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Ricoeur and Foucault
Between Ontology and Critique

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Abstract

In this paper, I trace some of Ricoeur's criticisms of Foucault in his major works on historiography, and evaluate them. I find that Ricoeur's criticisms of Foucault's archaeological project in *Time and Narrative* are not particularly worrisome, and that Foucault's "critical" project actually provides alternatives for enriching and expanding on some of Ricoeur's later insights in *Memory, History, Forgetting* and – in particular – for troubling the distinction made between critique and ontology.

Keywords: Foucault, critique, ontology, history, historiography

Résumé

Dans cet article, je passe en revue quelques unes des critiques ricoeuriennes de Foucault telles qu'on les trouve dans ses œuvres majeures sur l'historiographie, et je cherche à en évaluer la portée. Il me semble que les objections de Ricoeur à l'égard du projet archéologique de Foucault telles qu'elles apparaissent dans *Temps et récit* ne sont pas particulièrement inquiétantes, et ce projet «critique» de Foucault fournit en fait des alternatives pour enrichir et développer certaines des perspectives développées ultérieurement par Ricoeur dans *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* et - en particulier - pour mettre en question la distinction entre critique et ontologie.

Mots-clés: Foucault, critique, ontologie, histoire, historiographie

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Paul Ricoeur is not often regarded as one of the major figures of 20th century Continental Philosophy.[2] This is in part a consequence of Ricoeur's milieu, in which many thinkers were directing us to the startling limitations of the nevertheless inescapable metaphysical frameworks in which we find ourselves, or – if more optimistic – exhorting us to radically transform our *epistemes*. Ricoeur's more conciliatory approach doesn't immediately appear to have this same urgency, the sort that finds a thinker devoted disciples or antagonists. Even if Ricoeur always claimed to belong to the tradition of hermeneutic thought, and phenomenological hermeneutics more specifically, and thus often gave pride of place to such thought in his work, he remained committed to a synoptic project. As late as *Memory*, *History*, *Forgetting*, he took pains to incorporate the insights of many – from Plato and Aristotle, to the Annales school, Foucault and de Certeau, through to Reinhart Koselleck and Heidegger – into an overarching vision of what it means to be historical, to have a past that exceeds and shapes us, and yet have that past somehow available to us. Certainly, he arranges these thinkers in a hierarchy of sorts, but his aim is not to refute, undermine or deconstruct, but to thoughtfully delimit and, consequently, appropriate their claims. Ultimately, he aims to incorporate a phenomenology of remembrance into the discursive enterprise of historiography, as – contra Heidegger – "authentic" constituents of an ontology of historical human being, one that maintains the resources for the thoughtful self-criticism integral to the project of historical self-understanding. Ricoeur's final *magnum opus* is obviously ambitious.[3]

However, to do justice to Ricoeur's philosophy is not simply to rest content with his conciliatory gestures, but to examine them. One must place Ricoeur in an argumentative landscape, and *address and evaluate* the ways in which he engages his interlocutors. Despite Ricoeur's repeated attempts to address himself to other thinkers and the questions they raised, there seems to be a remarkable lack of interest in taking up Ricoeur's's *explicit* engagements with other philosophers, such as Heidegger or Foucault. In this paper, I would like to contribute to remedying that situation, specifically with regard to the work of Foucault.[4]

In *Memory*, *History*, *Forgetting*, Ricoeur gives an account of the hermeneutics of the historical condition. For Ricoeur, these hermeneutics are two-fold. First, a deep *ontological* hermeneutics of the human being in its relation to birth and death, of the existential structures in virtue of which human beings are "historical" at all. Second, a *critical* hermeneutics of the historical condition, aimed at explicating just how it is that we manage to situate and orient ourselves "within" history, and thus how it is we are able to make historical judgments about, and take responsibility for, events such as the Shoah. Ricoeur's aim is to show, ultimately, that *conceptual* categories for understanding history fall short, and that an existential, or *ontological* engagement with "historicity" is fundamental.[5]

In the same volume, Ricoeur engages with the work of Michel Foucault. However, his engagement is restricted to the methodological and epistemological challenges he takes Foucault's historical method to raise for the practice of historiography; for Ricoeur, even if these are important, the ontological hermeneutics of historical consciousness precede and make them possible. Foucault's challenge, according to Ricoeur, is simply not radical. Foucault, on the other hand, described his own work as, alternatively, "historical ontology," and "a critical ontology of the present, and of our selves." As far as he was concerned, there were no strict demarcations to make between critique, ontology, and historiography.

With these issues in mind, I would like to continue the nascent dialogue between Ricoeur and Foucault on the relations between these three notions: critique, ontology, and history. It is my hope that such a dialogue will be of use to contemporary philosophers in precisely the areas with which Ricoeur was concerned: that by getting a better sense of how we come to be beings with the history we have, we might have a better a sense of how it is that we are supposed to go on. In the following, I argue that Ricoeur's objections to Foucault fail to find their mark, and that in fact Foucault's notion of an "historical ontology of the present" constitutes a complementary strategy to the critical and ontological hermeneutics of historical experience presented in *Memory, History, Forgetting*. I defend Foucault from Ricoeur's characterisation in *Time and Narrative*, and give an outline of Foucault's critical-ontological project that avoids too-easy divisions of his work into alleged "archaeological" and "genealogical" periods.[6] I then present some of Ricoeur's goals in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, and some aspects of Foucault's work where Ricoeur's criticisms would be most likely to be effective. However, these criticisms do not gain any traction either. I conclude by sketching the stakes of a confrontation between Ricoeur and Foucault and suggesting directions for integrating their thought.

To begin, let us turn to *Time and Narrative*, where Ricoeur first responds to Foucault, before briefly developing an interpretation of Foucault responsive to these objections, and finally show how the two thinkers might be able to work together in articulating the relations between critique, ontology, and history. In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur attempts to develop a coherent account of historical experience under the heading of the "hermeneutics of historical consciousness." He borrows from Reinhart Koselleck the twin notions of the "space of experience" and the "horizon of expectations" and puts them to use as transcendental categories.[7] That is to say, for Ricoeur, these are constitutive organizing concepts for thinking about history and historical experience as we now have it; we experience historical time – I will simply use the term "history" – as a collective singular: *we* experience it. And, beyond the horizon of the present (whose borders are never exactly clear) we project our collective possibilities, our expectations, in such a way that the historical present becomes intelligible to us. But the horizon of expectations – quite clearly isomorphic to the projection of future possibilities in and through which the singular *Dasein* temporalizes itself – stands in a reciprocal relation to the "space of experience." Unsurprisingly, it seems that the space of experience is supposed to be the collective analogue to the *thrownness* of the singular *Dasein*. That is, the individual human being finds herself always already in a meaningful world, such that the things she encounters are immediately intelligible to her on the basis of her tacit, prejudicial understanding of the world. At the historical level, the level of the collective singular that surpasses any given human individual, we contemporaries share a common, if anonymous, historical present in virtue of the fact that we project a horizon of expectation into the historical future, and we can only do this because we already find a vast range of experience *available* to us, that is, we are connected to an historical past that we take as

ours, in which we find ourselves more or less at home (though of course not without our misgivings and our criticisms and our doubts); it is on the basis of a past that we more or less unproblematically understand *as ours* that we are able to project coherent expectations into the historical future. These metahistorical/transcendental concepts, the space of experience and the horizon of expectation, in turn subtend further "transcendentals for thinking about history."

It is at this point that Ricoeur turns his attention to the notion of *tradition*. Ricoeur notes that "tradition" has (at least) three distinct senses; I shall be concerned presently with the first of these. Tradition, in this primary sense, can also be considered as a formal/transcendental feature of our thought about history; to avoid confusion, we will call it *traditionality*. Taken in this sense, traditionality, as Ricoeur puts it, "signifies that the temporal distance separating us from the past is not a dead interval but *a transmission that is generative of meaning*."[8] We might put it like this: tradition – in this formal sense – is a transcendental structure of the experience of "historical time," in which temporal distance is *not* simply an empty container to be filled with events, or a continuous segment of linear instances. Rather, this distance makes possible meaning and understanding; it enables a *trans-mission*, a giving over. It is in virtue of this traditionality that we *have* a space of experience, that the world in which we live is familiar to us.

So, traditionality is also transcendental category for thinking about history. We are not simply living bodies occupying positions in the physical time of the cosmos, nor isolated selves experiencing the passage of lived time, but are a collective singular that belongs to a tradition, and see ourselves as such. The present as a "today" in collective life *can be so* because we are linked by tradition from *meaningful* past to a *meaningful* future. And it is traditionality as both the connection to and distance from the past that makes this thinkable.

For Ricoeur, then, the hermeneutics of historical consciousness, which one might also describe as the explication of the experience of historical time, relies basically on three categories: the space of experience, the horizon of expectation, and traditionality. In terms of these three categories, we can articulate the coherent experience of historical time, insofar as they allow us to bring together the phenomena of contemporaries, successors, and predecessors with the succession of generations, and further tie these to the institution of calendar time, thereby linking our individual experience of time to that of the cosmos.

In order to discuss how Michel Foucault fits into the discourse of *Time and Narrative*, I need to turn to the two derivative senses of tradition that Ricoeur also discusses. Beyond the transcendental category of tradition/traditionality, there are the various concrete traditions in which one might find oneself, with their various materials, practices, canonical texts, and so forth. And, lastly, there is tradition in the sense of traditional authority, taken as the point of contention in the debate carried on by Habermas, in the name of critical theory, against Gadamer and his hermeneutically-minded followers. In broad strokes, the critique runs as follows: traditional authority is not always legitimate authority, and is often the effect of (perceived or unperceived) coercive, dominating power and, further, if this sort of authority plays a role in constituting the concrete traditions to which we belong, then these traditions themselves should be reformed or rejected in order to respect modern demands for legitimacy. Critical vigilance, with respect to the sources of tradition and their actual maintenance, should therefore be exercised.

Ricoeur very self-consciously avoids embroiling himself in this debate; his point, rather, is to make clear that the Habermasian critique of traditional authority does not invalidate the use of traditionality as a metahistorical, or transcendental, category for explicating the possibility of

historical consciousness. Rather, the two co-exist and – as we might expect from Ricoeur – the critical moment is subordinated to the hermeneutic. As he puts it, though suspicion of ideology contaminates every claim to truth that a tradition might make, "this criticism [of traditions] is just one variant in the style of traditionality."[9]

It is telling that, though Habermas carried on his own polemic with Foucault, Ricoeur nevertheless assimilates the latter's archaeology to the same sceptical camp as the critics of ideology.[10] The first reference to Foucault in *Time and Narrative* appears during Ricoeur's epistemological discussion of archives and documents. Archives and documents are the fundamental resource of the historian; documents are the preserved traces of our predecessors, their meaningfulness allowing us to reconstitute the world in which they lived. Part of Ricoeur's purpose, here, is to defend historical research against overzealous criticism by those who – like the critics of ideology – would be inclined to see in every document, every preserved trace of the past, not the presentation of a truth but the effects of power. He names Jacques Le Goff and Foucault as those who would remind us that, often, documents are *monuments*, that is, the institutionalized memorials of society's ruling class. Ricoeur takes this to mean that, as above, critical vigilance must be exercised by the historian.[11] And in a footnote, Ricoeur cites Foucault:

> The document is not the fortunate tool of a history that is fundamentally and primarily *memory*: history is one way in which society recognizes and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked.[12]

In *Time and Narrative*, then, Ricoeur construes Foucault's fundamental challenge as an epistemological one, a critical-sceptical challenge to the alleged ability of documents to present truths about the past. Or, more precisely, Ricoeur thinks Foucault's challenge arises when one tries to turn from the epistemology of the past as manifest in the practice of the historian, to an ontological investigation of the historical condition:

> What is ultimately at stake in this discussion is the apparent antinomy between discontinuity and continuity in history. We can speak of an antinomy here insofar as, on the one hand, it is the very reception of the historical past that seems to require the continuity of a common memory, and because, on the other hand, the documentary revolution brought about by the new history seems to make breaks, ruptures, crises, and the irruption of changes in thinking – in short, discontinuity – prevail… It is in Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* that this antinomy receives its most rigorous formulation, while at the same time it is resolved in terms of the second alternative [i.e. discontinuity].

> On the one side, the asserted privilege of discontinuity is associated with a new discipline, the archaeology of knowledge, which does not coincide with the history of ideas as historians usually understand this. On the other side, the contested privilege of continuity is associated with the ambition of a constituting consciousness and the mastery of meaning.[13]

On Ricoeur's reading, Focault's endeavour seems to illegitimately cross the ontological/epistemological divide; it appears as if Foucault is drawing an ontological consequence – the denial of anything like a constituting consciousness that would underlie the

continuity of history – from epistemological developments in the field of historiography. And Ricoeur's response is simply to note, again, that these developments are entirely legitimate. The actual *practice* of the archaeology of knowledge – in, for example, *The Birth of the Clinic* and *The Order of Things* – is enough to validate an approach to history that prioritizes the "subterranean" ruptures and discontinuities between apparently continuous sciences and practices. But Ricoeur, ever the mediator, is not willing to grant that this undermines the basic continuity of traditionality, nor that the continuity of traditionality implies anything about a "constituting consciousness." For him, the continuity of tradition outstrips any individual memory, making possible the development of a collective "memory" (that is not "consciousness" in anything but a metaphorical sense), insofar as it allows the past to appear intelligibly to us, insofar as the past can "speak to us" through those meaning-generative traces documented and kept in archives.

As mentioned, whatever differences there might be between Habermas and Foucault – and, at the very least, Habermas thinks that there are many – Ricoeur takes them both to be raising *epistemological* challenges to tradition: the former to its normative authority, the latter to the continuity of traditional narratives. And, indeed, when almost 20 years later, in *Memory, History, Forgetting* Ricoeur readdresses these same themes, he will explicitly divide his investigations into three distinct – though interrelated – sections: the phenomenology of memory, the epistemology of historiography, and the hermeneutics of the historical condition. And, in this later work, Ricoeur's only explicit engagement with Foucault takes place in the second, explicitly epistemological section.

The point to be drawn here is this: though in *Time and Narrative*, and beyond, Ricoeur is more than willing to countenance epistemological critique, both in the anodyne sense of submitting knowledge-claims to critical scrutiny and the stronger sense of critiquing the *authority* of scientificity, he has a very difficult time finding a space to locate "critique" in a radical sense. Because of his commitment to an original *ontological* "belonging" to history, a commitment to traditionality in its deepest sense, there can be no *radical* critique, no *total* rejection of the everyday, no position from which one might grasp an "undistorted" view of the totality (of history, of society, of Nature, of whatever). This originary belonging – the object of the "ontological hermeneutics" of the historical condition – is a consequence of our finitude, but in the *positive* sense that having a limited perspective is a positive condition of having any perspective at all.[14] This will become manifest in his discussion of critique and ontology in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, to which we will return later.

Towards the very end of his life, Foucault described his own project as an "historical ontology of ourselves."[15] I would like to turn now to reconstructing that project, in order to see whether and how it might exceed Ricoeur's epistemological characterization and, further, might contribute to the latter's own project. This reconstruction – which will be all too brief – will focus on the explicit discussions provided in the 1984 essay "What is Enlightenment?" and his 1978 lecture "What is Critique?" The 1978 lecture anticipates a great deal of the essay, culminating in the closing statement that Foucault had originally intended to entitle it "What is Enlightenment?" I will also draw on some of the "meta-ethical" statements he makes in the introductory sections of *The Use of Pleasure*. The opening lectures of Foucault's 1983 course at the College de France on *The Government of Self and Others* contain, almost verbatim, the bulk of the material presented in the Enlightenment essay; given that Foucault was simultaneously preparing the materials for publication that would become the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, I take this to be (at

least minimal) textual evidence for reading Foucault's late "ethical" works against the backdrop of his thought about Enlightenment.

In each of these "Enlightenment" works, Foucault links the spirit of his project to Kant. First of all, Foucault places his own project in the framework of the Kantian notion that Enlightenment is humankind's "exit" or "way out" from "immaturity" to "maturity," by linking it to his own thought on governmentality and self-government. While I cannot in this paper fully explicate Foucault's complicated (and perhaps indeterminate) conception of governmentality, I can provide a quick sketch of how I think the concept evolves in his thought from 1978 to 1984.

The concept of "government," or of "governmentality," arises in Foucault's work while he trying to explain the genesis and nature of bio-politics, in particular in his lectures at the College de France in the mid- to late-70s, and it occupied him to some degree until the year of his death. Recapitulating the history of bio-politics, in which "governmentality" takes conceptual shape, would take us far beyond the scope of this paper. But the basic idea is this: government is the "conduct of conduct," the manner in which one conducts oneself, the ultimate form given, by oneself or another, to one's life, to one's subjectivity. As he describes subjectivity in *The Care of the Self*, the subject is not something substantively pre-given, from the features of which one could draw any important normative conclusions about how to concretely live one's life. Rather, the existence of an ethical subject requires an individual (say, a concrete human being) to be determined (or "subjected") in various ways:

1. The *ethical substance* of the individual must be determined; it must be determined just *which* part of her is subject to norms, and the sorts of things for which she is to be responsible.

2. Further, the form of *ethical work* required by subjectivity must be determined. Must, for example, the subject constantly survey her will in order to make sure that it accords with the moral code, or is all that is required for her proper ethical conduct a sort of conversion experience?

3. There must be a *moral code*, with respect to which the subject can determine her standing, and make adjustments as need be (though, for Foucault, moral codes are generally the least interesting determining factor with respect to ethical subjectivity).

4. The *mode of subjection* of the individual must be determined. *Why* and *how* does she do the sort of ethical work on the sort of ethical substance that she does? Because she is a spiritual being subject to the law of a Divine Creator? Because she is a certain species of living organism subject to various functional norms? Because she is an autonomous being capable of responding to the demands of reason? Or because she is a proud member of a long tradition of certain spiritual practices? And does she carry this work out *reflectively*? Or completely unwittingly? If the former, is she joyful, begrudging, or almost thoughtless in the discharge of the ethical tasks assigned to her?

5. The ethical *telos*, the goal to which the individual aspires (though not necessarily exhaustive – or perhaps even a component – of the mode of subjection). This could be state of spiritual purity, the maximization of total human utility, etc.[16]

It is quite reasonable to think that the determination of these five dimensions of ethical subjectivity amounts to the conduct of one's conduct, which Foucault elsewhere talks about in terms of one's *mode of being*. There is an explicit ontological dimension to Foucault's ethics, as to govern is to determine the mode of being of an individual, to determine it in its very subjectivity.

And it is not without reason that Foucault begins his lecture course on *The Government of Self and Others* by discussing Kant's essay.[17] There are ways in which others can govern one, and ways in which one can govern oneself. Foucault, clearly, shares with Kant the aim of *autonomy*, in the sense of *self-government*, at the very least in the minimal sense in *thinking for oneself*, of "exiting" from having one's conduct conducted by others. For Kant, to be autonomous is to comply with the demands of reason, at least partially *because* they are the demands of reason; it might be the case that the edicts of an enlightened despot are in accord with the demands of reason, and yet to comply with those demands simply *because* they are the edicts of one's ruler, or simply *because* we fear the consequences of doing otherwise, would be heteronomous. And, thus, for him, Enlightenment, or the "escape" of humanity from its self-incurred immaturity to maturity is, first of all, a matter of determining the *limits of knowledge*, that is, determining the limits of the permissible and impermissible use of reason and, second, of reflectively acting in accord with reason within its permissible limits. And this Kantian Enlightenment heritage has, Foucault thinks, been taken up in various ways by thinkers from Marx through Weber to the Frankfurt School; to the extent that Foucault also shares a Kantian heritage, his work has a kinship with these thinkers.

Nevertheless, Foucault's work diverges in important ways from Kant and his German heirs. While he can appreciate the attempt to discern legitimate from illegitimate uses of reason, and hence legitimate from illegitimate uses of power, such a project is orthogonal to his interests. Rather, as Foucault sees it, there isn't anything like a singular rationality or Reason; rather, there are and have been various *rationalities*.[18] The basic idea is this: in more or less Kantian fashion, the world and the things in it underdetermine the sorts of judgments we make about it. In addition, there are rules – that need not, often are not, and in some cases perhaps cannot be accessed by consciousness – that govern the judgments that we are able to make, to the extent that they establish which statements are candidates for truth and falsity in the first place.[19] And, again in more or less Kantian fashion, insofar as there are rules governing our judgments, these rules determine the objects about which can judge. However, Foucault is sceptical of taking these rules as timeless, necessary or in any sense innate. His wager, with respect to his archaeological investigations, is that he can delineate and distinguish different *epistemes*, an *episteme* being something like the domain(s) of knowledge governed by a certain set of rules or principles for a specific period of time. It is Foucault's claim that the Classical *episteme*, for example, encompassed the sciences of natural history, general grammar, and the analysis of wealth, while the modern *episteme* encompassed the sciences of political economy, biology and philology. The latter cannot be seen as the continuation or development of the former insofar as it is governed by different rules or principles and hence has new objects: life, labour and language, as studied by biology, political economy and philology, are objects that are *constituted* in the shift from one *episteme* to another. If archaeology in Foucault's sense really can be carried out, its stakes are to show *that* there are rules underlying judgments in various domains and *that* these different domains can be

distinguished. This is the substance of the short descriptions he gives of "archaeology" in both "What is Critique?" and in *The Government of Self and Others*.

However, from Foucault's perspective, this greatly complicates the task of autonomy, if we may call it that. If rationality, reasons, and meaning all emerge from the functioning of coercive structures (which we might simply call a set of rules), then the line between reason and power begins to blur. At the risk of oversimplifying, it doesn't seem as if, on his view, one can clearly distinguish between *rational norms* and the *effects of power*, such that one could in any meaningful sense qualify as autonomous by only accepting those effects of power that conform to reflectively endorsed rational norms (or some variation on this theme). And, indeed, Foucault clearly states that analyzing knowledge and rationality in terms of power (or power/knowledge) is distinguished insofar as it "is a procedure that is unconcerned with legitimizing and consequently [excludes] the fundamental point of view of the law."[20] Etymology notwithstanding, autonomy will not be understood as a matter of self-legislation; so, then, to what could it amount?

As we have seen, autonomy will be two-sided, for Foucault. First of all, at least ideally, autonomy will be self-*government*. This is not necessarily the same as self-legislation. First of all, it cannot be a matter of accepting, endorsing, or acquiescing to only those exercises of power that are presently rationally justified.[21] If we grant Foucault his archaeological method – as Ricoeur does – we grant him that different sets of rules have, at different points in time, constituted different rationalities and, further, we grant that these constitutive rules are *themselves* exercises of power. So, while Foucault certainly wouldn't want to qualify properly autonomous comportment as simply "irrational," nevertheless, such comportment won't be essentially characterized in terms of its rationality. Indeed, part of determining oneself as an ethical subject, as a subject at all, means actually determining the sorts of reasons to which one will be responsive, that is, which sorts of reasons will *be* good reasons (or, maybe, will count as reasons at all).

On the other hand, autonomy becomes simultaneously a matter of history (and historiography) and a matter of practice, "a historico-practical test of the limits that we may go beyond, and thus… work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings."[22] Given that different rationalities, *epistemes*, regimes of power/knowledge, have prevailed at different points in history, and that we ourselves have been "born into" such regimes, the task of autonomy will require, precisely, seeing just what aspects of our current regimes are *not* universal or necessary, but are rather singular or contingent. We work on ourselves, thereby, by *experimenting* with our selves, by attempting to alter (some) contingent determinations of our subjectivity that are revealed to us as such.

I should point out here, that on this "continuist" reading of Foucault, there is no "methodological failure" of archaeology or a deep rift between it and genealogy.[23] Archaeology does not critique prior constitutive norms for knowledge, but only brings them to light; genealogy attempts to highlight not just how "false" or "ideological" forms of purported knowledge are supported by relations of power, but how those constitutive norms for knowledge *as such* are part and parcel of social systems of power; this is the upshot of moving from analysing "rationality" as opposed to power, to "rationalities" embedded in power-relations. While Ricoeur's engagement with Foucault is not to be criticised for following a traditional pattern of separating archaeology from genealogy and engaging them as different projects, the

reading I develop here, in the light of resources that Ricoeur obviously could not have had, works to block that move.[24]

It should, I think, be clear by now that, contra Ricoeur, Foucault's critical project should not be assimilated to the critique of ideology. He is uninterested in distinguishing the rational, or legitimate, uses of power from the illegitimate. His historical project is, to speak somewhat misleadingly, more descriptive than evaluative in this regard, a type of *analysis of power, including rationality*. So, Ricoeur misunderstands when he cites Foucault on documents and monuments. Foucault is not concerned with revealing the *distorting* effects of power on documents that are otherwise expressions of meaning, traces of meaningful work and ciphers of past worlds, but rather with specifying those rules of discourse and rationalities that, *qua* effects of power, allow documents to appear as meaningful in the first place. To this extent, Foucault seems at least in broad agreement with Ricoeur regarding "positive" finitude; though the constraints that constitute *epistemes*, scientific objects, and scientific knowledge may rule other discourses out, it is only in virtue of such rules that we objects and knowledge of them at all.   It thus strikes me that Ricoeur's remarks on Foucault in *Time and Narrative* fail to get at the substance of Foucault's project. At any rate, the concept of traditionality, or a debate over continuity or discontinuity in history, or indeed over "ideology," and its critique, no longer seems the point of contention between Ricoeur and Foucault.

Indeed, in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, divided – much like *Time and Narrative* – into separate discussions of the epistemology of historiography and the hermeneutics of the historical condition, the theme of traditionality gets more or less dropped from Ricoeur's investigation. While he may still hold that traditionality is a transcendental category for historical thinking, it no longer plays any major role in his discussion. In *Memory, History, Forgetting*, the hermeneutics of the historical condition is divided into two distinct sections, one "critical" and one "ontological." The latter is an engagement with Martin Heidegger over the relation between historicity and authenticity. In the former section, "critical philosophy of history" is, again, not a matter of substantive positive claims, but merely the paying of close attention to the sorts of grounds provided for certain totalizing claims. Ricoeur again draws heavily from Koselleck, this time not in order to explicate the conditions of possibility of historical thinking, but to guard against the presumptions of both speculative philosophies of history claiming to discern the meaning of history and various manifestations of the "modernist" tendency to declare and valourize the discovery of a clear break between "their" time and the rest of history. This discussion comes right before his inquiry into the various similarities and dissimilarities between the respective tasks of the judge and the historian and the role of interpretation in historiography, which serves as the transition from "critical" to "ontological" hermeneutics. And it is precisely at this point, I want to suggest, that the real engagement between Ricoeur and Foucault might take place, on the border between ontology and critique.

Ricoeur wants to problematize the "modernist" desire "to say in what times we live… Or to express our difference and novelty in relation to every other age."[25] His goal is to show the "controversial, polemical inconclusive nature of all discussions on the 'true' sense of 'our' modernity."[26] And his strategy is to trace the development of the terms "modern" and "modernity," demonstrating that the "modern" is not so modern, and its evaluative connotations simply a (relatively) recent permutation in the history of this concept.

And, one might think, this is *exactly* where Ricoeur would want to confront Foucault. Isn't Foucault's "critical ontology of the present" precisely a discourse on the "sense of 'our'

modernity," one that would uncover the events that underlie the shift between the epochs of the past and *ours*? So, then, shouldn't Foucault be a primary target of Ricoeur's critique? He is very explicit about finding something novel in Kant's thoughts about Enlightenment and its relation to history, in how Kant links the task of "exiting" from immaturity to both historical reflection on the nature of the present and to explicit critical reflection on the relationship between reason and authority; the question he takes over from Kant is "What difference does today introduce with respect to yesterday?"[27] Foucault's explicit borrowing from and inspiration by Kant shows that even the *construction* of an historical present, of a concept of an historical *now* that would be distinguished from the past, often relies on a continuity with the past that would undermine any claim to *radical* novelty. To the extent that Ricoeur wants to reconcile "discontinuist" and "continuist" approaches to (philosophy of) history, Foucault seems especially suspect here, both claiming that his project rests on a characteristically "modern" attitude *and* nevertheless staking his archaeological work on the claim to uncover the fundamental discontinuities between different regimes of power/knowledge.

These, I take it, are the points where Ricoeur might come into genuine conflict with Foucault: these are where, if anywhere, his worries might find some bite, some traction. But, I contend, such objections still miss the mark; this does not mean that Ricoeur's work needs to be rejected, but rather that Foucault shows us a new and different direction in which to take it.

First of all, for Foucault, the "modernity" in which he is interested is not a set of beliefs, of institutional structures, or anything that could be temporally circumscribed in that way. While "modernity" might be, in some respects, either the era of the individual or of the "iron cage," Foucault is not *primarily* interested in modernity as itself an historical category. Rather, what he finds in Kant – and, interestingly, in Baudelaire – is a modern *attitude*, an ethos, as he calls it in "What is Enlightenment?" (In "What is Critique?" Foucault refers to a specifically modern-critical determination of the will, a "decision-making will not to be governed.")[28]:

> I know that modernity is often spoken of as an epoch, or at least as a set of features characteristic of an epoch; situated on a calendar, it would be preceded by a more or less naïve or archaic premodernity, and followed by an enigmatic and troubling "postmodernity." And then we find ourselves asking whether modernity constitutes the sequel to the Enlightenment and its development, or whether we are to see it as a rupture or a deviation with respect to the basic principles of the Eighteenth Century… Thinking back on Kant's text, I wonder whether we may not envisage modernity rather as an attitude than a period of history. And by "attitude," I mean a mode of relating to contemporary reality.[29]

In other words, Foucault does not seek to tell us just *what* the nature of "modernity" is, as opposed to premodernity or postmodernity. The point, for Foucault, is not that there emerged, with "modernity" or with some period known as the Enlightenment, some set of institutions, or widely shared moral precepts or norms of moral reasoning, or some great disillusionment on the part of the subjects of political power, or some common "humanist" sensibility. We can remain agnostic about what constitutes modernity or Enlightenment as epochs, if there are such:

> Let us say, if you will, that it is not because we privilege the 18th century, because we are interested in it, that we encounter the problem of the *Aufklärung*. I would say instead that it is because we fundamentally want to ask the question, *What is Aufklärung* that we

encounter the historical scheme of our modernity. The point is not to say that the Greeks of the 5th century are little like the philosophers of the 18th or that the 12th century was already a kind of Renaissance, but rather to try to see under what conditions, at the cost of which modifications or generalizations we can apply this question of the *Aufklärung* to any moment in history…[30]

For Foucault, to use Ricoeur's language, the "conceptual" category of Enlightenment is also an *ethical* – indeed, an existential – category, a way of thinking about and embodying one's ethos that, precisely, straddles the line between critique and ontology. Let us grant that Foucault is on to something when he shifts the discussion of ethical subjectivity from a purely moral, or moral-psychological, register into an ontological register, that is, into a discussion of different ways or modes of a subject's *being*. (Though I take Foucault's position to be *prima facie* plausible, my aim is not to defend it here, but to show where and to what end, in relation to Ricoeur's thought, such a defence would be valuably undertaken.) Then the work of critique is also an *ontological* transformation, both making history intelligible to us in new ways – allowing us to see, for example, how the Classical Greeks engaged in acts of "subjectivation" and "desubjectivation," and how they may be instructive for those of us wishing to alter our relation to, say, disciplinary or biopolitical norms – and making us into new sorts of subjects for which the past may provide newly intelligible models.

Admittedly, a full-blown explication of Foucault's historiography and meta-ethics is beyond the scope of this essay, which is intended only to continue and open up a discussion between two of the most historiographically-sensitive philosophers of the last half-century. Nevertheless, I think it is clear that Foucault sidesteps Ricoeur's objections to the notion of "our" modernity, by not making claims about the "nature" of modernity (or any other epoch), but rather – in Ricoeur's language – attempting to *constitute* "our" modernity: passing through precisely the "civic dissensus" that we engage in as citizens, between historians and judges.[31] In making explicit his "relation to contemporary reality" in the form of a critical ontology of the present, Foucault invites us to take up this historico-philosophical practice, which is at once descriptive, prescriptive, and hortatory. And I think that there is a space for this historico-philosophical practice in Ricoeur's reflections on history. Unsurprisingly, given Foucault's dissolution of a strict divide between critique and ontology, this space overlaps both sections of Ricoeur's text.

First of all, in the penultimate section of *Memory, History, and Forgetting*, Ricoeur explores the "ontological" dimensions of the hermeneutics of the historical condition. In fact, this section ends up being a dialogue with Heidegger. Certainly, the Heidegger of *Being and Time* is concerned with laying out the existential structures of the human being, in virtue of which we are the sorts of historical beings that we are, and in virtue of which we can *understand* ourselves in historical terms. In this task, he and Ricoeur are allied. Ricoeur takes issue, however, with Heidegger's emphasis on the solitary, non-discursive dimensions of historicity. Being *authentically* historical, for Heidegger, depends upon authentic being, period. And authenticity is achieved through resolutely anticipating one's death, which grants one a momentary grasp of one's *authentic* possibilities; these possibilities are grounded, so to speak, in one's historicity, in the fact that one is thrown into a world with an effective history, and to take them up authentically is as close to "freedom" as Heidegger will grant that we can get.

The issue is that, given the ultimately non-discursive, non-intersubjective criteria of "authenticity" that Heidegger develops, one's historicity is completely severed from "History" as a discipline, and from any concrete historical understanding. For Heidegger, taking up one's historicity, one's throwness, and one's possibilities authentically is a matter of "repeating" the possibilities of the past, of the possibilities latent in one's traditions. But, for Heidegger, there can be no "criticism" in this, at least not in any concrete sense. As he says, "it is only through traditional history that historiology [i.e. historiography] penetrates to what has-been-there [i.e. past existence] itself."[32] Whatever authentic "repetition" might mean to Heidegger, it will not receive guidance from concrete, critical historiography, and this – to Ricoeur – makes it impotent:

> From start to finish, the philosophical act, permeated with *angst*, emerges from nothingness and is dispersed in the shadows… The pairing of the authentic with the primordial could save it from this peril if primordiality were assigned a function other than that of reduplicating the allegation of authenticity. This would be the case… if by the historical condition one were to understand… the existential condition of the possibility of the entire series of discourses concerning the historical in general, in everyday life, in fiction, and in history.[33]

It strikes me that this is precisely the sort of problem that Foucault avoids. For him, as for Heidegger, there are certain ways of finding our past – and, therefore, our possibilities – intelligible, but for Foucault, like Ricoeur, these ways are linked tightly to empirical inquiry and historiographical practice. Indeed, they would have to be, given that, for Foucault, this "critical" way of being is one that only becomes intelligible itself through a specific reading of empirical events such as the Enlightenment (or Classical Antiquity, or what have you):

> Actually, in this historical-philosophical practice, one has to make one's own history, fabricate history, as if through fiction, in terms of how it would be traversed by the question of the relationships between structures of rationality which articulate true discourse and the mechanisms of subjugation which are linked to it. We also see that this question invests philosophical work, philosophical thought and the philosophical analysis in empirical contents…[34]

It seems that Foucault's notion of "critique" answers *precisely* to the problems that Ricoeur finds in Heidegger's "ontological" hermeneutics of the historical condition.

On the other hand, the "ontological" dimensions of Foucault's ethic may augment the "critical" power of Ricoeur's thought. In *Time and Narrative*, still working with Koselleck's notions of "space of experience" and "horizon of expectation," Ricoeur claims that it is these categories that make possible a particular "Enlightenment" experience of historical time. As discussed earlier, it is on the basis of an accumulated space of experience that we are able to project an intelligible horizon of expectations, and thus to experience a coherent historical present. The sense of historical experience characteristic of the Enlightenment has three essential characteristics: first, a sense of novelty, that is, of a break with past history; second, a sense of historical progress, that is, a positive evaluative dimension, and; third, precisely, the *availability* of history to us, a sense of our ability to really *make* history. However, Ricoeur notes that, in the 20th century, in "our" modernity, these characteristics have undergone a sort of "decline." The sense of novelty characteristic of the Enlightenment has become a sense of disconnection, that the break

with past history is utterly radical. Our space of expectations has been diminished. Simultaneously, the sense of the historical progress of humanity has shifted; history no longer seems to be a steady progress, but increasingly rapidly accelerated change. While history certainly keeps moving forward, and ever more quickly, its continued acceleration is no longer a sign of its progress but of its utter unavailability. History is no longer something we make, but – at best – something that happens to us. And, lastly, our historical horizon of expectation is shrunken; we no longer have any sense of what to expect from the future, of how it might change or – more importantly – of how we might change it.[35]

Given that, as mentioned above, the categories of "space of experience" and "horizon of expectation" seem isomorphic to Heidegger's concepts of "throwness" and "projection," and that Foucault's project gives genuine, determinate content to this structure, we ought to expect Foucault to have something to contribute here. And he does: it is precisely this apparently etiolated experience of historical time, which for Ricoeur is characteristically "modern," that Foucault wants to productively appropriate. The break between past and present, which Ricoeur takes to undermine the projection of possibilities into the future and hence the intelligibility of the present, becomes the *task* of the archaeologist. Discerning (or perhaps even *producing*) what is *different*, in our present, is actually part of the practice – as we saw above – of "making one's history," though no doubt in a different sense than Marx or Hegel thought we make history. And, of course, if we are breaking with the past in the service of "creating oneself," of "working on our selves as free beings," then we ought not be surprised that, for Foucault, what is important is not the projection of a horizon of possibilities. Rather, the task of *making* history in accord with our "modern" ethos in the present undermines the continuity of the past in order to render the projection of possibilities problematic; by scrambling our "space of experience," our relation to the future becomes *experimental*:

> … if we are not to settle for the affirmation or the empty dream of freedom, it seems to me that this historico-critical attitude must also be an experimental one. I mean that this work done at the limits of ourselves must, on the one hand, open up a realm of historical inquiry and, on the other, put itself to the test of reality, of contemporary reality, both to grasp the points where change is possible and desirable and to determine the precise form this change should take. This means that the historical ontology of ourselves must turn away from all projects that claim to be global or radical…[36]

In the place of a Heideggerean concern with projection, discerning within that projection which possibilities are genuinely *mine* and which merely inauthentic evasions of my death, Foucault implies that there is a different way of being historical. Though he did not live to flesh out this sketch (among others), Foucault's critical ethos is a call to *be* differently, in the wake of a history that was never as much ours, and certainly never our "ownmost," as we would have liked it to be.

It appears Foucault escapes Ricoeur's objections to the epistemological dimensions of his project, and indeed has something to offer Ricoeur, namely, a way of doing history – and of relating to the past – that unabashedly takes up those very aspects of contemporary reality that seem troublesome and tries to make them productive. But what are the stakes of this encounter; why does it matter? To begin addressing this question, let us see where Ricoeur takes his discussion of "critical hermeneutics."

For Ricoeur, there lies between critique and ontology a somber discussion of the differences and affinities between the judge and the historian, their different functions and responsibilities with respect to *judgment*, and in particular judgment on and of the *singularity* of historical events like the Shoah. In brief, while both rely on similar epistemic procedures for gathering evidence, constructing representations, and so on, they differ in that the *judge* is called upon to link responsibility to named or nameable individuals, and in doing so to judge, "once and for all," by "declaring the law." In a very real sense, these verdicts *make* the law; they are, to use the language of speech acts, both declarative *and* constative. The civic duty of the historian, on the other hand, whose judgments are never once and for all time in the sense that they are not constative, is to continue to amass evidence, to bring to light further explanatory factors for any event, in short, to keep open the space of *public dissensus*.   Now, for Ricoeur, begins an endless dialectic. The judge who makes the law in proclaiming it begins "a new temporal era... for the person convicted, another horizon of expectation which opens up options that are envisaged later on under the rubrics of forgetting and forgiveness."[37] On the other hand, the finality of the law is always in tension with the continued work of the historian, a work which is itself constantly faced with the threat of transforming new evidence and explanation into exculpation.[38] Between these two poles of judge and historian stands the citizen, the public, in whom, at any given point in time, more or less *dissensus* is fostered. For Ricoeur, motivated as he is by civic concerns, the duty of *public* deliberation, of citizen involvement in interpreting the past and moving forward in its light as polity, is crucial.[39]

All of this, I take it, is salutary, and compatible with Foucault's project. The aim of fostering public participation through dissensus is a valuable one, and the manner in which such dissensus plays out at the level of the concrete policies of both individuals and corporate social and political bodies should not be underestimated. But it should be noted that, as ever for Ricoeur, the limits of critique - despite the title of "critical hermeneutics" - remain at what might be called the "epistemic" level. Ricoeur writes that, contra Heidegger, historiographical research is not inauthentic, belonging to "an order of derivation that would not be reduced to a progressive loss of ontological density but that would be marked by increasing determination on the side of epistemology."[40] There is an epistemological side, and an ontological one, and critical hermeneutics rests on the former. While the declaration of the law in a verdict may well constitute the law, its constative function is inextricable from its declarative form. The proclamation establishes how we are to go on applying the law, insofar as it matches the general principle of the law - e.g., in rough form, "Murder is illegal," - to the specific facts, issuing in a judgment, e.g., "the deaths of these individuals at the hands of the State was a case of murder, and thus the heads of State are legally culpable." But in each case it matches a declarative to a declarative; a general principle to facts. And the increasing wealth of information provided the continuing work of historiography is, by and large, a matter of facts, of statements in the impersonal declarative mood; dissensus may be fostered regarding the interpretation of the facts, their place in a causal chain or nexus, their explanatory relevance, etc., but all of this ultimately rests at the epistemic level, where we can get straight on what exactly has happened and how exactly we might go forward in light of it.

What Foucault grants us, in contrast, is a way of thinking about our relation to history that blurs the lines between the "epistemic" and the "ontological." The unsettling work of Foucauldian history does not necessarily play out in the realm of public dissensus. Indeed, my contention is that it does not play out in the epistemic arena of propositions - their evidence,

justification, and refutation - or the declaratives expressing them at all. Though both he and Ricoeur are interested in the ways that critique, as an historico-philosophical practice, can alter our horizon of expectation, it strikes me that for Foucault, this alteration has the form of a profound unsettling. To the extent that Foucault is engaged in the philosophical history of *subjectivity*, of the forms it may take and the ways it may be bound to the normative structures that constitute it, it seems that his history speaks to us in a different sort of voice altogether. My wager is that in tracing the techniques and strategies by which we have been made into subjects of a certain sort, responsive to select authorities and receptive to particular possibilities, Foucault's historiographical practice serves less to furnish us with information *about* the past, from which we might draw lessons for the future, but rather with disorienting questions: *who are we*, and *who might we be*?

It's not clear that any sort of merely declarative statement of historical fact, or any process of interpretation, can provide an answer to these sorts of experimental or individuating questions. The upshot, I take it, is that we can engage the past - even in the context of an originary "belonging-to-it" - in a manner more fundamental than that of the historian, the judge, or even the citizen. Perhaps Ricoeur even leaves room for us to do so. All I would like to do is suggest that, when we try to adopt a stance toward our history that is not that of the legislator or her interlocutors, we may be able to free ourselves - at least a little, at least at times - from the historical space of experience in order to open up a new horizon of *experiment* for our selves.

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2 For example, in neither of Gary Gutting's books on French philosophy in the 20th century is there a sustained discussion of Ricoeur on his own terms. In the *Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy* there is but a single indexed reference to Ricoeur. In 8 volumes of the soon-to-be-canonical History of Continental Philosophy series, Ricoeur only merits prolonged engagement alongside Gadamer, as hermeneutic transformers of the phenomenological tradition. None of this is to say that Ricoeur should be treated otherwise, or that the organizing principles or narratives of these works are faulty; it is simply to note the phenomena.

3 Paul Ricoeur, Paul, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

4 Two steps in this direction have recently been taken, in this journal. See Annie Barthélémy, "Hérmeneutiques Croisées: Conversation imaginaire entre Ricoeur et Foucault" and Simon Castanguay, "Michel Foucault et Paul Ricoeur, vers un dialogue possible," *Ricoeur Studies* 1.1 (2010): 55-86. Our essays share a similar aim, in that we turn hopefully (and perhaps, to some, surprisingly) to Foucault in our attempts to further develop Ricoeur's thought, and I hope to incorporate their insights in future work. For the moment, however, my essay is aimed at pinpointing genuine points of contention and possible *rapprochement* in Ricoeur's philosophy of history. The details of his substantive moral philosophy are not crucial to this aim, and so I do not address a Ricoeurian "hermeneutics of the subject" in this paper.

5 For both Heidegger and Ricoeur, then, historiography, as an epistemological enterprise, is derivative; they differ in that Ricoeur thinks that the objectivity of historical knowledge enriches historical intelligibility, and is not merely inauthentic.

6 The continuity and coherence of Foucault's work through his career is still a subject of much debate. Some argue that Foucault recognized his "archaeological" work as a failure and shifted to a "genealogy," while others have - more recently and, to my mind, compellingly - argued that both "archaeology" and "genealogy" are parts of a continuous project, with the latter enlarging the scope of the former, rather than superseding it. See, for example, Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2013).

7 Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 3, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 208-216.

8 Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative 3*, 221, emphasis mine.

9 Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative 3*, 229.

10 A certain "Leftist" response to Foucault finds its roots in Habermas' "Foucault: A Young Conservative?" and Nancy Fraser's "Michel Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions."

This response is continued in Habermas' further work, such as *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, and in thinkers like Peter Dews and Richard Wolin.

[11] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 118.

[12] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. Rupert Sawyer (New York: Random House, 1972), 7. Cited in Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative 3*, 303, n. 33.

[13] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 217.

[14] This should hardly be controversial; it's hard to imagine what a commitment to hermeneutic philosophy – and hermeneutic ontology in particular – might otherwise mean.

[15] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" trans. Catherine Porter, in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer (Cambridge MA: Semiotext(e). 2007), 97-120.

[16] See Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality Volume 2*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: 1990), 25-33.

[17] I am not alone in linking Foucault's remarks about the formation and dimensions of ethical subjectivity with his thought about governmentality. For a particularly detailed example, see Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, 2nd Edition (Thousand Oaks CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 24-30.

[18] This particular claim, and its lineage from French philosophy of science or "historical epistemology," has been well-documented. See the first part of Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[19] This way of reading Foucault, with its emphasis on talk of "possible candidates for truth-and-falsity" I take from Ian Hacking.

[20] Michel Foucault, "What Is Critique?," trans. Lynda Hochroth, in *The Politics of Truth*, 61.

[21] In failing to note this, many of Foucault's critics miss the point.

[22] Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," 115.

[23] The "methodological failure" trope has its origin in Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), especially pp. 79ff.

[24] Again, I stress that the degree of continuity and coherence between Foucault's purported "periods" is a matter of debate; I come down on the side of a relatively strong continuity. While I obviously cannot conclusively prove such a continuity here, I mention it to show that defending Ricoeur on the grounds that he targets "archaeology" and not "genealogy" or the analytics of governmentality or whatever is to begin a deep interpretive debate.

[25] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 305.

[26] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 306.

[27] Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," 99.

28 Foucault, "What is Critique?," 67.

29 Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," 105.

30 Foucault, "What is Critique?," 56-7.

31 Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 319-320.

32 Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 448.

33 Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 349.

34 Foucault, "What is Critique?," 57.

35 See Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative 3*, 208-216.

36 Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," 119.

37 Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 320.

38 Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 326.

39 See the Preface of *Memory, History, Forgetting* for a discussion of the major motives behind its writing.

40 Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting,* 349.