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Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics. by Hubert L. Dreyfus; Paul Rabinow; Michel Foucault

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cases in which theoretical convictions influence appearances, there are also many cases in which appearances seem quite immune to the presence of conflicting beliefs. For example, coins persist in looking elliptical from certain angles, even after years of knowing that they are really round.

Therefore, it is not obvious that new, entrenched, geometrical beliefs would change the way things look. Moreover, it is unclear that we need go to any great lengths at all in order to see things noneuclideanly. Maybe it suffices to glance at an Escher print?<sup>4</sup> Or perhaps the geometry of our visual space is *already* radically noneuclidean? Apart from an inconclusive section on Thomas Reid, little attention is given to the psychological literature in which such views are argued.<sup>5</sup> Thus there are considerations here that Nerlich does not go into. However, the approach is fresh and often ingenious, and I found this chapter especially absorbing.

Less satisfying is the treatment of conventionalism—hampered, I think, by a conception of the doctrine as metaphysical rather than epistemological. This results in a long discussion which contributes very little to the giant problem that motivates conventionalism: on what basis do we prefer our theories of geometry and physics to an alternative, empirically equivalent, combination? But this part of the book is not typical. In sharp contrast to it, Nerlich's discussions of relativism, orientability, and visualization are original, provocative, and well worth studying.

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*Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics.* HUBERT L. DREYFUS and PAUL RABINOW, with an Afterword by Michel Foucault. Chicago: Chicago University Press. First Edition, 1982, xxiii, 231 p. Second Edition, with an Interview with Michel Foucault, 1983, xxvii, 271 p. Cloth \$25.00, paper \$8.95.

Never before has an editor sent me the first edition of a book when the second was already on sale. A second edition within a year of

<sup>4</sup>For an illuminating analysis of Escher's work, see Marianne L. Teuber, "Sources of Ambiguity in the Prints of Maurits C. Escher," *Scientific American*, CCXXXI, 1 (July 1974): 90-104.

<sup>5</sup>See Patrick Suppes, "Is Visual Space Euclidean?", *Synthese*, xxxv, 3 (August 1977): 397-421, for a good survey and evaluation of research on the geometry of visual space.

the first speaks more strongly than words for the value of Dreyfus and Rabinow's work, and, since their first edition has already been widely reviewed (and read), I can most usefully tell how they have supplemented it. They add a 24-page interview with Foucault and an 11-page summing up. These 35 pages of "Afterword 1983" are a brilliant introduction to work that we expected to see Foucault complete over the next few years, were it not for his death in June, 1984.

An instant second edition was a necessary part of a good book on Foucault during his lifetime. No philosopher commanded a wider American audience than he; so books about him proliferated. But he never stood still; so commentary, once written, would fade off into the story of a phase in intellectual development—unless it were regularly retooled.

Among books about Foucault now in print or in press, that of Dreyfus and Rabinow stands out in two ways. First, they approach his work not as disciples, but as people from another tradition. They are richly informed by Heidegger. It is of no moment that this often leads them to ideas or a style of writing that I cannot endorse; for it makes their book an interaction with, rather than a presentation of, someone else. Secondly, since this is interaction, it leads both to dialogue, within the first edition, and, in the Afterword of 1983, to the most useful kind of update: an interview about work then in progress.

The overriding topics of the new Afterword are traditional for analytic philosophers, namely, some mix of ethics and metaethics, and an inquiry into the self and personal identity. But where analytic philosophy would treat these as two "problems," for Foucault they were inseparable. He contrasts moral codes, which tell you what to do, with ethics. Ethics concerns "the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself . . . and which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions" (238). Only for a moment does this definition seem strange: is it not in fact an illuminating characterization of, for example, Kant's ethics? Yet where Kant will found his theory on an account of freedom and the noumenal self, Foucault—always a respectful turner-upside-down of Kant—thought of freedom and the self as constituted by ethics and what he somewhat opaquely called "techniques of the self."

Foucault was a complete nominalist about things human. His blockbuster books 1960–1975 were about the mad, how we classify them and what we do to them, about disease and how we conceive

it, about the wicked and how we punish them, and about life, labor, language, and the human sciences. None of these topics has an identity independent of what we say and do. For long Foucault was fascinated by fairly sudden mutations in our practices in which something, say "life" as an object of study, came into being (The very word, 'biology' is dated by the Dictionary as 1802). Yet Foucault was in a curious way only incidentally a student of the past. To use one stale catch phrase, he wrote histories of the present. He was concerned with what made possible our present range of beliefs, practices, and objects of thought—and how this excluded other ways of life. His work on the self had the same character, but encompasses a vast time span, the entire traditional "European" culture of Greek, Hebrew, and Christian.

Foucault engendered specialist literatures on every topic he touched. He also started abstract debates about power and knowledge, but those two interlocking themes can now be seen as only two-thirds of larger exploration. How do we become constituted as persons? In the Interview he says that there are at least three ways (237): (1) as subjects of knowledge, as studied, for example in *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963) or *The Order of Things* (1966); (2) as subjects who act on others, as for example in *Discipline and Punish* (1975); (3) as moral agents. It is this third dimension which is the topic of his present work.

It began with *The History of Sexuality: Vol. I, Introduction*. That appeared as *La Volonté de Savoir* in 1976. Five more volumes were projected, written, awaited, postponed, rewritten. The Afterword 1983 tells something of that. More important is his description of the kinds of topics you might address if you were a complete nominalist about ethics and the self (238f). First, there is "ethical substance," the subject matter that will be endlessly worked over in the ethics of the day, what a person worries about as a morally alert individual. This "substance" slowly changes in a story that Foucault hoped to weave from Greeks through Augustine to us.

Secondly, there is the "mode of subjection," the way in which people are invited or incited to recognize their moral obligations. Divine law in sacred text? Kantian reason and autonomy? Californian EST and the doctrine of feelings? Thirdly, there are the means by which we are supposed to change ourselves, a whole series of approved techniques, including asceticism.

Finally, there is a sort of teleology, the kind of being to which we aspire. These four are only a framework on which various exam-

ples are to be hung. As always in Foucault, the examples are outrageous in a sentence, but become fascinating as more and more historical details and concurrences are added.

Foucault's historical inquiries always had a practical bent. There are some casual remarks on liberation movements needing a new kind of ethics, and being unable to provide it. In the Afterword written for the first edition, he said that

. . . the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries (216).

The new Afterword is vastly richer than that in its conception of how the individual is formed. As always the concern is with the present. We come to understand how we were formed, in order to break with that way. Foucault may have been curiously successful, already, in creating new breaks. There are knowledgeable people who blame him, in print, for the fact that New York State allows far more of its former asylum inmates to wander defenseless on the streets of the metropolis—as does the government of Italy. Foucault is unrepentant that these changes have brought new problems: *of course*.

We combat something we see as the present danger. Foucault, in 1950, was appalled by asylums. Later he was engaged in collective assault on the French penal system. But every new arrangement of power and knowledge creates new dangers. He was therefore accused of nihilism. Foucault was irritated by this, and restrains himself from adding that nihilism is itself an historical construct of a previous century. He speaks of his own work as leading to "hyper- and pessimistic activism" (232). "Hyper" because his archaeology tried to uncover the principles, the *arche* from which the present danger springs. If one understands the principles and the constraints that they impose, we need no longer see them as the only principles. By undermining, a danger may be destroyed. "Pessimistic" because Foucault denies that there are final true solutions to the perplexities of existence. Each new practice creates its own dangers.

Critics of this uncompromising attitude, often professed nominalists or pragmatists themselves, fail to see that Foucault was making an elementary deduction from his own strict nominalism about human affairs. There is obviously no salvation in eternity for

those who deny the immortal soul. Foucault was the rare nominalist apprised of the equally evident fact that, if there is no intrinsic human nature, there is no salvation, period. There remain dangers and the combatting of dangers. Our world will be a more dangerous place without him.

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#### NOTES AND NEWS

The Department of Philosophy of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, with a grant from the Franklin J. Matchette Foundation, will hold a conference on rationality May 17-19, 1985, in Blacksburg, Virginia. Principal speakers will be Michael Bratman (Stanford), Stephen Darwall (Michigan), Allan Gibbard (Michigan), Frederic Schick (Rutgers), and Jon Elster (Oslo). Further information may be obtained from Harlan B. Miller or William H. Williams, Department of Philosophy, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg 24061.

The Center for Philosophy and Public Policy at the University of Maryland will sponsor a workshop on Teaching Philosophy and Public Policy to be held in Washington, D.C. at Georgetown University, June 19-21, 1985. Those wishing to attend or receive further information should write to Lori Owen, Workshop Coordinator, Center for Philosophy and Public Policy, University of Maryland, College Park 20742.

Vassar College, with support from the Sloan Foundation, is hosting a conference on the theoretical and practical issues in the teaching of cognitive science to undergraduates, June 19-20, 1985. Discussions will consider the nature of cognitive science and the pros and cons of teaching it at the undergraduate level. Further information can be obtained from Ken Livingston, Vassar College, Box 479, Poughkeepsie, N.Y. 12601.

#### NEW BOOKS IN PAPERBACK

- MASI, MICHAEL: *Boethius and the Liberal Arts: A Collection of Essays*. Berne: Peter Lang, 1982. 220 p. SF 52.
- MATEO, MARTHA: *Razon y sensibilidad en la etica de Kant*. Tucuman, Argentina: Universidad Nacional de Tucuman, 1981. 83 p.
- MATSON, WALLACE I.: *Sentience*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1983. x, 190 p. \$6.95.
- MCGINN, COLIN: *The Character of Mind*. New York: Oxford, 1982. vii, 132 p. \$7.50.
- MACKAY, ALFRED E.: *Arrow's Theorem: The Paradox of Social Choice. A Case Study in the Philosophy of Economics*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale, 1984. ix, 143 p. \$6.95.