence of Hegel's philosophy on Foucault has often been forgotten due to the lack of recognition of Jean Hyppolite and his decisive influence over the formation of a generation of students in

the 1950s. Hyppolite's lectures on Hegel and his published work in *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Logic and Existence* had a large impact on the development of French thought at the time.⁴ Hyppolite teaches Foucault the Hegelian understanding of philosophy as its own time comprehended in thought. Both Hegel and Foucault extend Kant's critical philosophy in the direction of a historicisation and a de-transcendentalisation of his work. Foucault expressly positions himself in a line of post-Kantian thinking about the Enlightenment, which, in spite of Foucault's protestations, contains Hegel himself. A theoretical line can be traced from Hegel, through Hyppolite, and into the work of Foucault.

I argue that Hegel and Foucault share a common framework of what constitutes the primary methods and goals of a critical philosophy. First, I claim that Hegel and Foucault engage in a philosophical critique of contemporary practices by introducing mediation into the immediacy of the present in order to reveal the ways in which taken for granted forms of life are in fact the result of a long period of cultural development. The aim of this exercise is to pursue a project of human autonomy. Although Hegel and Foucault have different conceptions of what human autonomy means and how this could be achieved in modernity, they both seek to engage with the Kantian definition of autonomy in order to extend and transform it, rather than rejecting it outright. The second part of the article concerns philosophical methods. If the goal of philosophy for both thinkers is human autonomy then the method is a historical critique of the present through genealogical or phenomenological analysis. Both thinkers engage in a form of critical historical inquiry for the purpose of mediating the present, what Foucault calls "histories of the present." This article thus brings Hegel into conversation with Foucault on their concepts of autonomy and philosophical criticism.

Foucault's perceived anti-Hegelianism is partly a result of his work being read alongside of Deleuze and included as part of Deleuze's polemics against Hegel. Deleuze argues in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* that Hegelianism is a regressive historical force that must be overcome by a Nietzschean affirmation of the creative and productive powers of life.⁵ However, Foucault and Deleuze part company on a number of issues and it is simply inaccurate to equate the divergent projects of the two philosophers as identical on every point. It is true that Foucault's references to Hegel, when they are made, are almost always negative. But one of the aims of this article is to show that another reading of Hegel is possible outside of Foucault's own negative assessment of his work. Foucault states that

[i]n actuality, dialectics does not liberate differences; it guarantees, on the contrary, that they can always be recaptured. The dialectical sovereignty of similarity consists in permitting differences to exist, but always under the rule of the negative, as an instance on non-being ... freeing of difference requires thought without contradiction, without dialectics, without negation; thought that accepts divergence, affirmative thought whose instrument is disjunction; thought of the multiple ... it was necessary to free ourselves from Hegel—from the opposition of predicates, from contradiction and negation, from all of dialectics.⁶

This notion of differences being subsumed via contradiction into a unity and sameness is a theme that Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida all learn from Hyppolite, but it is only one possible form of Hegelianism that has been offered by Hegel scholars. There are a number of other possible readings of Hegel available and while Foucault sought to distance himself from both a dialectical logic and the confines of Hegel's philosophy more generally, there are a number of similarities that remain between their projects. They are both anti-utopian anti-revolutionaries who both support a version of radical reformism. They both believe it is not philosophy's role to instruct political actors on how to live. Rather, philosophy's role is to engage in a critical analysis of the world. The political act of the philosopher is to engage in a diagnosis of the present, which itself is to take a political stand.

This paper is divided into three sections. First, I seek to recover the hidden mediating figure of Jean Hyppolite that assists in explaining the thorough Hegelian education that Foucault received as a young student. Second, I provide a reading of Foucault's "What is Enlightenment?" essay to reveal the deep critical and dialectical themes that run through his work and how these could be linked to Hegel's philosophy. This also shines light on

FOUCAULT'S FORGOTTEN HEGELIANISM

Foucault's interest in the Enlightenment category of autonomy and its relationship to Hegel's own understanding of freedom. Finally, I offer a comparison of Hegel's method of phenomenology and Foucault's genealogy to show that the two thinkers were engaged in similar exercises. I conclude with some reflections on the state of dialectical thinking in Foucault's work.

HYPPOLITE AS FORGOTTEN MEDIATOR

One of the main reasons the Hegelian influence on Foucault has been neglected, if not forgotten, is because of the lack of recognition given to one of Foucault's first mentors, the great French Hegelian, Jean Hyppolite. In the fall of 1945 Foucault arrived in Paris at the *Lycée* Henri IV to take classes to prepare to be admitted to the *École normale supérieure*. Here Foucault took a course on Hegel with Hyppolite that was to have a profound effect over the direction of his studies. Although Foucault had previously taken a great interest in history, it was at Henri IV that Hyppolite introduced Foucault to philosophy through Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Speaking of Hyppolite's philosophy courses at the *Lycée*, one of Foucault's biographers notes: "there is no doubt that Jean Hyppolite was the one who initiated Foucault into the field that would become his destiny."⁷ Foucault himself would never forget Hyppolite's influence in these early days, speaking glowingly of the professor in whom one could hear "something of Hegel's voice and, perhaps, even the voice of philosophy itself."⁸ Foucault did not just take a course on Hegel, he engaged in a detailed study of his philosophy. In 1949, at the age of 23, Foucault completed a now lost thesis for his *diplôme d'études supérieures* under the supervision of Jean Hyppolite entitled "The Constitution of a Historical Transcendental in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*."⁹ Hyppolite was an important teacher for a whole generation of French students. He taught courses on Hegel and Marx at the Sorbonne from 1949 to 1954. At this point he became a professor and director at the *École normale supérieure*, which he held until 1963. In 1963 he took up a chair at the Collège de France entitled "The History of Systems," where he taught until his death in 1968. At the *École normale supérieure* Hyppolite sat on the committee in front of which Foucault would defend his doctoral thesis, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (History of Madness in the Classical Age). In the preface to the published work, Foucault thanked Hyppolite for having "read this work in a still unformed state, advised me when things were not simple, saved me from many errors, and showed me the value of being heard."¹⁰ Foucault gave a number of public acknowledgements to Hyppolite, both in a eulogy for Hyppolite at the *École normale supérieure* and in his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, where he in fact succeeded Hyppolite and took over his chair. Foucault himself gestures towards the Hegelian/Hyppolitean origins and future projections of his work when he states in 1972 that he places his future work "under his [Hyppolite's] sign."¹¹ Even as late as 1975, seven years after Hyppolite's death when Foucault published *Discipline and Punish*, he sent Hyppolite's widow a copy of his book with the dedication: "For Madame Hyppolite, in memory of the man to whom I owe everything." So what was this decisive influence of which Foucault has spoken on so many occasions?

Through his translation of *Phenomenology of Spirit* into French, Hyppolite assisted in mainstreaming Hegel's philosophy in a country that was, at the time, under the sway of neo-Kantianism. He also helped shift the interpretation of Hegel from a phenomenological and existential position towards an anti-humanist focus on discourse. Whereas Jean Wahl's 1929 *Le Malheur de conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* read phenomenological concerns into Hegel and interpreted him through the figure of the "unhappy consciousness,"¹² Hyppolite turned away from the lived experience of the subject towards the logical analysis of conceptual thought. Hyppolite's emphasis on the structure of human language as the basis of Hegel's *Logic* had a great effect on the post-structuralist generation. Foucault and his contemporaries were interested in anti-humanist critiques that sought to decentre the lived experience of the phenomenological subject in favour of an analysis of deeper systems and structures. Although Foucault describes his own concept of discourse as disloyal to Hegel, his early archaeological method is nevertheless partially made possible through Hyppolite's turn to language in Hegel's philosophy.¹³ Foucault states that Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence* was "one of the great books of our time" that posed the question of "the point where the tragedy of life finds its meaning in a Logic, where the genesis of a thought becomes the structure of a system, where existence itself is articulated in a Logic."¹⁴ Foucault found Hegel attractive partly because of the way in which, through Hyppolite, he seemed to refute the claims of the

existentialists and phenomenologists of the priority of consciousness and experience. Hyppolite argues that those who translate “self-consciousness” in Hegel as “man” have “somewhat falsified Hegel’s thought.”¹⁵ For the young Foucault, Hegel is viewed as capable of thinking a deeper logic that lies behind everyday experience.

In his inaugural address at the Collège de France in 1970 Foucault argues that Hyppolite effected a number of fundamental alterations “not within Hegelian philosophy, but upon it.”¹⁶ One can locate in this lecture a number of concepts that will become important starting points for Foucault’s own research. Hyppolite’s attempt to think Hegel alongside several other figures such as Marx, Kierkegaard, Husserl, Heidegger and Bergson mark the first points of departure for a line of thought stretching from Hegel to Foucault. Foucault argues that Hyppolite identifies the precise nature of Hegelianism and specifies what is involved in an attempt to break from Hegel’s philosophy of “absolute knowledge.” Foucault points to a number of gestures made by Hyppolite with regard to Hegel’s philosophy. First, Foucault states that Hyppolite abandons claims that philosophy could culminate in a “totality” that synthesized and reconciled all oppositions. Instead Hyppolite presents philosophical thinking as “an endless task, against the background of an infinite horizon.”¹⁷ The supposed finality of absolute knowledge should be thought rather as a “continuous recommencement” of consciousness interrogating itself. This notion of critical thinking as an endless task of a critique of the present is echoed in Foucault’s “What is Enlightenment?” essay. He takes up Hyppolite’s challenge to think a form of philosophy that does not attempt to lay claim to an absolute knowledge and instead places itself in the purely finite realm of human affairs. He takes part in a return to the Young Hegelian attempt to politicise Hegel’s dialectical method and transform it into a critique of existing social practices. Next, Foucault argues that rather than attempting to incorporate all non-philosophical forms of experience into philosophy, Hyppolite attempts to establish a non-reductive connection between philosophy and the world. Hyppolite seeks to provide the starting point for philosophy in the non-philosophical of social relations and political contestation. Foucault learns from Hyppolite that philosophy cannot think of itself as a purely autonomous domain but must base itself in the arbitrariness and complexities of human history. It was Hegel who had first thought that philosophy should be a matter of conceptualising one’s own time in thought and it is this sentiment that is continued in both Hyppolite and Foucault. Foucault’s modernism of historical self-creation revisits a number of themes, not of the Hegelian absolute, but of Hyppolite’s Hegel as a thinker of modernity as an era of “repeated interrogation.” Foucault can be viewed as extending Hyppolite’s paradigm further still, not simply placing Hegel in relation to Kierkegaard, Marx and Heidegger, but questioning the very foundations of a totalising conceptual logic.

Hyppolite offers Foucault the first steps along a path through which Foucault envisions himself escaping Hegel. However, if this is the case, it is also primarily a Hyppolitean version of Hegel that he and others in his generation feel the need to reject. For Deleuze and Derrida, it is Hyppolite’s Hegel that will be rejected, the Hegel who raises difference to contradiction, to an internal difference within a totality, and who incorporates all otherness into a logic of sense.¹⁸ For Foucault, it was the totalising, unbroken, and all-encompassing nature of Hegel’s philosophy that had to be rejected, for it was one that did not allow for what Foucault describes as “experiences in which the subject might be able to dissociate from itself, sever the relation with itself, lose its identity.”¹⁹ For Foucault, Hegel established a philosophical world with a “model of history’s unbroken intelligibility.”²⁰ One of the central problems for Foucault was Hyppolite’s attempt to “turn Hegel into a schema for the experience of modernity.”²¹ This ran counter to Foucault’s own interpretation of modernity and his assessment of its possibilities and dangers. Although Hegel and Foucault both portray modernity as an ambiguous, contradictory and tension-filled epoch, they differ significantly in their diagnoses of the new social forces that were unleashed in the modern era. Hegel believes that the emerging forms of diremption and alienation in modernity could be reconciled through the unifying power of art, religion, philosophy and the modern state. For Hegel, although modern individuals have become divided from God, nature and their community, modern institutions and practices have the ability to bring individuals back into a meaningful relationship with their social world through adequate reflection on their own activities. Hegel presents a legitimation model of modernity that attempts to rationalise and justify modern political institutions that will give modern individuals a sense of being at home in the world.²² For Foucault, modernity’s claim to provide greater freedom to its subjects is undermined by the extent to which the production of this freedom is tied up with increasingly insidious and restrictive methods of

FOUCAULT'S FORGOTTEN HEGELIANISM

surveillance and control. Modern practices of governmentality seek to direct the conduct of subjects by structuring their field of possible actions.²³ For Foucault, Hegel's restrictive and unified historical narrative of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* does not enable the appropriate critical attitude to contemporary practices. Foucault invokes notions of rupture, transgression, transformation and the injection of difference and discontinuity into life. Rather than affirming the legitimacy of historical knowledge, Foucault is interested in a critique of the limits of knowledge and an attempt to move beyond them.²⁴

However, when Foucault speaks of Hyppolite's lesson of giving him "an appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from Hegel," one could ask the question: which Hegel?²⁵ Whose interpretation of Hegel does Foucault find it necessary to reject and for what reasons? Foucault states that "we have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us."²⁶ Perhaps in his desire to avoid an encounter with a stiff and motionless Hegel waiting at the end of the path—Hyppolite's Hegel of the unity of thought and being and the totalising nature of the absolute—Foucault fails to realise the presence of a much more open, fluid and historicist Hegel that has continued alongside Foucault throughout his journey. Foucault's own method and goals have more in common with contemporary readings of Hegel that have begun to be offered by a new generation of Hegel readers such as Žižek, Comay and Malabou.²⁷ These commentators undertake more open and radical readings of Hegel's texts that emphasise the *aporias*, incompleteness and excesses of Hegel's philosophy. The emergence of a different Hegel, one that is not reduced to a caricature of the static thinker of "absolute knowledge," opens the path for a re-examination of the Hegelian origins of Foucault's philosophical goals and methodology.

HEGEL AND FOUCAULT ON AUTONOMY

When Foucault wrote in 1984 that the philosophical ethos of Enlightenment is "a critique and a permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy," it is Hegel rather than Kant that it would be more correct to say that Foucault was invoking.²⁸ For it is not Kant's largely ahistorical and transcendental philosophy that is depicted, but Hegel's historical and dialectic philosophy of the dual-natured process of humanity's self-actualisation (creation) and critical self-reflection (critique) in its movement towards self-determination (autonomy). Foucault's reference to "critique," reflects Hegel's commitment to a critical philosophy that attempts to attain a more adequate picture of ourselves as human beings, whereas "creation of ourselves" could be taken as referring to Hegel's analysis of the self-actualisation of human beings through the continual transformation of concrete human societies, which he describes as the movement of "Spirit." In his essay "What is Enlightenment?" it could be argued that Foucault is echoing Hegel's own claim that the task of philosophy is to comprehend its own time in thought, or in other words, to provide a permanent philosophical critique of the present. In spite of his own conscious efforts to present an anti-Hegelian face to the world, Foucault can be situated within a line of post-Hegelian philosophy that moves from Jean Hyppolite and extends in an even more radical direction to Foucault himself. Although there are significant differences in the respective details of their political philosophies, a shared politico-philosophical project can be discerned in the writings of Hegel and Foucault. Both thinkers believe that the historical task of philosophy is to introduce mediation into the immediacy of the present in order to further the project of human autonomy. Whereas the language of "mediation" is distinctly Hegelian, the activity of historical critique is common to Hegel and Foucault. For Hegel, the present can only be adequately understood through a phenomenological analysis of the series of stages that human beings have traversed in order to attain their current form. A phenomenological analysis assists uncovering the various modes by which we came to constitute ourselves as free subjects. For Foucault, our capacity to intervene politically is increased by uncovering the contingency of present social relations and understanding that things could be otherwise. The seemingly universal and necessary aspects of current institutions and practices are revealed through genealogical analysis to be merely contingent and arbitrary. While different aspects of human freedom are more pronounced in each thinker, for both the end goal of historical investigation and political activity is human autonomy. How, then, is autonomy understood for Hegel and Foucault?

The important connection between Hegel and Foucault on the question of autonomy can be located in the way in which they respond to the Enlightenment project and Kant's critical philosophy. Both thinkers perceive themselves to be working in the Enlightenment tradition and transforming it from within in a number of fundamental respects. Foucault distances himself from humanism while at the same time situating Enlightenment thought as the unsurpassed horizon of his age. Foucault argues that it is the activation of a certain philosophical attitude of critique, one that problematizes the "constitution of the self as an autonomous subject," which is a key part of the Enlightenment legacy.²⁹ Kant's project of using our reason without guidance from another is important for Foucault as the starting point of the Enlightenment attitude. However, whereas Kant's formulation of the problem of human autonomy relied upon an analysis and critique of the limits of knowledge and a commitment to not transgressing the limits of a finite knowing subject, Foucault transforms this critical limit attitude into a positive project of questioning the perceived limits of human freedom. Foucault's critical philosophy involves a questioning of the universal and formal structures that place limits on the constitution of historical subjects and an investigation into which practices can be modified to allow for a greater space for human freedom. Foucault follows Hegel in historicising and de-transcendentalising Kant's critical philosophy to take into account humanity's historical development and existence in concrete societies. Foucault learns from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* that humanity is engaged in a process of self-transformation, which entails a continual alteration of its nature. "The point," for Foucault, "is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression."³⁰ In Foucault's transformation of Kant's critical philosophy the nature of our understanding of human autonomy is reversed. For Kant, human autonomy involves the discovery of and adherence to the universal laws of our higher cognitive faculty of reason, which, importantly for Kant, we prescribe to ourselves. By understanding our limits as human beings and following a law that we ourselves have created, we can ensure that we act autonomously. Foucault seeks to reverse the priority. Instead of seeking to discover universal laws, Foucault believes that we should engage in a test of the limits that are currently placed on us in order to go beyond them. He maintains the same critical attitude of utilising reason to become autonomous, but for Foucault this critical legacy of the Enlightenment is best conceptualised as a "work on our limits, that is, a patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty."³¹ Foucault's concept of autonomy involves a continual critical appraisal of how we constitute ourselves as modern subjects, but there is no determined content of what it would mean to be free. Foucault states in "The Subject and Power" that we should strive towards the reversibility of power relations so that we have as much flexibility as possible in how we constitute ourselves as subjects, but unlike Kant, the content of autonomy remains open for historical actors themselves to decide how best to actualise themselves in their autonomy.

Hegel's own interpretation of the Kantian project of autonomy differs from Foucault's notion of a "limit attitude." Instead, Hegel is concerned with the cultural disintegration of modern society: the breakdown of sources of socialisation and legitimacy and the erosion of traditional institutions and values. Modern individuals must be reconnected to their families, communities and the modern state and allowed to feel "at home" in the world. An essential aspect of freedom for Hegel is an overcoming of alienation and an incorporation of the perceived otherness of the external world into the self. Political freedom can be objectively located in the world for Hegel through the establishment and legitimation of the rational and organic institution of the modern state.³² The role of the state is to overcome the divisions within modern individuals and reconcile them with other citizens, the alienating effects of the market place and the potential externality of social and political institutions. Hegel shares Foucault's attempt to transform the Kantian notion of autonomy, but he stays closer to Kant's faith in human reason to be able to reconcile the historical forces of modernity and provide a new foundation for human freedom.

However, Hegel shares Foucault's concern with human freedom and believes that the discovery of the human will's striving towards freedom was the most important discovery of the modern age.³³ Hegel's political philosophy begins from the starting point of an individual free will. He seeks to show how the rational institutions of the state can be developed from a conception of the free will. This would show them to be an organic, rational and legitimate manifestation of human freedom in the world insofar as they conserved the subjective freedom

FOUCAULT'S FORGOTTEN HEGELIANISM

of individuals within the objective structure of the modern state. Kant's conception of human beings providing laws for themselves is extended by Hegel to include the necessity of creating a realm of self-consistency and non-alienation that includes the customs and laws of the state. True autonomy for Hegel involves reconciling oneself with the freedom of other individuals and showing how different individual's freedoms could be reconciled in an objective realm of political institutions. This is the task of Hegel's political philosophy through the detailed analysis of the necessary institutions that a state must adopt in order to adequately actualise freedom in the world. Foucault is more sceptical about the ability of human reason to create the blueprint of institutions that would ensure human freedom. While Foucault shares Hegel's anti-utopian and anti-revolutionary political position, he extends Hegel's scepticism of the ability of philosophy to legislate for the world of politics by refusing to prescribe any form of institutional arrangement for modern societies. In this way he can also be seen as extending and transforming, rather than completely rejecting the outlines of Hegel's philosophical project. Although both thinkers have different conceptions of human freedom based on their divergent assessments of the modern era, both maintain that the task of philosophy and historical analysis is to further the project of human autonomy.

PHENOMENOLOGY AND GENEALOGY

Hegel and Foucault are often taken to have opposing philosophical methodologies. Hegel is assumed to deploy a totalising philosophy of history that seeks to annul instances of alterity and difference within a closed system of identity, whereas Foucault is a radical nominalist who locates discontinuities and ruptures in history and searches for the arbitrary, contingent and constructed within the seemingly natural and universal. However, underneath these apparent differences lie several core similarities in the historical methodologies of the two thinkers. In this section I will discuss Hegel's phenomenological method in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Foucault's genealogical method developed in his essay on Nietzsche and work on sexuality and prisons. Both Hegelian phenomenology and Foucauldian genealogy are forms of historical investigation, or what I will call critical historical work, which intersect and overlap in important respects. While Evangelia Sembou has claimed that both philosophers can be said to share a critical attitude towards a "correspondence theory of truth," I argue that both thinkers are involved in an analysis of the present through the traces and remnants of the past.³⁴ They seek to interrogate the ways in which we constitute ourselves in the present as a result of our long formation through social and historical experience. This work involves a phenomenological or genealogical investigation into the ensemble of antagonistic forces that produced current social relations. Both thinkers allow for a questioning and transformation of social practices and institutions by unravelling a series of problems that have entangled us over the course of our development. I analyse five main lines of inquiry along which it may be fruitful to explore a relationship between the methodologies of these two thinkers. I will examine the ways in which Hegel's phenomenology could be described in language that evokes the genealogical methods of Foucault without, in the process, significantly distorting the projects of either thinker.

First, phenomenology is a recollective narrative of the process of our own coming to be as modern subjects. It is a description of the various strategies and struggles that form the history of our development. In the same way as Foucault's genealogies seek to provide insight into the formation of vital aspects of ourselves as historical subjects of the present (i.e. his studies on madness, sexuality, punishment etc.), so too does Hegel provide an analysis of our own self-becoming. *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is a story of the human spirit's journey through a number of thought positions and historical moments that, among other things, tracks humanity's development to its current epoch. For Hegel, the truth of human beings is not contained naturally and unproblematically in the present, but is buried within all of its past experiences, which, as completed, can be brought before modern consciousness one after another in a "gallery of images" that constitutes a history of its own development.³⁵ The purpose of this critical historical work is to gain a more rich and complex perspective on the status of the present. It assists in de-naturalising the present, what Hegel would call mediating it, so as to attain a degree of critical distance on contemporary practices.

Phenomenology also deals with the complex processes—including the errors, deviations, and dead ends—that have led to the constitution of the present. It would be unsympathetic to characterise Hegel as having an overly idealised or fully progressive understanding of history. For Hegel, there are aspects of history from which we can learn nothing: there are wars, slaughters, and entire forms of life that are largely meaningless. Nor is Hegel's phenomenology a description of the progress of a rational inevitability. Hegel's history is retrospective, told from the position of the present, which details how—given that history has unfolded in the way that it did—we came to be the kinds of modern subjects that we are today. It is not intended to be a description of a process that was necessary and inevitable from the beginning. Rather, phenomenology can be viewed as a meticulous search through the historical past for problems, conflicts and moments of contradiction that illuminate key moments in the gradual struggle and development of humanity. Hegel looks for singular moments in history: the way they exhibit themselves not in ideal and heroic deeds, but in sentiments, mindsets or standpoints of thought that are unable to move beyond themselves and remain stuck in pathological structures of repetition and self-defeat. Hegel seeks to untie the various knots of previous thought patterns by revealing their internal inconsistencies and gesturing towards a more adequate conceptualisation of their own problems.

Third, phenomenology is not history done for its own sake but critical historical work undertaken in order to pursue a task in the present. Phenomenology and genealogy are both written for the purpose of gaining greater insight into contemporary social life. Foucault characterises his own work as writing 'the history of the present,' which emphasises the way in which his critical studies are directed towards current political problems. In the same way, Hegel seeks to diagnose a series of inadequate and problematic mindsets or standpoints that many forms of modern consciousness are still trapped within. The journey of spirit in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* contains a number of diagnoses of specific problems that would have afflicted his contemporaries: Hegel's era would have been filled with mystics, beautiful souls, stoics and sceptics, Kantians and unhappy consciousnesses, all of whom Hegel believes subscribe to unworkable philosophies of life. Critical historical work is designed to have an effect on the present, to provide a framework of intelligibility in order to break down and transform current problematic institutions and practices.

Fourth, phenomenology challenges the idea of a timeless, universal and unchanging human essence that endures beneath or behind historical experience. Hegel is among the first critics of metaphysics who lays bare the pretensions of holding to a "timeless and essential secret" of human beings, for he sees that in truth, "the secret [is] that they have no essence."³⁶ The individual, ethical figure of self-consciousness is only the result of a long developmental process throughout history, rather than a given that is presupposed by philosophical thought. Human beings are the product of their circumstances and cannot be defined or determined outside of their socio-historical formation. The subject, in Hegel, has no essential transcendental identity. This is to say that there is no human essence for Hegel that remains constant regardless of context and stays the same over time. Moreover, this subject is also only an abstraction from the broader social processes of social development and so to understand the subject one must obtain knowledge concerning the nature of these transformations. Foucault's critique of the subject in its classical Enlightenment form is a continuation of Hegel's historicisation of the philosophy of the subject.

Phenomenology also rejects the search for pure origins of truth, since the actual must develop out of a long process of contingent historical events. The final product of human society that exists today is not located in its pure form at its birth. Hegel argues that to grasp the truth of an entity one must allow that entity to undergo a process of its own development, in which it differentiates and particularises itself. He does not think that one can predetermine the outcome of such a process, for "truth is not a minted coin that can be given and pocketed ready-made."³⁷ An entity is not given in its essence at its origins; there is no lofty moment of awakening in which such an entity would emerge in a state of preformation. Rather than search for origins, Foucault highlights that Nietzsche undertakes an examination not of origin but of stock or descent [*Herkunft*].³⁸ This is to seek out the subtle marks and different traits that have combined in various networks to have an effect on the way in which an entity was formed. Such a history would be full of contingencies, arbitrary encounters and loss along the way.

FOUCAULT'S FORGOTTEN HEGELIANISM

However, it is clear that phenomenology and genealogy are not identical enterprises. I am not arguing for a complete correspondence between the theorists' works or advocating that we should lose sight of the many important differences that separate the two, rather I think that reconceptualising the relationship between the two reveals a continuing Hegelian legacy in Foucault's work. As these differences have been adequately treated in available scholarship, the most important of them can be parsed in brief. First, Hegelian phenomenology is a single narrative of the development of Hegel's concept of spirit [*Geist*], which travels from a position of sense certainty to that of absolute knowledge. On the other hand, Foucault's critical studies are particular, localised and discontinuous, piling up rather than connecting together in a single narrative of development. Foucault completely disavows any notion of a unified or progressive scheme of history. Second, Foucault engages in highly empirical analysis and works through meticulous archival research, whereas Hegel's method is more idealised, focussing on character types and paradigms of modes of thinking or living. At times it is not clear to which historical figures or movements Hegel's caricatures are referring, and in a sense, it does not matter, because they are designed to play a broader role than being reduced to one particular moment in history. The most important difference between the two, however, relates to the status of reason in their work. Hegel's critical histories search for kernels of rationality—instances that show the development of our ability to rationally comprehend the world. The belief in the basic intelligibility and rationality of the world (for Hegel proved by speculative philosophy), underlies his entire project. Foucault, on the other hand, aims to break apart the seemingly universal and necessary aspects of human reason to open up the possibility of thinking and acting otherwise. He attempts to look behind the necessary to the contingent by laying bare the artifice of operations of power propping up those relations which are ultimately arbitrary constraints on human behaviour. Foucault abandons the attempt to demonstrate either the rationality or legitimacy of contemporary practices and institutions, partly because he is more attentive to the darker side of reason as a potential source of normalisation, domination and control, but partly because he has followed Hyppolite in breaking with Hegel's pretension to develop an all-encompassing philosophy.

CONCLUSION

To what extent could Foucault be said to be continuing a dialectical mode of thinking? Foucault explicitly rejects dialectics at a number of points in his work such as where he states that

I suggest replacing this dialectical logic with what I would call strategic logic. A logic of strategy does not stress contradictory terms within a homogeneity that promises their resolution in a unity. The function of strategic logic is to establish the possible connections between disparate terms which remain disparate. The logic of strategy is the logic of connections between the heterogeneous and not the logic of the homogenization of the contradictory.³⁹

However, we can see how Foucault is here rejecting a particular image of Hegel, one that does not exhaust the possibilities for conceptualising dialectical logic today. The Hegel that Foucault finds intolerable is one that reduces all difference to sameness and attempts to escape all of the arbitrariness and complexities of modern life within a totalising logic. However, without arguing that Foucault himself is a dialectician, there are a number of ways in which Foucault could be located within a tradition of dialectical thinking. Such a line of inquiry has already been attempted by John Grant, who traces the dialectics of Foucault's concepts of power and resistance.⁴⁰ Hegel considered that dialectical thought was the most appropriate methodology for a critical understanding of the world. For Hegel, the dialectic is not just a method that an individual subject can apply to an object of inquiry. It is not like a formal logic or mathematical formula that can be applied to an external object. The reason that it is more than this is because dialectical philosophy is making a claim about the nature of the world itself, not just proposing a methodology for understanding it. It is an understanding of how the world is structured and composed and hence a plan for how it can best be understood. Dialectics is a process that is discovered in reality. Hegel thinks that one cannot understand objects in the world as a set of isolated, static and immobile things. Dialectics understands the world as in a constant state of motion and flux in which reality is structured organically and developmentally. Things are inherently interconnected and display their

essential natures when they are seen as organized wholes or systems. They have essential tendencies to develop and unfold their natures by continually transforming their organic structures.

Foucault does not think that reality itself is structured according to a pre-conditioned set of relations but he would agree with Hegel that analysis should involve the immanent study of the movement of the object of inquiry itself. Hegel says one has to present the “immanent soul of the content itself.”⁴¹ One has to descend down to the level of the phenomena and trace its movements, its interconnections and the way in which it operates. The intention is not to follow some universal set of rules called “dialectical logic” or to read into everything the same schema but to trace the specific interconnections unique to each subject matter that is treated. Dialectics involves suspending external or transcendent principles or methodologies that seek to organize the material in advance, and being attentive to the movement of things themselves. This is the sense in which Foucault continues the dialectical tradition in an altered form. Dialectical philosophy must allow for the object to unfold according to its own basic dynamics, which for Hegel, but not Foucault, was coextensive with the unfolding of reason in the world.

Where critical historical studies will lead us is an open question for Hegel and Foucault, since both thinkers saw modernity as a radically open epoch. Hegel would agree with Foucault that one could never hope to attain a complete and definitive knowledge of what may constitute an epoch’s historical limits. He would readily acknowledge that he had not finished the task of philosophy once and for all because no human being could step outside of his or her own age to conceptualise the future. This task remains an open one for each successive generation. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel believed that he had constructed the most adequate institutional arrangement that would actualise freedom in his own era given the prevailing balance of social forces, but Hegel was no utopian. His political institutions closely resembled the types of progressive reforms that were in the process of transforming the Prussian state in the 1810s, although this movement was to come to a halt in 1819 following the rise of Restoration tendencies. The future is inherently open and unknowable for Hegel. It is not a domain that human beings can know with certainty or about which it is any use to speculate or prophesise. For Hegel, the immediacy of the present is ruptured by a phenomenological analysis of the past in order to provide for the possibility of a more autonomous existence. Foucault continues in the tradition of a critical historical project that seeks out human autonomy through a critique of the present through traces of the past.

FOUCAULT'S FORGOTTEN HEGELIANISM

NOTES

1. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourses of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985, 238-266.
2. Béatrice Han-Pile, *Foucault's Critical Project*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002, 3, 12.
3. Some exceptions to this neglect are Gary Gutting, "Foucault, Hegel and Philosophy" in Eds Timothy O'Leary and Christopher Falzon *Foucault and Philosophy*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010; Evangelia Sembou, "Foucault and Hegel Re-visited" *An Anthology of Philosophical Studies, Vol. 4*. Ed Patricia Hanna. Athens: Athens Institute for Education and Research, 2010, 99-110; Frederic Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*. London and New York: Verso, 2009, 51-2, 121-3; Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth Century France*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, 217-230.
4. Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974; Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*. Trans. Leonard Lawler and Amit Sen. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
5. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. London and New York: Verso, 1986.
6. Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 184-5.
7. Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991, 17.
8. Michel Foucault, "Jean Hyppolite (1907-1968)" *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* (1969) 14(2): 131.
9. Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, 30.
10. Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*. London: Routledge, 2006, xxxv.
11. Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language" included as an appendix to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon, 1972, 237.
12. Jean Wahl, *Le Malheur de conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1929.
13. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 235.
14. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 235.
15. Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 20.
16. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 236.
17. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 236.
18. Gilles Deleuze, "Review of Jean Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*" in Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 195.
19. Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault" *Power: Essential Works of Foucault*. Ed J. D. Faubion. London: Penguin, 2001, 248.
20. Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," 248.
21. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 236.
22. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 21.
23. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power", *Critical Inquiry* 8(4), 1982: 790.
24. Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" *The Foucault Reader*. Ed Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984, 45.
25. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 235.
26. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 235.
27. Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing*. London: Verso, 2012; Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010; Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
28. Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" 44.
29. Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" 42.
30. Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" 45.
31. Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" 50.
32. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 21.
33. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 35.
34. Sembou, "Foucault and Hegel Re-visited" 99-110.
35. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
36. Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" 78.
37. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 22.
38. Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" *The Foucault Reader*, 81.
39. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*. New York: Picador/Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 42.
40. John Grant, "Foucault and the Logic of Dialectics", *Contemporary Political Theory* 9(2), 2010: 220-238.
41. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*. London: Routledge, 1969, 28.