

ARTICLE

Normalizing Foucault? A Rhizomatic Approach to Plateaus in Anglophone Educational Research

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In a recent analysis of anglophone scholarship,¹ Baker and Heyning considered both where and when Foucault's name was made to live and also analyzed the kinds of work such naming has performed, i.e., the substantive claims made in the name of or through Foucault.² In regard to where and when, the most marked uptake of Foucault occurred in the second half of the 1990s in the humanities and social sciences, with the field of philosophy indexing the earliest discussions of his work. This timing does not reflect either the date of publication of Foucault's first book in 1954 (in French) or the availability of his books, interviews, and lectures in English, most of which were translated throughout the 1970s. Education followed this pattern with a swarming around Foucault's name taking place in the late 1990s in particular. Three predominant uses of Foucault in education appeared:

- (1) historicization and philosophizing projects with relativization emphases (a more "problematizing" Foucault).
- (2) denaturalization projects without overt historical emphases and with diversity emphases (a more "sociological" Foucault).
- (3) critical reconstruction projects with solution emphases (a more "administrative" Foucault).³

While orientations to Foucault varied tremendously, both within and across particular pieces of research, most deployments fell within the second

1 There are always dangers and impossibilities in subsuming a variety of settings under a term such as anglophone, as well as the limitations arising from not analyzing to the same extent other -phones in the uses of Foucault. The focus on anglophone and in places francophone commentaries are based on my familiarity with the literatures. For analytical purposes here anglophone refers to works available in dialects of English, whether or not they were originally published as such.

2 Bernadette M. Baker and Katharina L. Heyning, *Dangerous Coagulations? The Uses of Foucault in the Study of Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004).

3 *Ibid.*, 29.

approach. The preferred works here seem obvious: those thought more related to specific institutional analysis, such as *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*,⁴ to “behavior” and “subjectivity” such as *The History of Sexuality, Vol I*,⁵ and to “explicit” articulations of “method” such as “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”⁶ or the openings of *The Order of Things*⁷ and *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*.⁸ The main concepts drawn on in this approach, quite repetitively, were power-knowledge, discipline, surveillance, and governmentality.⁹

The point of reference in educational scholarship was not by and large how theoretical frameworks in other disciplines operated or were categorized, such as in philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, or history, but the exigencies of education’s domains. This was especially evident in the (perhaps surprisingly) strong role that identity politics played in “governing” Foucault’s usage, i.e., scholarship either for or against using Foucault in projects predicated upon traditional identity politics and scholarship devoted to giving Foucault a determined identity e.g., from “postmodern”, to “structuralist,” “dangerous,” “productive” etc.¹⁰

Three main axes contoured how researchers moved around Foucault’s name in educational studies: the analytics of power, the subject, and action/event. In terms of power, a variety of analytics from within and beyond Foucault have been deployed (e.g. sovereign power, disciplinary power, biopower) in his name. In terms of the subject, centered versus decentered, and a priori and transcendental or suspended and deferred marked the range. In terms of action, belief in consciousness, intention, will, and premeditated, planned action versus an anti-consciousness, dispersed, and “exterior” epistemic mapping of events appear in different accounts also in Foucault’s name. Responses to and uses of Foucault thus took form explicitly or implicitly around belief or understanding of the possible positions within each axis. The derivative nature of education as a field and the complexity of its analytical object (largely, schooling) is particularly evident in the

4 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975/1979).

5 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol. I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1976/1990).

6 Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971/1977), 139–64

7 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1970/1994).

8 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

9 Baker and Heyning, *Dangerous Coagulations?*, 30.

10 Ibid.

recombinatorial tendencies, including seemingly contradictory alliances, that circulated through particular positions.

This paper takes off from Baker and Heyning's¹¹ survey of anglophone uses of Foucault by examining substantive examples of such recombinatorial approaches to Foucault and the plateaus they serve. It will suggest that specific responses to Foucault's work at the turn of the twenty-first century are sustained in part by historical propensities in the field to a) scientize and template theoretical frameworks, b) normalize-govern particular approaches as standardized methodology amid swirling and recombinatorial tendencies, and c) carve out moralistic dualisms around their utility.

Three deployments of Foucault within education, in the form of plateaus of vilification, discipleship, and agnosticism, are examined demonstrating the pull of such historical propensities, and subtle efforts to challenge them. "Why Foucault Now?",¹² "Foucault May Not Be Useful",¹³ and "Michel Foucault: Marxism, Liberation, and Freedom"¹⁴ generated notable reactions and were articulated in key sites of enunciation in the field. The first essay incited published responses in a future edition of the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* in which it had appeared, the second presented at a Foucault and Education Special Interest Group session in the United States drew sharp rebukes and some defenses, and the third, which was presented initially as a keynote address at the first International Foucault and Education conference in 2000, led into vexed discussion amid conflicting understandings in the audience of the terms *autonomy*, *freedom*, *liberation*, and what constituted a *political act* (e.g., at one point the debate turned on whether Foucault was to be seen as "caring", as a better person and scholar, simply because he was involved in street marches and stuffing envelopes for particular causes. This, in turn, was challenged as missing the point of his problematizations).

Educational research frequently draws upon dualistic and moralistic senses and, more rarely, contests the reduction. Dualisms are not here considered, in circular fashion, "bad" or as that which ought always to be avoided – every turn of phrase would then become culpable of that which it critiques. Rather, the propensity toward dualism makes the educational responses analyzed amenable to a rhizomatic analysis. The image of the rhizome is a productive orientation to the ways in which Foucault has been deployed in education because of the skepticism it suggests toward thought

11 Ibid.

12 Francis Schrag, "Why Foucault Now?" *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 31 (1999): 375-83.

13 Lynn Fendler, *Foucault May Not Be Useful* (Montreal, Canada: American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Foucault and Education Special Interest Group, 2005).

14 James D. Marshall, "Michel Foucault: Marxism, Liberation, and Freedom," in *Dangerous Coagulations?*, 265-78.

that branches from a single point and because it acknowledges, draws upon, and problematizes the ways in which dualisms are involved in the production and assignment of alterity around norms.¹⁵

While it is impossible if not antithetical to condense the interdisciplinary work that constitutes Deleuze and Guattarian analysis, especially if that effort is perceived as plotting points and fixing orders in advance, some sense of their textual play can be introduced. A rhizomatic orientation to Foucault scholarship indebted to (non-formulaic) *principles of connectivity* and *heterogeneity, multiplicity, and asignifying ruptures* brings to notice the recombinatorial attributes of educational work, and subsequent efforts to corral, control, and/or dichotomize such swirling “excess.”

Deleuze and Guattari argue against Freudian psychoanalytics and structural linguistics. They initially pit the image of an erratic rhizome against arborescent thought - a style of analysis that draws everything back to the root and trunk of a single tree. They do so through a series of nuanced arguments that eventually prevent the “pitting” being seen as an originary dualism, elaborating four principles in the process. First, *principles of connection and heterogeneity* refer to how “Any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order.” Connectivity is not oppositional to heterogeneity. Rather, they are interdependent: “A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages”.¹⁶

Second, the *principle of multiplicity* refers to a substantive (a shift from *multiple* to *multiplicity* is crucial here): “Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudomultiplicities for what they are. There is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject....A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature”.¹⁷ The determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions of scholarship in education would here be put into connectivity with each other, shifting images of “an authentic Foucault” into a multiplicity that changes rather than resolves what is seen as Foucaultian.

15 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

16 *Ibid.*, 7.

17 *Ibid.*, 8.

Last, the *principle of asignifying rupture* is formulated “against the oversignifying breaks separating structures or cutting across a single structure. A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on a new line”.¹⁸ In the three plateaus discussed here, the reterritorial is usually given focus rather than deterritorial lines of flight. As such, in vilification and discipleship orientations both leakiness and reversibility are downplayed: “Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in a rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of good and bad. You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still a danger that you will reencounter organizations that restratify everything....Good and bad are only the products of an active and temporary selection, which must be renewed”.¹⁹ As a line of flight from how Foucault scholarship in education has been characterized elsewhere as simply for or against Foucault,²⁰ I offer a reading here in which such rhizomatic principles implicitly operate through the analysis in deliberately uneven and subtle ways that create and recreate strata from the richness of his work.

In the first section I outline some parameters of an educational field that indicate the boundaries of receptivity and that mark education’s distinctiveness. In the following sections I demonstrate how historical propensities and parameters give shape in different ways to the plateaus that have temporarily formed around Foucault. I argue that in vilification and discipleship plateaus the obliteration of noise in favor of one frequency resecurates the prejudices that underpin such framings at the outset. In agnostic accounts, I suggest that the effort is neither directed toward quashing “difference” at the site of “its” production, nor seeking to govern and regulate the “difference” that separates sameness/difference in Derridean terms.²¹

18 Ibid., 9.

19 Ibid., 9-10.

20 For examples, see Schrag, “Why Foucault Now?”; Ramon Flecha, “Modern and Postmodern Racism in Europe Dialogic Approach and Anti-Racist Pedagogies,” *Harvard Educational Review* 69 (1999): 150-71.

21 The difficulty of calling anything Derridean in relation to Derrida’s writing always raises its head. The adjectival form used here is a way of marking the analytical leverage that the 1968 lecture on *différance* provides for re-reading debates over Foucault in education. But it is also a wider issue in this paper – that of the grammar of possession in regard to discussing plateaus rather than “individuals.” “I” have laid out elsewhere (see Bernadette M. Baker, *In Perpetual Motion: Theories of Power, Educational History, and the Child* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 14) how the “I” and the use of the possessive more generally have to be read differently in such projects,

“Representing” a line of flight from other plateaus and embodying its own deterritorial impulses the availability of an agnostic plateau keeps open the possibility for rhizomatic recombination from “within”, for challenging dominant historical propensities in the field, and for embodying in its poetics some anti-essentialistic aspects of Foucault’s work. The analysis suggests in sum, both the nature of what is encamped and what seeps in educational deployments, demonstrating how “the rhizome is altogether different, *a map and not a tracing*,” and where despite their eventual interdependence mapping has more “to do with performance,” rather than an alleged competence, distinguished at the outset from tracing by its orientation toward “an experimentation in contact with the real”.²²

Three Plateaus

I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area... I would like [my work] to be useful to an educator, a warden, a magistrate, a conscientious objector. I don't write for an audience, I write for users, not readers.²³

Placing education into comparative relation with other fields is bound to generate generalizations, inaccuracies, and glossing of transnational and intranational differences. What I am more comfortable identifying here are differences I have noted in moving between biophysical, humanities, and social science “contexts” through which I travel, write, and teach, and which historically embody discipline-specific and “nationalized” variations at some level. They may be helpful for bringing into relief some of the uniqueness of anglophone educational scholarship and in regard to locating how vilification, discipleship, and agnostic approaches appear on the one hand as simplistic “polemic versus intellectual” orientations, and also as something more complicated in regard to discursive trajectories in the field.

First, many disciplines are not tied to a formal institution at which attendance is compelled by force of law and threat of punishment and where non-attendance has to be either prefigured in law (e.g., “severe intellectual disability” as a condition of exemption) or excused (e.g., homeschooling, juvenile detention, suspension). This is an enormous difference that constitutes one parameter of education’s domain. An emphasis on compulsory schooling has historically been *the* litmus test for worth in much

as “shorthand ways of conveying a narrative in which citing an author’s name in the possessive is always to be understood as beyond reference to an individual and outside discourses of ownership.”

22 Delueze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 12-13.

23 Michel Foucault, *Dits et Ecrits t. II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974/1994), 523-4.

educational scholarship. While scholars such as Pinar have recently urged to “speak of the schools sparingly”,²⁴ this is a tremendous provocation in a discipline where many job descriptions require several years of experience in full-time primary, elementary, or secondary schoolteaching to even apply and where many university-based activities such as conferences or professional development try to “reach out” to schoolteachers. A perception of schools as institutional and intellectual endpoints, as “concrete” or “real” places over and above university-based teaching has dominated sensibilities of worthiness to the point that in some publications, faculty meetings, reviews, and so forth if the insight does not lead directly to recommendation for how to teach reading or mathematics in a local state school it would be considered not worthy or denigrated as irrelevant “high theory.”

In anglophone-dominant locales, pragmatism, especially in the looser form of “whatever works” in present-day Commonwealth countries or more specifically in the form of venerating John Dewey in the United States is a particularly popular philosophy given the pressures that many scholars have felt as former schoolteachers. Imagine teaching, for instance, over three hundred different teenagers per week who are forced to be in front of you and who may not want to be there, interacting with hundreds of people every day, not just for a few hours once a week in a campus lecture hall, meeting with parents or guardians on a regular basis, grading hundreds of papers, folders, assignments, and projects each month with no assistants or relief, interacting with perhaps more than a hundred other teachers at your workplace on a regular basis, not just at conferences, and then being expected to do extracurricular activities before and after work for no pay. Given the institutional pressure of bodies to teach and not just to process, the number of interactions, and the diversity of philosophies coming at a teacher on a given day, pragmatism’s popularity becomes superficially understandable within a discourse of survival. In certain locales, too, the protestant vestiges within pragmatist approaches buoy its popularity further – its salvatory, religious heritage is forgotten and its basic tenets appear as secular efficiency, childcentered, and hip.

The redemptive and pragmatic aspects of forced schooling’s governmental project holds much sway in the field, then. As such, a theory/practice dualism structures much scholarly debate. Daignault and Gauthier have characterized the curriculum studies field, for example, around two poles: tension in a theory/practice split and ambiguity over what is meant by curriculum and subsequent efforts to pin it down.²⁵ These poles intersect within a particular gambit, however, and that is the project of citizen-

24 William Pinar, *What is Curriculum Theory?* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 175.

25 Jacques Daignault and Clermont Gauthier, “The Indecent Curriculum Machine: Who’s Afraid of Sysphe?” *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 4 (1982): 177–96.

production. Compulsory schooling has for the most part in the twentieth century been a nationalist project. The kind of citizen inscribed in educational policy as perfectible becomes the benchmark for (almost) all. The inscription of a narrow range of national imaginaries is tied very closely to compulsory schooling's institutionalization, making nationalism, a theory/practice dualism, and calls for clarity of concepts, methods, frameworks, behaviors, and personal allegiance a potent concoction shaping dynamics in the field. Second, this scaffolds conflicting duties in university settings. Schools, Departments, or Colleges of Education on many campuses have faculty torn between three somewhat incommensurable functions: formal preparation for a profession bound by district, state, and federal laws (teacher education at the undergraduate and/or masters levels), formal preparation of doctoral students who are not necessarily headed to a school, and the research function. One epistemological upshot of this and the first parameter together is a tendency to privilege and tightly script methodological approaches. Scholars will often introduce themselves and classify others by methodological compartments ("I am a qualitative researcher, "a critical race theorist", "a Foucaultian", "a Marxist", "a feminist poststructuralist", etc) or by allegiance with professional preparation categories (teacher educator, literacy person, mathematics or science educator, geography educator, a philosopher of education, a policy analyst, a curriculum studies scholar, etc).

These forms of address and types of compartments do not necessarily hold internationally and unilaterally in every single locale but they will be unavoidably present, implicitly or explicitly, in many professional settings. What is more generic is the historical propensity to template methodologies into curriculum-ready chunks of sequenced steps and how-to guides. E.g., "to do qualitative research enact these steps"; "to use Foucault follow these rules"; "to call it mathematics education scholarship use these concepts" and so forth. While such prescriptiveness might be denied in specific settings there is no way around the pervasiveness of such scientization of educational research. This emerges, in part, through the explicitly derivative nature of the field, its close relationship with the formation of psychology, and the status anxiety that has plagued a discipline that has been positioned by scholars within and without as pseudo-professional and quasi-intellectual.²⁶

Third, much more so than the biophysical sciences educational scholarship pins published research to the person amid theories of authorial intention, consciousness and will. In the biophysical sciences especially of the laboratory kind critiques are tied more noticeably to what line of experiments

26 David F. Labaree, "Power, Knowledge, and the Rationalization of Teaching: A Genealogy of the Movement to Professionalize Teaching," *Harvard Educational Review* 62 (2) (1992): 123-54; Lisa Weems, "Troubling Professionalism: Narratives of Family Race, and Nation in Educational Reform," in Baker and Heyning, *Dangerous Coagulations?*, 225-60.

have and have not been done, are targeted at collaborative laboratories or groups of workers and authors (where the main author is listed last, not first), and pivot on an unspoken agreement of validity, objectivity, and reliability (V.O.R.) as conditions of proof (Validity = are your experiments really testing what you think they are testing? Objectivity = have you isolated the real cause or could contaminating variables have been involved? Reliability = repeatability, can other people in different parts of the world come up with the same results by following your procedures?). Critiques of V.O.R. from Karl Marx to Thomas Kuhn to Bruno Latour to Donna Haraway automatically suggest themselves here but the point is about the differential ways in which research protocols act back upon the constitution of knowledge and the conditions of truth.

For example, in education if someone does not notice something that someone else believes they should have it can be taken as a moral flaw, an insensitivity, a marker of lack of proper self-governance that makes each piece of writing and each critique into a personality indicator. Foucault's insight that "the individual" is the effect of particular trajectories and not an originary vehicle has eluded large segments of the field and his insights especially in "What is an Author?"²⁷ remain subjugated. As such, the stakes are often constituted around such notions as whether someone is seen as caring, kind, polite, sensitive, selfless – or appropriately networked - and not just around the topic, method, or substance of study. Although research never speaks for itself, such interpersonal judgments and psychological orientations to knowledge-production play a strong role in structuring determinations of worthiness in the educational field, not despite the tendencies toward formulaic methodological templating but in part because of them. That is, if the methodology is already decided in advance, predictable, patterned, and applied, then what is it that separates one piece of scholarship from another? It is here that such psychological orientations to authorship and research production are given space to operate.

In *Madness and Civilization*,²⁸ the experiences of confinement generate new possibilities. The three parameters I have noted here, the ties to a confining, compulsory institution, to citizen-production and nation-building, and the psychologization of authorship where work is seen to "go through" one's being and is not left behind at the office as an object, are conditions of possibility for upholding other major tendencies that mark the field: the scientization of theoretical frameworks, their governance as methods, and the moralization of their utility around dualisms. Such historical propensities

27 Michel Foucault, "What is an author?" in *Essential Works of Foucault, volume 2: Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology, 195–1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1969/1998).

28 Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Pantheon, 1961/1988).

shape scholarship drawing on Foucault in education, as well as providing a springboard for efforts to “de-disciplinarize” or challenge such borders. This highlights the significance of the quote that opens this section. Whether “Foucaultian” scholarship ought to or needs to appeal to particular strategies, tactics and rules might seem beyond debate given Foucault’s largesse toward the appropriation of his work. Thus, it might appear that such a statement about tools in toolboxes pre-empts any further discussion and undermines education’s propensity to template research approaches: “however they wish” and “in their own area” and “I write for users not readers” is all that needs to be said. Foucault revisits the tools in the toolbox metaphor at least four times across his career and he does not invoke it in relation to only one book or one project that he is asked about.²⁹

At another level, it is not all that needs to be said. The *carte blanche* that Foucault gives in relation to his histories in particular can be met by further excerpts where he corrects or at least sidestep his interviewers’ presumptions, denies his work is structuralist, or elaborates in his lectures what he means by sovereignty, and so forth. This makes him ripe for debate in educational scholarship because he can be tied into pre-existing anxiety over methodological prescriptiveness and territoriality, scientism and rigor in specific ways that relate to historical propensities, systems of governance in the field, and ongoing efforts to sidestep or challenge such tendencies. What I examine in the following section are three plateaus – vilification, discipleship, and agnosticism – that demonstrate how such propensities in the field are recombined around Foucault’s work, crossing “national” boundaries and at the same time bearing their historical mark.

Precisely because of education’s parameters, the effects of which I do not claim to be beyond, several caveats are required. I have laid out extensively elsewhere my orientation to Foucault and to Foucault scholarship in education and I do not wish to reiterate all the caveats and nuances that those mappings contain.³⁰ What I do want to preface here is firstly, my discomfort with a priori monochromatic readings of Foucault. My response when being asked a usually generic question about Foucault is “Which Foucault?” By this request for specificity I do not imply a developmentalization into earlier and later Foucault that presumes the order of publication as automatically causal and evolutionary regarding innovations in his work. Nor do I imply that Foucault is always already

29 O’Farrell has identified locations of the toolbox metaphor, including those that have not appeared in English translation such as this one. Her insightful comments on drafts of this paper have been immeasurably helpful. See Clare O’Farrell, *Michel Foucault*, (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), 50-60, 159.

30 Bernadette M. Baker, “From the Genius of Man to the Man of Genius, Part 1: A Slippery Subject,” *History of Education Review* 34 (1) (2005): 1-18; Baker, *In Perpetual Motion*; Baker and Heyning, *Dangerous Coagulations?*.

different unto himself across his major works.³¹ Rather, the position taken has to be argued in regard to the texts cited. One may or may not make a case for relation between one publication and another given the topic at hand – it cannot be decided in advance.³² Second, the play on religious terminology in the naming of plateaus is instructive, not pejorative, in relation to the educational field. As other scholars using Foucault have noted, there has been a very strong history in many national settings of salvationist rhetoric and redemptive reform efforts in educational discourse.³³ Last, I am not writing here in order to demonstrate an ideal reading or illustrate how to move beyond the field's historical tendencies. My effort is not focused either on reflexively avoiding things that I see as problematic within the three plateaus. Thus, when I am critiquing scholarship for essentialized readings or monochromatic orientations to Foucault and then citing a passage from Foucault that might be interpreted as oppositional or alternative my aim is not to capture an authentic Foucault or to be pedagogical in the didactic sense. Instead, I offer potential counterpoints as lines of flight that, if anything, understate the variety of approaches to Foucault and that suggest the nuances possible through reading him. This strategy is not to be understood as grounding a primordial Foucault, but as precisely the opposite - an unhinging, a turn to what leaks, rather than a reterritorialization of preexisting segmentarity. To that end it honors attention to asignifying ruptures by focusing simultaneously on what is encamped and what seeps.³⁴

31 Causality, evolution, and developmentalism are all concepts educational research has already questioned, not despite but because so many scholars have taught every "age group" in formal institutions. For an elaboration of anti-developmentalism through Foucault, see John Morrs, *Growing Critical: Alternatives to Developmental Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1996).

32 This position comes out of specific philosophical orientation to what Francois Victor Tochon ("Metareference. A Bakhtinian View of Academic Dialogue," *International Journal of Applied Semiotics* 1 (Special Issue) (1999): 5-12) calls the game of references in which Foucault participated very differently. It is difficult to be convinced that someone ought to critique Foucault without having read him. This may seem an obvious or mundane point if "I" hadn't been to conference presentations and read book chapters in the educational field that criticize Foucault where there has been not one citation of any of his texts amid sweeping summaries of "what Foucault really meant."

33 *Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge*, ed. S. Ball (London: Routledge, 1990); Wayne Fife, "Creating the Moral Body: Missionaries and the Technology of Power in Early Papua New Guinea," *Ethnology* 40 (3) (2001): 251-69; Ian Hunter, *Rethinking the School: Subjectivity, Bureaucracy, Criticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Thomas Popkewitz and Marie Brennan, *Foucault's Challenge: Discourse, Knowledge and Power in Education*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1998).

34 Any labeling of approaches will, however, remain vulnerable to charges of misrepresentation, essentialization, etc. See Baker and Heyning, *Dangerous Coagulations?*, for an extended discussion of the slipperiness, contingency and excess of mapping.

Vilification

In anglophone educational research, efforts to template Foucault and claim him for or against a particular analytical style or project are easy to find. There are also efforts that step to the side of existing dualism and beyond the pettiness. These are more agnostic (if not also agonistic) readings of Foucault. Agnostic readings are not neutral. What makes them agnostic is that such readings historically map how positions such as vilification and discipleship could even become possible around his name, in a sense doing Foucault to Foucault or they engage with a wide range of debates around his work as part of arguing for a particular position.³⁵

Vilification approaches deploy Foucault to argue not just that he is wrong about whatever he studied, but that he is *dangerous*, irrelevant, and a problem. The vilification of Foucault that circulates through and as “Why Foucault Now?” is not unique in the field.³⁶ Its publication drew written responses, however, in ways that other works have not. It can be read against a backdrop of university politics as well as epistemological debate. In 1998 Popkewitz and Brennan published the first edited volume on Foucault and education to appear in the United States (an earlier volume appeared in 1990 in the UK edited by Stephen Ball).³⁷ The international volume was, in relation to Schrag’s location at the University of Wisconsin, USA, coming from across campus (Popkewitz), across hemispheres (Brennan’s location in Australia), and across epistemological divides about the role of the “intellectual” and the nature of research. This specificity is what may escape a reader from outside the United States and outside of education, and in this case it matters. The commentary and implicit targeting inherent to “Why Foucault Now?” is difficult to comprehend without awareness of the new availability of Popkewitz and Brennan’s work at the time and the international group of scholars it drew together. The seemingly innocuous opening in an international journal, then, will speak volumes later: “Over the last forty years American educational scholars have deployed a variety of theoretical perspectives to understand schooling in its relation to society beyond the

35 For examples, see Ball, *Foucault and Education*; Jennifer Gore, “Enticing Challenges: an Introduction to Foucault and Educational Discourses,” in *Inside/Out: Contemporary Critical Perspectives in Education*, eds. R. A. Martusewicz and W. M. Reynolds (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 109–120; James D. Marshall, *Michel Foucault : Personal Autonomy and Education*, vol. 7: *Philosophy and Education* (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996); Julie McLeod, “Foucault Forever,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 22 (1) (2001): 95-104.

36 For examples, see Michael Apple, *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Flecha, “Modern and Postmodern Racism”.

37 Popkewitz and Brennan, *Foucault’s Challenge*; Ball, *Foucault and Education*.

schools.”³⁸ The frame of reference is thus American educational research alone – the reduction has been effected and the attempted disciplining begins.

“Why Foucault Now?”³⁹ maps phases in educational research: most of the 1950s and ‘60s in educational research was dominated by structural-functionalism derived from Parsons, the 1970s by appeal to Marx and Gramsci, and “Most recently, the influence of the late French scholar Michel Foucault has been growing.”⁴⁰ The latter trend is satirically described as “cutting edge” in the opening paragraph and an endnote presents the following as evidence of misguided growth: that in an electronic search of The University of Wisconsin libraries no books with “Foucault” and “Education” appeared before 1990 and “that by 1994 and later” six were held. The reader is not told what the titles are, whether Foucault and educational research was the central topic, and whether in consonance with the initial delimitation American educational research was the focus. There are no citations of journal articles, book chapters, or conference presentations that might substantiate the charges. The paper’s opening general claim has not, then, been adequately researched or documented from a survey of the field’s literature.

Embedded in the opening paragraph is a further indicator of how the tone of the paper will end up resembling a panicked thematic of “waves of immigrants crashing on our shore!” – Parson’s nationality remains unmarked, the radically different settings of Marx and Gramsci are subsumed under the title “European theorists,” while Foucault is singularly identified as “French.”

“Why Foucault Now?” is then divided into two main sections. The first asserts that Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* is the only one of his works that deals specifically with schooling and that it bears a strong resemblance to the logic found in earlier structural-functional accounts such as Robert Dreeben’s Parsonian analysis *On What is Learned in School*.⁴¹ The second and third sections draw parallels between the two books, suggesting that just as structural-functionalism disappeared from the educational landscape for its weaknesses, so should Foucault scholarship. As part of defending the claim that structural-functionalism and Foucault have something in common, Foucault’s intellectual project is introduced in the first section as follows: “Foucault is concerned to map a set of major social transformation occurring within a span of decades that separate our world from that of our European ancestors living before the eighteenth century”.⁴² This establishes the world in Foucault as having two time zones, before and after the eighteenth century, and only one kind - “us” and “our” ancestors in Europe. Foucault’s work is

38 Schrag, “Why Foucault Now?”, 375.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid, 375

41 Robert Dreeben, *On What is Learned in School* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1968)

42 Schrag, “Why Foucault Now?”, 376.

then described as a “hermeneutics of suspicion” with a subsequent heavy reliance on Weberman’s templating of disciplinary power to explain what Foucault means by disciplinary.

The reduction of Foucault’s work to dualistic timezones and characters and the templating of one of his analytics of power brings to the fore the kinds of historical propensities discussed above. Several further strategies support such initial efforts. First is the inconsistency in the self-delimitation to *Discipline and Punish*. While flagging the restricted focus in the opening is helpful – it delineates precisely for the reader which text has been engaged – the claim for the delimitation is difficult to support. Upon engaging with *The Order of Things*, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, and *The History of Sexuality Vol 1 and 11*,⁴³ overt connections to curriculum studies, pedagogy, and institutionalized education are apparent, such as: “It does not appear that the privilege accorded to this particular type of relation can be attributed solely to the pedagogical concerns of moralists and philosophers. We are in the habit of seeing a close connection between the Greek love of boys and Greek educational practice and philosophical instruction”.⁴⁴ Here Foucault relativizes this habit of reading as well as interrogates what “Why Foucault Now?” refers to in its opening – links between “schooling” and “society.” Such delimitation ultimately turns, though, on what one defines as schooling and as “dealing with” it, a predisposition that the paper does not clarify in regard to the analysis offered or in relation to the rest of Foucault’s work.

This is a significant lapse, for it is upon such an unspoken definition of schooling, upon an undefined understanding of institution, structure, and event, and upon a minimalist reading of Foucault’s work that “Why Foucault Now?” relies to make claims from beyond its documents. The analysis gradually ventures away, for instance, from *Discipline and Punish* to discuss some of the interviews in *Power/Knowledge*⁴⁵ in the last section. This is a methodological admission that opens the piece to the critique that it tries to cut off early. That is, a wider reading of Foucault’s works – and of structural-functionalism – is necessary to make the analytical maps that the paper tries to both draw and to bury.⁴⁶

43 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol. II. The Use of Pleasure* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

44 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, 195.

45 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

46 The acknowledgments and endnotes are telling in regard to local epistemological politics, notable for their absences and their presences, and verging on the comical. In endnote four, for instance, it is argued that Michael Apple, a Marxist scholar who “Why Foucault Now?” names as someone consulted for the paper’s preparation, holds a more positive orientation to Foucault than Schrag. For scholars who have read Apple, heard him speak, or taken classes from him the public derision of

A key issue in the first part, which extends into the following two sections, is thus the question of wider reading and what the argument does not survey, more so than what it does. In addition to its inconsistency around the localization to *Discipline and Punish*, the early argument turns heavily on proofs never given, including: 1) the absence of any Foucault and education literature in an analysis that asserts its growth and status within the field, 2) the absence of a rationale that documents rather than asserts how the delimitation to *Discipline and Punish* is arrived at, and more specifically to one section within it on examinations, 3) the absence of a broad survey of humanities and social science commentaries on Foucault relative to the number and variety of those already published by 1999 – this is an important task in forming the question “Why Foucault Now?”, and 4) the absence of published commentaries specifically on *Discipline and Punish* or on *On What is Learned in School* from within the field of education.

Colin Gordon noted nearly fifteen years ago that vilification of Foucault is often characterized by holding critiques of his work to a standard that is not actually met within the critiques themselves.⁴⁷ This tradition is retained in “Why Foucault Now?” and combined with the absences enumerated above generates questions and concerns regarding the research process. Such concerns would often be addressed in educational research, for instance, in Masters and Doctoral theses/dissertations. This is important to raise because it is often differences in conditions of truth-production that remain uninterrogated in the hostility directed toward Foucault and this can obscure a deeper conversation about the (ir)reconcilability of approaches at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Second, the wider propensity to template frameworks functions here to gloss significant historicities that relate to how the concepts attributed to a given approach were made possible, sequenced, and/or absented. In making one section of *Discipline and Punish* the centerpiece (the role of examination) it would seem important to flag awareness of the section’s placement in the text, what precedes and follows it, and how it is introduced in relation to the wider project. This is not a point about wider reading as per above but about *close* reading. In “Why Foucault Now?” it is difficult to locate any awareness of

Foucault and Foucaultian scholars up to 1999 – the point of publication - is both familiar and indisputable, appearing, for example, not just in seminars, but in addresses at national conferences, and conjoined pejoratively to the use of the term “posties.” The vilification plateau in such instances has been formed on the same plane as “Why Foucault Now?”, but in an impossible if not laughable yet characteristic torsion Apple is presented in “Why Foucault Now?” as a mediating and moderate voice in the area of Foucault-based research.

47 Colin Gordon, “Rewriting History of Misreading”, in *Rewriting the History of Madness: Studies in Foucault’s Histoire de la Folie*, eds. A. Still and I. Velody (New York: Routledge, 1992), 167–184

how Foucault re-theorizes subjectivity throughout *Discipline and Punish*, how he posits the relationship between prisons, schools, hospitals, judiciary, police, and armies, of differences between French and English versions, such as in regard to the placement of photographic plates, of the opening statements that forecast a unique theorization of body, power, gaze, and method (“history of the present”), or of the relation of examination to the prison, to changes in truth-production, and to the conjuring of possibilities for reform. Any set of noticeabilities can be plucked out of a long text but if the stated enterprise is to answer the question “Why Foucault Now?” as tied to one text it seems reasonable to expect a full and close reading of that text and not just a section within it.

The analysis, then, did not generate a feeling that a close, thorough, or rigorous reading of *Discipline and Punish* had been offered or that Foucault’s work had been more than superficially engaged. This “feeling” arises from how “Why Foucault Now?” positioned Foucault and Foucault scholarship via both what was never attended to in the analysis and via specific examples such as this one, found in the endnotes: Foucault’s appeal in the United States should be suspect because in one book published in France in 1997 on the education of North African immigrants, Foucault is not referenced. Such examples in the paper exemplify something else – that there is no awareness of different disciplinary boundaries in the French academy relative to the US, of how one should not expect to find Foucault in publications emanating from departments of education, and how one should not expect to find American historians or philosophers of education being studied in such settings. A similar glossing of Dreeben’s analysis occurs and a similar lack of attention to debates within and at the edges of structural-functionalist approaches operates to occlude any data that might contradict the thesis. One is left with the impression that the two texts – *Discipline and Punish* and *On What is Learned in School* - can only be brought into alliance on the basis of shearing more complicated analyses in both. More plainly put, when two books use the word “examination” it does not necessarily mean that their analytical projects are reconcilable. The historical propensity to incite moralistic dualisms around particular methodological approaches is given full rein here, then, by ignoring more wide-reaching and nuanced dialogues over how different approaches to research are conceptualized and how they springboard from different philosophical assumptions about power, the subject, and action/event.

This leads into a third major way in which the field’s historical tendencies are recombined to uphold a temporary vilification plateau around Foucault’s name. Particular analytical strategies that link normalization-deviation-eradication discourses circulate through “Why Foucault Now?”, acting as unspoken vehicles that reinscribe the governance of preferred methodologies. Given the opening assumption - that structural-functionalism

and Foucault have something in common – the paper poses the following question: “Why, then, would a mode of analysis that was the object of so much criticism a generation ago be reincarnated a generation later?” The question presupposes another opening assumption, more subtly inscribed i.e., that Foucault-based research needs to be eradicated from the educational landscape as structural-functionalism has been. The paper is not dedicated to the question it asks “Why Foucault Now?”, but rather to “Why Not Get Rid of Foucault *Now!*” The deviance-making around an unnamed yet better norm thereby suggests the potential for eradication.

The discursive linking (normalization-deviance-eradication) is attempted through the last two sections of the paper, subtitled “Parallels and Criticisms” and “Why Foucault?” Here, the analysis maps how critiques leveled at structural-functionalists can be leveled with equal force at Foucault, the first being that Foucault and Dreeben both assume that society is static rather than dynamic. The claim of staticity in Foucault seems difficult to sustain. In the opening of *Discipline and Punish*, for instance, the reader is greeted with a form of punishment that seems gruesome, torturous, and dramatic. That this style of punishment, in some locales, was no longer viable in a few short decades of the building and production of prisons, indicates the dynamic changes that Foucault documents, part of which he theorizes through a non-totalizing shift from sovereign power to disciplinary power. Claims to static depictions of a generic entity called society are, then, difficult to substantiate in light of the graphic shifts that *Discipline and Punish* takes up. Missing from and undermining of the paper’s parallelisms thesis, then, is a sensitivity to the mutability of terms that Foucault generates through his engagement with “primary documents”. In short, the term *society* takes on different inscriptions across the ruptures that *Discipline and Punish* lays out.

The second criticism of *Discipline and Punish* that “Why Foucault Now?” raises in the latter sections is that in Foucault’s approach and that of Dreeben’s individual human actors and human choices play little or no role. Ladelle McWhorter argues that because humanists cannot understand politicizing the subject as Foucault does they remain in a circular logic where: a) political action is always the work of a logically prior subjectivity and b) good actions are always premeditated, reasoned actions based on universalizable, normative criteria.⁴⁸ “The fact that Foucault starts elsewhere means that questions – not simply answers – are transformed”.⁴⁹

Such philosophical points and understanding of epistemological differences are not presented or engaged in “Why Foucault Now?”. The conclusion is quite sarcastic, listing four reasons for why Foucault has become

48 Ladelle McWhorter, *Bodies and Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1999), 73.

49 Ibid, 73-4.

popular in educational research: “Of course his undoubted brilliance and dazzling linguistic virtuosity make it relatively easy for converts to believe that they are astride a fresh mount rather than a dead horse. To put my point in a more Gallic manner: by embracing Foucault, scholars can announce their resignation to the status quo while appearing to protest it”⁵⁰ The other three reasons are: that neo-Marxist schemas do not resonate in a post-communist world and so scholars predisposed to neo-Marxism have to turn to something less tainted; that Foucault’s refusal to be identified with the Communist party allows scholars to align with a variety of counter-hegemonic movements, and, Foucault allows one to believe that theorizing is social activism: “Notions such as this make it possible for scholars, especially those with a flair for theorizing, to believe that no matter how esoteric or precious their formulations, and no matter how limited their audiences, they are, even they theorize, social activists engaged in laying the ground for social transformation”.⁵¹

In the conclusion, then, “Why Foucault Now?” gives most shape to the vilification plateau and the chastising of (nameless) scholars who draw upon texts such as *Discipline and Punish*, putting into alliance those who use Foucault and the political right who are painted as homogeneous. By forging this relationship the paper concludes that the effect of Foucault scholarship is to support “the political right’s” eradication of public education. The implication remains that the only way to be a “good” academic is to get rid of Foucault and that way Americans will have less ammunition to argue for the end of their own institutions and they will not have to end up defending what decades earlier they criticized (the self-same public schools).⁵²

For such conclusions to hold, it is crucial to know what the terms structural-functionalism and structure are being used to convey, especially the latter term. If the different philosophical springboards and conditions of truth-production for *On What is Learned in School* relative to *Discipline and Punish* had been discussed up front, the analysis might have been better placed to elaborate a key and common problem that haunts educational research: the unique inscription of “structure” in different accounts of education. Neither structure nor education is defined in “Why Foucault Now?” and thus their intellectual baggage remains implicit – structural-functionalism, for instance, is Parsons and Dreeben only, and its analytical qualities and difference from other approaches to educational research has to be inferred from statements such as: “Schools have distinctive structural features that assist students in the development of norms that are needed to

50 Schrag, “Why Foucault Now?”, 381.

51 Ibid, 382.

52 Ibid, 381.

function in society”⁵³. The request for specificity is instructive, not pedantic, for it is on the word structure that the parallel between Dreeben and Foucault, and their dismissal, is drawn. The point of contestation in this third problem is not simply wider reading, close reading, or “difference” and whether “it” exists, then, but *what governs distinction between sameness/difference* on which normalization is predicated.

The grounds upon which methodological groupings are made have to be intuited from further statements embedded in the text: “Such inculcation [of students] demands schools with structural features such as examinations”.⁵⁴ In “Why Foucault Now?” examinations = a structural feature, then, regardless of where or how they are discussed and analyzed in specific pieces of research. Such statements have the effect of implicitly dovetailing Foucault’s “history of the present” into Dreeben’s 1968 clockwork-style analysis. The arrival at the assertion of similarity, if not sameness, is removed from philosophical interrogation and thus what has been debated as structural, structuralist, and structuralism within France and relative to elsewhere is ignored. For example, sometimes in anglophone educational scholarship debates within anthropological and linguistic structuralism are actually subsumed under the name “poststructural” without realization of the slippage.⁵⁵ Such field-specific points are key to unlocking the greater divisions and finer-grained nuances between styles of educational work. Foucault, for instance, overtly denies that his work is structuralist in the English-language edition Preface to *The Order of Things*, and does not claim that his work is post-structuralist either (see below). In “Why Foucault Now?” attention to localized and traveling discourses is not evident and as such the histories that underpin the differences between approaches - histories of the present and structural-functional - are smothered and reduced into the one analytical framework. The templating tendencies of the wider field, evident especially in the latter two sections of the paper are used, then, to stabilize works that swirl with differential philosophical springboards, such as incommensurable analytics of power and meanings of structure, and to thereby assert a similarity.

Fourth and finally, “Why Foucault Now?” bears the marks of “history” and “nation” that become involved in and interpenetrate the scientization, homogenization, and moralization of methods in educational research. The (non)sense of historicity delimits what can be drawn into answering the questions it poses. Nationalities are named but the intellectual ramifications

53 Ibid, 376.

54 Ibid.

55 See, for instance, Aaron Schutz, “Rethinking Domination and Resistance: Challenging Postmodernism,” *Educational Researcher* 33 (11) (2004): 5-23; Elizabeth Adam St.Pierre, “Discussant's response”, Montréal, Canada: American Educational Research Association Annual Conference (2005).

of naming are retreated from. The combined effect appears as a center that is presumed to speak for itself. The answer to “Why Foucault Now?” turns in the end, for instance, on commonly expressed fears in the United States over Marxism, communism, and social protest. These are the vectors of the historical analysis – it is scholars’ relations to these things that explain Foucault’s apparent popularity. Within this trajectory, then, Marx only is a key lineage for Foucault; there is no Canguillhem, no Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger, etc. The attempt to temporalize Foucault and elide “national” differences while still being bothered by them builds upon the psychologization tendencies of the field, where levels of consciousness are seen as predominant explanations for events and nationality becomes a shorthand reference – geopolitical entities are presumed stable and to speak for themselves. The danger here is that no similar effort to temporalize the preferred lens for critique is offered. The tendency to ask important questions only about analytical frameworks one disagrees with has already been noted. That “Why Foucault Now?” has circulating within it a particular genre that appears ahistorical to itself has already been pointed out:

In a discussion quite hostile to Foucault, Schrag asks how can we ‘explain the attractiveness of Foucault’s genre of analysis in the American academy today.’ The answer lies [in “Why Foucault Now?” paper] in the ‘fact that political processes and mechanisms of social change are conspicuously absent from Foucault’s analysis.’ This absence, the argument continues, appeals to the apolitical and overtheorising tendencies of the academy today. This is a familiar genre of discussion about Foucault (and other poststructuralists) – a lament for a lost, golden past when academics were not victims of intellectual fashions, combined with nostalgia for ‘real’ politics and ‘real’ scholarship”.⁵⁶

In a rhizomatic sense, then, the arguments over Foucault in this first kind of plateau appear as the first kind of tree that is assumed as the image of the world in Deleuze and Guattari. In this image, the educational field has – or ought to have – one style of thought, one trunk and root system, presiding over every subsequent division: “the Tree or Root as an image, endlessly develops the law of the One that becomes two, then of the two that becomes four...” The denial of multiplicity (as opposed to the multiple) at stake in claims of parallelism establishes the ground on which waste, efficiency, and eradication discourse operate. “This is as much to say that this system of thought has never reached an understanding of multiplicity: in order to arrive at two following a spiritual method it must assume a strong principle

56 McLeod, “Foucault Forever”, 95.

unity".⁵⁷ So strong is the principal unity assumed that the only analytical move possible in the paper is a claim of similitude, reproduction of a bad thing, which necessarily precedes arguments about annihilation.

In sum, while many of the published responses to the paper note that the framing question of why now is an important one, the lines of flight that seep from its encampment of Foucault flood the reading experience, providing multifarious points of entry for the replies published in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies*. While such a plateau is temporary, simultaneously an index of a field's historical propensities, its recombinatorial potential, and its conservative impulse, the most dire issue that comes with the formation of a vilification approach is the re-rooting of the tree of the One. It implies that the only responsible outcome is eradication of Foucault scholarship from "the American academy" regardless of how limited the audience is claimed to be. Apparently size matters, and so even a small size matters so much that it ought to be condemned as an ally of the political right and as another failed version of a structural-functionalism never defined. It is difficult, then, not to see an intellectual McCarthyism in such a vilification approach that wishes to, on the one hand, claim that Foucault scholarship has acquired an elevated status, and on the other, to react to such importation, immigration, and reincarnation, as unhealthy for local labor policies. Weaving nationalistic, xenophobic, and eradication sensibilities together, the templating of and commentary on Foucault in "Why Foucault Now?" resecurates the prejudices that helped found an educational field in the U.S. and that continue to circulate as useful devices of systems-closure and self-replication.

Discipleship

"Why Foucault Now?" appears oriented in the end toward denigrating if not getting rid of Foucault-based research, eradicating it on the same grounds as structural-functionalism apparently has been. In "Foucault May Not Be Useful",⁵⁸ the goal is not the eradication of Foucault from the educational field but purification of his presence within it. Whereas in the vilification approach little difference is seen between structural-functionalism and Foucault, in the discipleship approach that shapes "Foucault May Not be Useful" the general complaint is that there is not enough of a difference between structuralist users of Foucault and more pure poststructural deployment: "Lately it seems to me that there have been some moves toward hybridizing structuralism with poststructuralism....I find the impulse to combine and reconcile structuralist theory with poststructuralist theory to be

57 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 5.

58 Fendler, *Foucault May Not Be Useful*.

a modernist impulse that reflects a preference for analytical coherence, closure and certainty".⁵⁹

The difference in orientation to Foucault is subsumed by the manner of approach, in what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as aborescent systems of thought, which they discuss through two main images of tree and root and both of which they find limiting in regard to substantive multiplicity. In "Why Foucault Now?" the tree of the law of the One that becomes two roots the analytical moves. In "Foucault May Not Be Useful", the image of the radicle-system is what reproduces the desire for a secret unity of a yet-to-come. For instance, "Foucault May Not Be Useful" describes Foucault as now being an icon "even in the US, even in education",⁶⁰ but, in part, this is what is posed as the problem. The main point of the paper is to outline how Foucault should not be taken up in critical educational research in cases where such projects do not match up with what is positioned as a poststructural reading of Foucault. To this end, the paper makes explicit what remains cautiously avoided in other celebratory and discipleship accounts,⁶¹ i.e., the presumption of fixed, if not binary, positions.

As for "Why Foucault Now?", a circularity, differently inscribed, becomes immediately obvious: the modernist impulse seems to reside only in hybridization, not in the classification of theories which are presumed to be closed and coherent entities; because of this fixing, Foucault is not useful for scholars who do not understand his differences from the structuralist movement; Authors such as Karl Marx, Karl Popper and/or John Dewey are better suited, then, to projects such as "emancipatory" ones; Foucault has only certain potential uses and as such should not be deployed in projects that do not articulate in the same way as "Foucault May Not Be Useful" this sense of his difference.

In rhizomatic terms such an arborescent approach tries to undermine an acentered system that has no General: "The tree and root inspire a sad image of thought that is forever imitating the multiple on the basis of a

59 Ibid, 2.

60 Ibid, 1.

61 For examples, see David W. Blades, *Procedures of Power and Curriculum Change : Foucault and the Quest for Possibilities in Science Education, Counterpoints*, vol. 35 (New York: P. Lang, 1997); J. Drummond, "Foucault for Students of Education," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 34 (4) (2000): 709-19; Laura- K. Kerr, "Foucault and the Care of the Self: Educating for Moral Action and Mental Illness", paper presented at the meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society, Chicago, IL (2001); Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability, Corporealities* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Kevin D. Vinson, "National Curriculum Standards and Social Studies Education: Dewey, Freire, Foucault, and the Construction of a Radical Critique," *Theory and Research in Social Education* 27 (3) (1999): 296-328.

centered or segmented higher unity".⁶² For Deleuze and Guattari, such a shift into a radicle-system changes the pathway but not the outcome:

The radicle-system, or fascicular root, is the second figure of the book, to which our modernity pays willing allegiance. This time, the principal root has aborted, or its tip has been destroyed; an immediate indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots graft onto it and undergoes a flourishing development. This time, natural reality is what aborts the principal root, but the root's unity subsists, as past or yet to come, as possible. We must ask if reflexive, spiritual reality does not compensate for this state of things by demanding an even more comprehensive secret unity, or a more extensive totality.⁶³

The historical propensity to scientize and template theoretical frameworks is overtly introduced in the paper as a pedagogical necessity. As for a vilification approach, the analysis tries to cover bases early, in this case by arguing that what is being undertaken entails a pedagogical position,⁶⁴ pedagogical orientation,⁶⁵ pedagogical genre,⁶⁶ and pedagogical considerations.⁶⁷ Because the version of pedagogical is never defined in a field that is highly attuned to such terminology one is left wondering what is assumed about the reader and the kind of instruction deemed necessary. Three caveats at the outset of the lesson give some clue: first, is the caveat around wariness of interpreting and essentializing meaning from Foucault's work; second, that the spirit of Foucault's work was "never to establish an interpretation as true, but always to be looking for ways in which ideas have become too settled, too comfortable, and too familiar";⁶⁸ and third, that the analysis "is still anti-evangelistic,"⁶⁹ which presumes that such a stance has been apparent before and continues now, according to the following two beliefs – anti-evangelical means that not everyone should read Foucault and that Foucault should not be used for all critical projects. Finally, in a dubious distinction in relation to Foucault's *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, the opening "suspects" that it is "the idea" more so than "the content" of the paper that will bring forth criticism of

62 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 16.

63 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 5-6.

64 Ibid., 2.

65 Ibid., 2, 3.

66 Ibid., 3.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., 2.

69 Ibid.

its “sacrificial draft”.⁷⁰ This leads into an articulated anticipation of being charged with “policing Foucault,”⁷¹ and later, the disciplining of Foucault.

The caveats scaffold the ultimate object of the argument, which is to redirect the misguided toward other theorists if their projects are not in line with the reading of Foucault in “Foucault May Not Be Useful”. This, in turn, is scaffolded by arguing that Foucault’s work belongs to a camp called *critical theory*,⁷² a positioning that is highly contested across and within disciplines. The positioning provides the springboard for sorting out what version of critical theory Foucault is and is not – of giving the analysis one of its *problema* in Derridean terms: the projection of a task to be done and the hiding from something unavowable.⁷³

The paper’s first apparent target in the opening section is an article submitted for review to an educational policy journal. “Foucault May Not Be Useful” opens by criticizing the skimming of quotations from Foucault in the article. The reading of Foucault is then “corrected” - Foucault should have been understood as summarizing approaches he does not hold to in order to contrast these with something he later articulates as his approach. The reviewed article, it seems, could not be saved from itself: “I included the entire relevant passage [from Foucault] in my review and suggested to the author that it would be a much better paper if all the Foucault references were deleted”.⁷⁴ The criticism here turns on the assumption that the reviewer’s reading is more correct than the author of the journal article. The difficulty of this position, its performative contradiction, lies in relation to other quotes given in the paper from *Power/Knowledge* and the 1984 interviews respectively: “The intellectual no longer has to play the role of advisor. The project, tactics and goals to be adopted are a matter for those who do the fighting” and “The role of the intellectual is not to tell others what they must do...The work of an intellectual is not to mold the political will of others”.⁷⁵

While the paper argues that “To use Foucault as a weapon in the fight for truth is a performative contradiction”⁷⁶ and submits that “I do not mean for the primary purpose of this paper to be: ‘There is one right way to use Foucault’”⁷⁷ the presumed differential, in which one “interpretation” automatically and implicitly accords itself the higher value, incites the complaint in the opening vignette. This establishes the pattern for the rest of

70 Ibid., 2, 3.

71 Ibid., 2.

72 Ibid.

73 Jacques A. Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, trans. G. Donis (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2002).

74 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

75 Ibid., 5.

76 Ibid., 2.

77 Ibid.

the paper in which a host-immigrant dynamic underwrites the passport-required mentality at the heart of the paper and in which only some performative contradictions appear bothersome.

The second apparent target is any scholar guilty of a “prolepsis” – a later heading in the paper.⁷⁸ In this case, the falling-back is reference to those who use Foucault in structuralist rather than poststructuralist ways: “I am interested in articulating a stronger distinction between the two. This reflects my preference to avoid closure and the pursuit of certainty, which is what I regard as a critical project for the moment”.⁷⁹ The difference between a critical project and critical theory, and what is not a critical theory remains unarticulated. As for the vilification approach, which traded on the term *structure*, the term *critical* performs a similar task here – it is both useful in drawing events into the same neighborhood – a site for analytical glossing that then enables the comparison to unfold. In “Why Foucault Now?” the analysis offered reasons for articulating parallels between Dreeben and Foucault – largely to see the uselessness of such approaches. In “Foucault May Not Be Useful” reasons must be inferred, i.e., that the preservation of a pure poststructural theory is preferred is clear, but why that matters is not. The paper does not offer, for example, an explanation as to why articulating a stronger distinction between “the two” – structuralism and poststructuralism – would occupy commentary around Foucault. Why would one need or make appeal to presumed camps or require a priori such classifications to read or draw upon Foucault? Multiple responses could be generated – it is not that such responses or explanations are not already available or impossible. As suggested below, the writing in the Foucault corpus against the term structural is well-known, such as the denial of it in the earlier works, as is the questioning of the term poststructural in later interviews. Whether that automatically leads into reading Foucault only around interests of articulating stronger distinctions between “the two” is an argument of particularly limited stripe, however. As in “Why Foucault Now?”, debates around classifications are important yet ignored (especially how temporal and temporary such classifications can be, as they are in plateau and rhizomatic modes of understanding). The groupings implicitly circulating are significant right at the outset of the argument to lay the groundwork for complaint, and whether a structural and poststructural distinction is a unique or even informative set of debates in regard to Foucault is a vector that is left unconsidered.

The paper moves after its opening comparisons and caveats into extrapolation of the second apparent target – scholars who use Foucault on the assumption of “demographically identifiable groups of people who are categorically oppressed” and those intellectuals who see their roles “as

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

speaking on behalf of marginalized people”.⁸⁰ It culminates in a list of ten ways in which Foucault should not be used, the first two of which are elaborated and the last eight of which are recited. In the elaboration, reading of quotes from Foucault offer only one “meaning” despite the earlier claim to being wary of essentialization and each section concludes with an encouraging of people who do not read Foucault that way to turn to other theorists for their projects.

The paper concludes its pursuit of uncertainty with a bullet-point list: Foucault is, through repetitive proclamation rather than force of argument, considered not useful for particular analyses, listed in a table at the end. The Ten Commandments-style prohibitions are accompanied by what appears in that context a rather weak call for more “public debate”⁸¹ and a superficial acknowledgment of the dangers inherent in the project. The list includes such polemics as these: “If your argument assumes there are demographically identified groups of people who are categorically oppressed, Foucault is not useful”; “If you believe it is the role of intellectuals to speak on behalf of marginalized people, Foucault is not useful”; “If you think you have a clear understanding of what freedom means, Foucault is not useful”; “If you have a project whose purpose is to improve the world by rational planning and management, Foucault is not useful”; “If you want to hold on to the notion of a humanist, essentialist, human nature, Foucault is not useful” etc.⁸²

The slippage from the “may not be useful” of the title to the “is not useful” as the paper ends is telling. An essentialized Foucault, templated for future application and normalized for future governance, emerges through a poetics that embodies a contemporary authoritarianism amid a reductive mimeticism. The discursive combination sustains the discipleship. Whereas in “Why Foucault Now?” Foucault and his interlocutors can do no right, in “Foucault May Not Be Useful” Foucault can do no wrong, but his interlocutors can. It is only the “impure” uses of Foucault, then, that are the site of attack, exposing the evangelicalism that holds up the plateau. In this sense, the misanticipation that the idea more so than the content will be the site of criticism generates an unanticipated line of flight that supports the plateau’s temporary coagulation. What is more important and informative to consider than an idea/content binary, then, is that which links contemporary authoritarianism, reductive mimeticism, and discipleship, that is, what some of the conditions of possibility are for the formation of what is taken to be a problem – the availability of a substantive multiplicity around Foucault and the “prolepsis” of a “post-” into a non-post.

80 Ibid., 3, 4.

81 Ibid., 5.

82 Ibid., 6.

Four kinds of segmentarity – their encampments and their seepage – sustain the discipleship plateau. First, authoritarianism is evident in torsions that attempt a recognition of “difference” while railing against so many possible forms. Such arborescent reasoning appears as a paradoxical regulation of *différance* – the governing of that which separates sameness/difference. The paper asserts in conclusion, for instance, that there “may” be many “worthy and conflicting” ways to read Foucault, the analysis of which do not appear as part of the paper’s survey, but chafes with vigor that “anything-goes pluralism is boring, and a political cop out”.⁸³ The “may” is crucial here – whether there *are* worthy *and* conflicting ways of reading Foucault beyond that offered in the paper remains an unsurety. The “may” is not borne of openness or tentativeness, then, but of an insistence toward sameness - ways of reading Foucault that conflict with the template offered are by default subjected to consideration of their worthiness.

This appears a common resort in radicle-systems of thought: “Even if the links themselves proliferate, as in the radicle system, one can never get beyond the One-Two, and fake multiplicities...Arborescent systems are hierarchical systems with centers of signifiante and subjectification, central automata like organized memories. In the corresponding models, an element only receives information from a higher unit, and only receives a subjective affection along pre-established paths”.⁸⁴

In this sense, circulating through the paper is a deep theological investment in tightly scripted pre-established paths upon which paradoxically the sense of difference (poststructuralism) relies. A wider historical propensity to normalize “difference” in the face of swirling and recombinatorial approaches in the educational field thus becomes especially evident in the bullet-point list. The impulse seems to be that no one should sully Foucault’s name or enter the nation of Foucault and education without particular visas in their passports. The earlier redirection of such itinerants to Gramsci, Marx, McLaren, et al attempts to normalize, in turn, the range of possible uses of these theorists as well

The dogmatism and the religious version of authoritarianism running through the argument has been made possible by a long history of various forms of Protestantism and nationalism that permeate educational scholarship and can be brought starkly into view through an informative comparison to Martin Luther’s *Small Catechisms*.⁸⁵ In 1527, in the wake of agrarian rebellions, Luther with the support of the Elector of Saxony, conducted a church-school survey to take stock of existing forms of Biblical teaching. Luther and his

83 Ibid., 5.

84 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 16.

85 Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*, (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1991).

supporters were concerned that the Word was being interpreted incorrectly now that other people than just the clergy were gaining access to the Bible's text. Guidelines were written by Phillip Melanchthon for examiners in their visitation to every parish in the territory. The a priori observational template guaranteed Luther's discontent with what he saw. There is no evidence of interrogating, suspending, or deferring the assumptions favoring homogeneity or of giving genuine consideration to any reading that differed from the one he liked. This is made very clear in *Small Catechisms*, which was published after the parish tours: "The miserable and deplorable situation that I myself encountered during my recent journeys as a visitor has forced and compelled me to cast this catechism, that is, the Christian doctrine, in such a small, concise and simple form."⁸⁶

The same spirit of discontent, territoriality, and purification imbue discipleship plateaus when they make appeal to radicle-systems. This points to the second major kind of segmentarity and leakage that sustains a discipleship approach - a reductive mimeticism - which means an effort to be faithful to an "imitation" of Foucault and to simultaneously reduce the criteria by which the aesthetics of the performance can be identified as pleasing. Notably, a pursuit of uncertainty undermines itself as it must do when one of its avowed objects is to secure an unequivocal difference between two camps: structuralism and poststructuralism. This is the location of the purity discourse upon which the argument implicitly trades and the analytical site of essentialization. It does not unseat singularities, essentialism, or end up in a Dissociation of the Me that rethinks the grounds that appear settled and comfortable. More the opposite, the concern is with preserving the purity and singularity of "each game" by reinforcing isolation from another one, which gives rise to exactly what was to be avoided - the domination of one game by another. Foucault seems to pointedly avoid this game in part through redefining domination and by taking the act of prescription as one kind of domination, which could be considered dangerous.

My position is that it is not up to us [intellectuals] to propose. As soon as one "proposes" - one proposes a vocabulary, an ideology, which can only have effects of domination. What we have to present are instruments and tools that people might find useful. By forming groups specifically to make these analyses, to wage these struggles, by using these instruments or others: this is how, in the end, possibilities open up. But if the intellectual starts playing once again the role that he [*sic*] has played for a hundred and fifty years - that of prophet in relation to what "must be", to what "must take place" -

86 Discussed in Baker, *In Perpetual Motion*.

these effects of domination will return and we shall have other ideologies, functioning in the same way.⁸⁷

Despite similar quotes from Foucault's work around the issue of prescription, the above point seems to be missed in "Foucault May Not Be Useful". The poetics of domination are allied to the purificatory project, troping the writing throughout, from the prescriptive action of telling scholars that Foucault is not useful for certain analyses to the "it is not the purpose of the Foucault SIG to convert people to believe in Foucault".⁸⁸ Both directives are also prescriptive acts that assume a homogenous reading of Foucault and a stewardship orientation to what a special interest group is or is not.

A different kind of templating strategy relative to "Why Foucault Now?" thus binds and bolsters the scientization of Foucault and the governance of his "application." This is precisely where such a discipleship project collapses – not in recognition of the possibility of critique, but in non-recognition of how contemporary authoritarianism, reductive mimeticism, and purity discourse establish the circularity that marks radicle-systems. Argued in a footnote is: "The specific term *counterproductive* is probably important because it is not my project to interpret Foucault 'correctly'; it is not my project to say this is the real Foucault and that is *not* the real Foucault. However, I don't think I've been successful in avoiding that stance, and I expect to be criticized for that in any case".⁸⁹ The safety valve is to make appeal to awareness of "the spirit" of Foucault⁹⁰ without indicating why so much annoyance is felt at something that has not been adequately documented in the first place, i.e., the increasingly bothersome appearance of hybridized deployments of Foucault in educational work. Moreover, there is no questioning of why, if one cannot avoid asserting a "real Foucault," energy is not more productively directed to thinking through that problematic rather than retreating to polemics.

The advantages in rhizomatic terms of rethinking such polemics are brought to notice when other readings of Foucault are put into contact with each other. When Foucault's *Histoire de la Folie* was reappropriated in the early 1970s as part of the anti-psychiatry movement, Foucault did not step in to adjudicate proper uses.⁹¹ An historical gap existed between the intellectual

87 Michel Foucault, "Confinement, Psychiatry, Prison," in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*, ed. L. Kritzman. (New York: Routledge, 1988), 197.

88 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 5.

89 Ibid., 3.

90 Ibid., 2.

91 Robert Castel, "The Two Readings of *Histoire de la Folie* in France," in *Rewriting the History of Madness: Studies in Foucault's Histoire de la Folie*, ed. A. Still and I. Velody (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

context of the early 1960s when the book first appeared and the end of the 1960s and early 1970s when it began to reach another audience and to assume a political/practical meaning rather than a theoretical one.⁹² While the book was received very positively in terms as an academic text upon its publication in France, after May 1968 it was read as political/practical in the sense of having themes in praise of folly and in criticism of constrictive systems. Castel notes, however, and argues that it is important to underline, that Foucault did not see this dual reading as representing an opposition between truth and error in interpretation or between good and poor uses: He “never disowned the militant reuse of his work” and “He even collaborated in it, to the extent that he committed himself to a number of ventures inspired by such a trend by participating in the ‘antipsychiatry’ movement, in the broad sense of the term”.⁹³

Drawing Foucault scholarship simply into a structural/poststructural binary is not an uncommon response. Strategies for stronger articulation of difference and pure camps do not escape from ethical paradoxes that critics have also pointed to in the works of Lyotard and Levinas.⁹⁴ Language games that attempt to segregate also attempt to essentialize and purify, achieving “the domination of the prescriptive in the form of *Thou shalt not let one language game impinge on the singularity of another*”.⁹⁵ The claim that “any attempt to state the law, for example, to place oneself in the position of enunciator of the universal prescription is obviously infatuation itself and absolute injustice, in point of fact. And so when the question of what justice consists in is raised, the answer is: ‘It remains to be seen in each case’”.⁹⁶ Whether it is “justice” that is the focus is not so much the point here, for it is more so whether the non-universality of singular and incommensurable games can be assured through the prescriptive of a universal value.⁹⁷ The subtlety of the paradox is that it can achieve a shift in violence from mode of “pedagogical genre” to an attempt to reduce the multiplicity of games or players through domination of the universal value.

The effort to purify Foucault scholarship is not necessarily commensurate with the quest to govern what is real, correct, accurate, or authentic, however. Purity discourse is rather more insidious because making appeal to pure categories of analysis, such as structural and poststructural, brings to noticeability the determinism, the closure, and the certainty in their

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid, 67.

94 Samuel Weber, “Afterword,” in *Just Gaming*, ed. by Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean-Louis Thebaud (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

95 Ibid, 104, emphasis in original.

96 Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean-Louis Thebaud, *Just Gaming (Introduction by Samuel Weber)*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 99.

97 Weber, “Afterword”, 103.

operation without having to fall back on claims to authenticity. Purification discourse can act in a cleansing mode without consideration of specificity of content. As long as a border is patrolled between two sides that are named the operation can be performed. It becomes irrelevant whether the substance of either "side" is delineated, discussed, or engaged. Placemarkers are all that are required for templates to be lifted out and to travel.

The price that "Foucault May Not Be Useful" pays for its discipleship is thus that such "approaches," "epistemologies," "theories," or "language games" called structural and poststructural become themselves pure and self-identical placemarkers – the formulation of the problematic in regard to Foucault becomes culpable of that which it critiques. The field of agonistics around Foucault's work becomes not so agonistic after all since it is restricted by a countervailing force of such self-identicalness and purity. Neither "internally," since each camp is singularly determined by an a priori and finite set of rules, nor "externally," since the incommensurability of such games is to be protected at all costs, can the weak call for public debate at the end be honored in terms of a substantive multiplicity.⁹⁸ If uses are pre-codified, settled, and comfortable, such as in checklist thought and templates, then the analysis acts in the mode of colonization, attempting to establish the grounds on which a home can be seen in tweaked form everywhere else.

Third, the historical propensity to normalize and then moralize dualisms around a framework's uptake becomes evident when only some forms of a priori classification are debarred. For instance: "Foucault's project here is to argue that categories are historically constituted. In addition, unveiling the conventions that hold categories together is a critical strategy to unsettle the categories and their determinist tendencies. Therefore, political projects that maintain demographic groupings as categories of analysis would be better served by structuralist social theorists rather than Foucault".⁹⁹ The jump from demonstration of historical constitution and conventions that hold categories together to there being only one critical strategy that could result – unsettling the categories – is a further site of the moralization tendency and essentialist reading. To take the analysis on its own terms, one would have to say that it is only "demographic" groupings as categories of analysis that are at stake in Foucault, with such a reading of Foucault not itself being subject to determinist tendencies of epistemological categories, such as structural and poststructural classifications.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge, and the Discourse on Language* Foucault could be read as having gone to some trouble to distinguish structural linguistics and anthropology in France from the approximately seven kinds of structuralism in historical methodology that he labels. From these, he then

98 Weber, "Afterword".

99 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 3.

moves on to play with where his project is located. The point is not how many times Foucault denied being a structuralist and in what poetic ways, but whether an enthusiastic discipleship can incorporate awareness of such nuances as these:

I've never really understood what was meant in France by the word 'modernity'...I feel troubled here because I do not grasp clearly what that might mean, though the word itself is unimportant; we can always use any arbitrary label. But neither do I grasp the kind of problems intended by this term – or how they would be common to people thought of as being 'post-modern'. While I see clearly that behind what was known as structuralism, there was a certain problem – broadly speaking, that of the subject and the recasting of the subject – I do not understand what kind of problem is common to the people we call post-modern or post-structuralist.¹⁰⁰

This is an important point to raise because while “Foucault May Not Be Useful” is keen to prohibit the use of Foucault for any project dependent on a “demographics of identifiable groups,” there has been willingness to refer to some kind of demographics by nationality, such as “U.S.” and “American” in regard to Foucault scholarship.¹⁰¹ What this exposes is the problematic demarcation around what constitutes a demographic, a determinist tendency, and which a priori demographics are permitted into a template. The feeling is one of unevenly played out prohibitions that remain both taken-for-granted and unspoken in holding up other complaints.

The irony in relation to Foucault’s *Dissociation of the Me* is striking at several levels, then. The attempted prohibition unwittingly underwrites the effort to occlude certain kinds of scholarship based on some “assumed” demographic groupings and not others. It also obscures the pivotal role of assumed “epistemological” groupings, categories of science, or theoretical frameworks. Moreover, it ignores the potential blurring of an onto-/epistemological divide at all. One could read, for instance, Foucault as having historicized, if not contested, the groupings of sciences and methods,

100 Michel Foucault, *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1966-84)*, *Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York, NY, USA: Semiotext(e), 1989), 205.

101 This includes listing scholars such as Mitchell Dean (445) (and elsewhere Jennifer Gore) under the demographic “US” and “American” while discussing Foucault’s work, when at no point have these scholars defined their work as American, US-inspired, or as constituted by contemporary US social theory. Because geopolitical entities are never closed and do not speak for themselves from a stable and discrete site of enunciation, such grouping would be an important site for discussion or elaboration, especially in regard to how sensitivity to such assimilating moves are comported and can be evoked in specific locales. See also Lynn Fendler, “Praxis and Agency in Foucault’s Historiography,” *Studies in Philosophy of Education* 23 (5 and 6) (2004): 445-66.

especially in *The Order of Things*. Through challenging any a priori distinction between ontology and epistemology, such an analysis seems to exceed the shearing and steering of its insights away from assumed “demographic” categories only. Such points operate as seepage, as lines of flight, then, in the wake of an historical propensity toward moralistic dualisms around a preferred version of a template.

Last, in addition to the conditions of possibility that imbue the imperialistic feel of the plateau’s formation, the paper’s characterization of Foucault scholarship is constructed out of what has not been surveyed. As with “Why Foucault Now?” a large amount of Foucault and education literature has not been sufficiently analyzed or the vast number of publications already in existence on the corpus of Foucault’s work engaged. The opening argument turns on one journal article. The paper also lists in a footnote several volumes on Foucault and education, one of them dated incorrectly, does not analyze any of them, and then comes to a point that has not been argued in relation to the hybridization thesis but assumed: that there are a priori structuralists and poststructuralists. The limited documentation not only fails to take into account Foucault’s interrogation of such terminology, cited above, but presumes a transnational, transdisciplinary stability to the terms structuralism and poststructuralism that is difficult to defend when the breadth of available literature is engaged. The limited survey further precludes awareness of how scholars of Foucault might find such reactions to the uptake of his work repetitive, or in the paper’s own terms, boring, as that which generates an active glossing and quashing of differences beyond a presumed structural/poststructural binary. As for the vilification approach, there is a presumption of unfamiliarity and/or naivete in the reader that infuses the writing and that expects the reader to believe that what Foucault means by certain terms in certain books is fixed within and across his corpus and within and across settings of receptivity. Foucault’s “What is an author?” which problematizes this very debate – if not preempting it – remains below the threshold of operability and its provocative insurgence into a more rhizomatic understanding of literature is obscured.

It is at this point that “Which Foucault?” matters in relation to what seeps beyond vilification and discipleship plateaus. While in “Why Foucault Now?” one cannot remain confident that Foucault’s scholarship has been studied, in “Foucault May Not Be Useful” it is that one cannot be confident that the study of Foucault has been rigorous – the stated “enthusiasm for all things Foucaultian”¹⁰² has occluded possibilities for a more nuanced approach to his vast scholarship, including criticism of it. This is most evident, for instance, in relation to the discussion of oppression in the paper and in regard

102 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 2.

to Foucault's analytics of power¹⁰³ where "Foucault May Not Be Useful" seems most agitated by others' approach to his work and where the strategies of glossing and closure are striking.¹⁰⁴ There is only one excerpt that is described as relevant¹⁰⁵ in regard to the definition of oppression. Foucault is to be understood, then, via only this one analytic of power discussed in the excerpt, to be, in a sense, represented by that.¹⁰⁶ In regard to analytics of power, *which* Foucault is crucial: The one whose focus was struggle-submission or the one whose focus was a technical and strategic grid rather than a juridical and negative one?: "The case of the penal system convinced me that the question of power needed to be formulated not so much in terms of justice as in those of technology, of tactics and strategy." Scholars drawing on what was called a "struggle-submission" framework in relation to the earlier publications might, then, be justified for the deployments that appear to be so disturbing to the radicle-system of "Foucault May Not Be Useful". Such nuance leaks and seeps from plateaus built around moralistic dualisms toward method. Incommensurabilities in Foucault's range of analytics of power across his writings are dismissed in the name of a homogeneous one for which he becomes spokesperson. Because other readings of Foucault's work make such a strategy recognizable as a strategy, however, the significance of lines of flight that seep from a given plateau retain their energetic potential, suggesting new possibilities for recombination beyond templates construed in the negative and mired in a field's status anxiety or local epistemological politics.

The legislation of Foucault has reached a new intensity in "Foucault May Not Be Useful," then. In trying to cut off being charged with the policing of Foucault, the analysis misses the lines of flight, the seepage, and the porousness that trouble its foundation. It is not that there might be a legislative effect from such discipleship - arguably this can be the effect of any

103 Ibid., 4-5.

104 The recently published dossier of Foucault in *Le Monde* argued that commentaries outside of France often focus on power in Foucault's work. Relative to Russian and Japanese receptions that *Le Monde* reviewed it was a common theme in anglophone receptions of Foucault.

105 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4.

106 *Power/Knowledge* lays out several analytics of power that had circulated through Foucault's publications to that point. The earlier works, in light of rethinking power, had been concerned with power in terms of a struggle-submission framework, which makes appeal to repression. This is differentiated from contractual power, which makes appeal to oppression *and* from several other analytics of power beyond these two frameworks that are elaborated in "Two Lectures" especially. In reflecting on his works up until the early 1970s, then, Foucault argued "Till then, it seems to me, I accepted the traditional conception of power as an essentially judicial mechanism, as that which lays down the law, which prohibits, which refuses, and which has a whole range of negative effects: exclusion, rejection, denial, obstruction, occultation, etc. Now I believe that conception to be inadequate."

scholarship - but that the pursuit of uncertainty so valorized in the opening is not demonstrated, embodied, or taken seriously throughout, nor can it be in relation to the analysis' final template. Thus, while there is an appeal to uncertainty and the importance of not closing something off or determining it that is precisely what the Ten Commandment-style list attempts. It attempts to bring certainty to the deployment of Foucault in the name of not blurring two "demographic" categories, structural and poststructural. "Foucault is not useful" ten times over is a religious refrain that while certainly possible within the educational field cannot itself permit the pursuit of uncertainty it claims to most cherish.

In sum, the scientization of Foucault via checklist thought dedicated to discipleship contains a logic of repetition that "will always inscribe a destiny of iterability and hence some automaticity of the reaction in every response".¹⁰⁷ It brings the play of historical propensities in the field to a different kind of fruition than "Why Foucault Now?", while at the same time climaxing in similar prescriptive efforts. In the end, the analysis on the one hand cannot avoid determinism, and on the other it actively performs a glossing of Foucault that it chafes at elsewhere. The net effect is a dogmatic foreclosing that attempts a strange project in relation to Foucault but one familiar within an educational field: to generate a priori standardization or normalization, not just of the uses of Foucault, but of Popper, Marx, Gramsci, McLaren, Dewey, et al.

Agnosticism

In agnostic plateaus that have formed around Foucault, for example as in "Michel Foucault: Marxism, Liberation, and Freedom", the feel is very different.¹⁰⁸ The language is measured, the analysis historicizes the problematic engaged, and the questions are probingly philosophical. In contrast, the absence of a preacherly poetics that does not contain lurking straw figures for eradication or Ten Commandments for veneration cannot help but appear refreshing in a field overloaded with religious vestiges.

The quashing of "difference" at the site of "its" production is not the project's aim. The chapter signals a different kind of awareness in its opening paragraph - of the importance of keeping conflicting readings and contrary possibilities in play within the one piece of scholarship. On the opening page, for instance, the placements around Foucault's name are made carefully, where the analysis asserts both wider influences on Foucault's sensibilities *and* marks their uniqueness relative to Marxisms, such as those of Althusser

107 Jacques A. Derrida, "And Say the Animal Responded", in *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal*, ed. C. Wolfe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 121-146.

108 Marshall, *Michel Foucault: Marxism, Liberation and Freedom*.

and Lefebvre. The argument begins by answering the question “What was wrong with Marxist views of liberation from oppression according to Foucault?”

This question does not establish a denigration or celebration of the response. The paper is written neither for nor against Foucault’s deployment in education. This is a particularly interesting move because Marshall was one of the first scholars in the field to seriously engage Foucault’s work and publish articles, book chapters, and monographs on Foucault. His engagement and familiarity with Foucault literature then has a longer lineage than that of other scholars and thus his survey of the uses of Foucault is somewhat different, being more overtly historical, more familiar in philosophical terms, and located within a different “nationalized” grid of sensibilities. The focus question appears to arise, for instance, from traditions of discourse circulating within the Commonwealth and draws upon a particular understanding of Marxist debates as they play out in New Zealand and in research circles that regularly cross hemispheres. Thus, where “Why Foucault Now?” and “Michel Foucault: Marxism, Liberation and Freedom” both position Foucault in relation to Marx, it is not the same Marx: the former Marx is a post-Communist failed hero of radical reformers while the name of the latter Marx is asserted in webs of scholarship that make him always already multiple in relation to what *class*, *science*, and *progress* mean in different “nations”, academic settings, and projects.

The cautiousness in the chapter does not suggest neutrality. The cautiousness, especially in the turns of phrase does signal, however, a substantive difference from vilification and discipleship approaches. After briefly mapping how power has been written about in education the analysis concludes at this point quite simply: “Foucault asks new questions about power.” This is deceptively not-so-simple, for it does not presume that Foucault advances only one analytic of power across his career, nor does it suggest that the new questions can be conflated with Marxist conceptions of the state, individuality, and humanism, which are terms under interrogation.

The chapter’s analysis thus orients itself historically - how Foucault’s sensibilities about liberation and freedom became available - and uses this historicization to suggest further questions for the educational field. In a unique analytical move, the reader is taken through Bergson, a scholar whom, as is noted in the chapter, Foucault rarely referenced. Aware of this radicality, the chapter documents instances where Foucault’s questioning could be seen as indebted to Bergsonian traditions, particularly in regard to critiques of a psychologized self, self-knowledge, time, and science. It is argued that “Foucault does not always totally reject the knowledge available through the human sciences as Bergson did. But whilst he does critique the knowledge of the human sciences, he sees that knowledge as being sometimes important and useful”, and later, “Rather than totally rejecting that knowledge he sees it

instead as potentially dangerous, as possibly imposing a view of the self upon individuals that may leave them in tutelage, that is under guardianship or 'protection' of others, whether directly or indirectly. This is the basis then of his attack upon autonomy and thus upon liberal education".¹⁰⁹ One outcome of this for educational scholars is then noted: "First, philosophically, his work challenges liberal education philosophy (and liberal education) and its use of authority as the fundamental concept for describing and understanding the 'processes' of transmission of knowledge, or as R. S. Peters puts it, the processes of initiation".¹¹⁰

The positioning of Foucault on this plateau is a slippery one. As such, it sits oceans apart from the way in which the strata that structure vilification and discipleship orientations are formed. Such approaches are not foils or counterpoints for the analysis, though, for the account is rendered more as a stepping to the side. Its relation to historical propensities in the field is that it historicizes such tendencies and how Foucault's work might forestall claims to their inevitability or naturalness. In contrast, the dogmatism of "Why Foucault Now?" denies the possibility for difference while the railing against pluralism in "Foucault May Not Be Useful" seems, despite its claims, to be otherwise, to be part of a liberal tradition - the use of a presumed authority as the fundamental concept for describing and understanding processes and keeping others under guardianship. The agnostic plateau's insertions - "does not always", "sometimes" "possibly" - mark the qualitative difference, inviting into the midst of a confident and rigorous reading the potential for a deeper conversation and the pursuit of uncertainty.

This qualitative difference established early in the piece tropes the rest of the chapter in particular ways. First, for instance, the analysis is attuned to the variety of ways in which Foucault wrote about self across his career. These shifts are not developmentalized e.g., by simply invoking their different publication dates. Rather, *the substantive differences they incur in relation to the opening question are elaborated* and thus the antennae are turned toward the unique ways in which Foucault theorized liberation and freedom. While unique ways of theorizing in Foucault are outlined, the chapter also notes some superficial commonalities between Foucault's approaches and the insights of contemporaneous scholars whom he analyzes.

Second, the paper documents how Foucault theorized oppression in relation to events of which he was a part. The analysis does not position such events as causal, but as part of a context provided for the quotes that are drawn from Foucault. Rather than dismissing discussion of oppression, which is a preoccupation of "Foucault May Not Be Useful", the agnostic plateau is formed by drawing upon Foucault's work to illustrate how his shifting levels

109 Ibid, 267.

110 Ibid.

of discomfort and suspicion took shape around Marxian versions. From here the chapter maps how “liberation is important for Foucault” as a precondition of ethics, yet in a way that refuses prior understandings of liberation and that overtly asks in conclusion “But does Foucault have an ethics? In saying that ethics is the practice of freedom he does not, however, say how we should practice our freedom so as to be ethical”.¹¹¹

The analysis is neither making a call here for prolepsis, nor advancing identity politics, nor is it prescribing or colonizing grounds for debate. This suggests a third aspect of the qualitative difference – the deployment of open-ended questions within the text. Four ways are offered in which issues from Foucault’s work can be considered in education, e.g., “Foucault directs our attention to a number of shaping-up processes – learning to speak, read, and write – which the liberal education framework would not normally see as being contrary to the interests of the child and therefore not involving power. But for Foucault power is productive. Do we use the concept of power in relation to these practices then?”¹¹² He also suggests that “apart from the [four] issues above, in the later Foucault there are at least these” and goes on to outline two other questions, one of which is “How would it be possible for his approach to ethics to be part of the ethos of the school?”

This question, which is construed as a how-to-apply kind is noted as not being the concern in the chapter, for the focus “is with liberation, the precondition of such pursuits.” Thus, the analysis acknowledges a question that might be typically asked in the field, such as via appeal to Freire, and takes the reader to the different space that Foucault’s work suggests, not back to Freire, not to prescription of an alternative, but to consideration of how the humanism of prescriptive pursuits became possible.

The argument climaxes with an invitation that is notably absent in the polemics that mark vilification and discipleship approaches: “Foucault’s approach leads one away ‘from the letter and the law of Kant,’ yet it shares with Kant the ‘notion of constructing morality.’ Thus, though he does not provide a full-bodied ethics he is being Kantian in the sense that we have to construct our ethics. It is we who have to decide how to practice our freedom.”

The analysis ends by citing Hacking and in a move that vilification approaches might better have pursued: “Those who criticize Foucault for not giving us a place to stand might start their critique with Kant.” It is evident here, then, that the argument does not become consumed with the essentialization of approaches or moralistic dualisms: Attention to Marxism is always already diversified; the location of Foucault in relation to Marxist theories does not reduce Foucault’s sensibilities simply to that trajectory;

111 Ibid, 275.

112 Ibid, 273.

From Bergson to R. S. Peters to Kant and from France to Sweden to Tunisia, the historicization of Foucault's analytics and placement of Foucault's energetics within an educational field open actively onto further questions that are encouraged. Foreclosing, determinism, and dogmatism are not parameters of the finished product even if or where it becomes obvious (and increasingly ineffective) to argue that all scholarship has a "disciplining" effect. The feeling is that one does not leave the analysis with a prescription for either not using Foucault or for how to use him. The feeling is that it takes several readings to get a handle on what appears a wandering analysis whose nomadic impulses are carefully designed to point to more than one destination.

In this sense, the analysis represents a line of flight from historical propensities in the field and from other plateaus that have formed around Foucault. It is not dedicated, for instance, toward an eradication of Foucault's potential impact in the field, nor towards a purification of his uptake within it. The elaboration of shifting concepts in Foucault's work does not assume a naïve audience that needs to be corrected and invites the continuation of a conversation in substance and style. The orientation is not to take swipes at targets across campus, across the globe, or across frameworks, nor map its sections around anticipated criticism or dualisms. Thus, while it is possible to take issue with the interpretation of liberation, of Bergson's relation to Foucault, of the reading of freedom, of the drawing of Freire and Foucault into any kind of proximity, etc, its rigor and its openness behooves the respondent to have done their homework very well indeed.

A significant effect of the orientation of this plateau, then, is that the segmentarities upon which it relies eventually blur themselves into new possible forms. This constitutes an "internal" form of seepage, deliberately built-in to such a plateau's temporary actualization. Prior tendencies in the field – scientization, templating, normalization, and moralization effects – cannot find easy ground in a piece where what is considered science, psychology, self, power, and ethical are historical and shifting. As such, the lines of flight helping to sustain an agnostic plateau are acknowledged and overtly operationalized from "within" rather than curtailed, dismissed, or glossed. The tactics that make the strata in such a plateau into shaky and temporary ones thus mark it as a point of departure in the field from approaches that attempt to fix or checklist Foucault into manageable form, and significantly, make the chapter also a departure from "itself."

Conclusion: The Limits of Educational Plateaus

Unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and

even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five, etc, It is not a multiple derived from the One, or to which One is added ($n + 1$). It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and overflows. It constitutes linear multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the One is always subtracted ($n - 1$)....Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points and biunivocal relationships between the positions, the rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension....These lines, or lineaments, should not be confused with lineages of the arborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions.¹¹³

This critique of commentaries evinces its own play on dualism, segmentarity, excess, and indebtedness to historical propensities on at least three fronts: in regard to mapping what vilification and discipleship approaches attempt to gloss in different ways (by blocking acentred systems in which communication runs from any neighbor to any other and where the stems and channels do not preexist); in relation to characterizing the qualitative difference that agnostic scholarship has provided in the field (“without any copying of a central order”¹¹⁴, and finally, in relation to lines of flight (where line of flight and deterritorialization are understood as reference to leaking, seepage, and porousness, *not* to escape or absence of border). The point has not been to consider whether Foucault has been used properly or improperly, but to elaborate how historical propensities and parameters of the field have contoured his uptake, shaping how he has been encamped and reterritorialized, and how he has not, that is, the seepage that agnostic readings represent relative to other plateaus and the leaks from each plateau that make future recombinations possible.

It should be obvious from the above, however, that vilification and discipleship approaches appear less rigorous and less informative in this review’s terms than agnostic scholarship. In vilification and discipleship approaches, a common thread despite differential respect for Foucault’s work is the salvation theme; researchers in education need to be saved from their own apparent ignorance about Foucault. The attempted occlusion of existence and/or respect for multiple, irreducible readings in educational scholarship

113 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21.

114 *Ibid.*, 17.

structures the opening, the closing, and the reactions in between. At no point is the reader given insight into why such positionings, in different directions on the surface, matter so much and why one would devote academic life to it. Where "Why Foucault Now?" fails to give genuine consideration to the range of celebratory, dissenting, and beyond readings of Foucault, "Foucault May Not Be Useful" fails to read any nuance into a celebration of Foucault. The potential for so-called "resistant," "structuralist," or "naïve" readings of Foucault for opening onto new domains rather than being prejudged as prolepsis cannot be entertained.

This does not imply that certain approaches should be eradicated, constrained nor left uncontested. To the contrary, claims made about the uses of Foucault in education have often dispensed with the elementary task of reading and researching the ways in which his work has already been deployed. Rigorous attention to specific scholarship in a field offers springboards for further dialogue, especially if or where temporary plateaus may suggest colonizing forms in key sites of enunciation. It is precisely in *irreconcilable articulations* and "messy and numberless" responses, such as this one, that the Academy currently lives and that conditions of truth-production can be taken seriously for their effects.

More significantly, the analysis embodies and draws out that with which education has been so concerned, namely the allocation of sameness/difference. Scientization, normalization, governance, and morality are obsessed with this binary. The plateaus reviewed here, turn strikingly on its availability. In the vilification plateau, the complaint is that Foucault is barely different from structural-functionalism, in the discipleship plateau it is that he is not deployed differently enough, including the difference that his analytics of difference makes, while in the agnostic plateau, the placement rather than complaint suggests the difficulty of marking difference/sameness: the messiness entailed in the interpenetration of conditions of possibility for thought makes Foucault an interesting analytical object whose work swirls precisely because it interjects in the application of a priori distinctions. Influenced by Marxist scholarship even if in the negative, not Marxist, and further still, not at all reducible to trajectories from various Marxisms alone - this is an instance of agnosticism toward Foucault that makes the purchase of a sameness/difference schism quite slippery.

The above analysis thus demonstrates how orientations to Foucault in educational research rely upon and exceed dualistic classificatory models and sensibilities, making such a field amenable to a rhizomatic analysis. Education has a long history of scientizing theoretical frameworks, standardizing their parameters, and moralizing their uptake, and this sets the limits for resistance within the field. It is not surprising then at one level that such activity has taken place around Foucault's name, too, yet from the perspective of other fields it surely appears bizarre. Such reterritorialization of Foucault that

operates through vilification and discipleship approaches has already been contested within the field, however, evidencing the productivity of a rhizomatic orientation. Given the now-wider familiarity of educational scholars with Foucault's work as indicated by number of presentations at national conferences, for instance,¹¹⁵ or by the number of theses/dissertations,¹¹⁶ parodies were bound to happen, embodied in the published retorts to "Why Foucault Now?" and in others that greeted the conclusion of "Foucault May Not Be Useful" at an annual meeting in the United States: "If there is one way that Foucault should not be used it's *that way!*"

Such rejoinders and parodies achieve little more, though, than indexing the depth of feelings that have formed around differential conditions of truth, acting mostly as barometers of how sensitivities and sensibilities have taken shape in the field. They suggest that while distinct preferences form and unavoidably circulate, as in here, their conditions of possibility and limits of conceptualization are not necessarily well-conjured through pure oppositions or simple reversals. Rather, the historical propensities that mark education's parameters seem to osmotically draw Foucault into particular webs of reception and formats of (re)presentation that preceded him, providing handles with which to grasp key distinctions between education and other fields. A key understanding that this analysis provides, then, lies in regard to how such parameters both shape and delimit the kinds of synergy and recombinations that can emerge in and as educational research. Attention to the complicated and uneven flows that circulate through claims made about Foucault and Foucaultian research, both within and across single analyses, perhaps, then, tells us less about Foucault and more about the field of education.

If in educational debates, vilification and discipleship plateaus meet up in the method of their proofs, rerooting the arborescent systems of thought that make them possible and that sustain their sense of home, missing the multiplicity for the tree, then agnostic plateaus around Foucault's name bring to the fore an almost infinite outback that defies a single entry point and muddies preestablished paths, an outback in which a maze of brush, dust, and scrub are sorted through only to come onto a new plateau whose sides are already melting in the heat of further possibilities. *The impossibility and nonnecessity of reconciling temporary plateaus* and the dynamic recombinatory, if not irreverent, nature of Foucault's deployment is, then, education's contribution to a wider Foucault Studies field.

115 St. Pierre, "Discussant's Response".

116 This was discussed at the 2001 *International Foucault and Education* conference in regard to Trevor Gale's review of the number of theses/dissertations coming out of postgraduate work in education in Australia.