ARTICLE

'Critique' as Technology of the Self

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ABSTRACT: This inquiry is situated at the intersection of two enigmas. The first is the enigma of the status of Kant's practice of critique, which has been the subject of heated debate since shortly after the publication of the first edition of The Critique of Pure Reason. The second enigma is that of Foucault's apparent later 'turn' to Kant, and the label of 'critique', to describe his own theoretical practice. I argue that Kant's practice of 'critique' should be read, after Foucault, as a distinctly modern practice in the care of the self, governed by Kant's famous rubric of the 'primacy of practical reason'. In this way, too, Foucault's later interest in Kant - one which in fact takes up a line present in his work from his complementary thesis on Kant's Anthropology - is cast into distinct relief. Against Habermas and others, I propose that this interest does not represent any 'break' or 'turn' in Foucault's work. In line with Foucault's repeated denials that he was interested after 1976 in a 'return to the ancients', I argue that Foucault's writings on critique represent instead both a deepening theoretical self-consciousness, and part of his project to forge an ethics adequate to the historical present.

> Critique is virtue
> Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?"

Last year (2004) marked the 200th year of the death of Immanuel Kant. In that time, Kant's proper name has become nearly synonymous with the word 'critique' that, without precedent, he introduced as a systematic term into Western philosophy. Nevertheless, like the proverbial coin that has been too long in circulation, the precise meaning of 'critique' has since smoothed around the semantic edges. One hears today of 'critiques' of everything from other philosophers to social practices, institutions, epochs and Western civilisation itself. "By its function, critique seems to be condemned to dispersion, dependency, and pure heteronomy".[1]

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1   Michel Foucault, "What is Virtue", quoted in Judith Butler, "What is Critique?, an Essay on Foucault's Virtue" [accessed 1/12/04]. Available at http://www.law.berkeley.edu/cenpro/kadish/what%20is%20critique%20J%20Butler.pdf, 4.

Ironically, this semantic 'heteronomy' is in one way one more mark of Kant's manifold influence upon contemporary thought, an influence that is the widest topic of this paper. For, in a familiar intellectual vicissitude, from shortly after the 1781 publication of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, it was only Kant's harshest critics who seemed certain about what his work had done. In Fichte's words, Kant "philosophised too little about his own philosophising"; or again, "this singular thinker looks more marvellous to me every day. I believe he possesses a genius that reveals the truth to him without showing him why it is true".[2] If Kant's critiques undoubtedly aim to hold up a kind of philosophical mirror to us, what is clear is that later philosophers have not failed to see their own philosophical visages in its "transcendental reflection". We are now familiar with Kant the philosopher of science, Kant the proto-analytic philosopher, Kant the founding- if founded- ontologist of finitude, Kant the psychologistic philosopher of mind, or- most recently of all, and the joker in the pack- Kant the Lacanian *avant la lettre*.

This essay addresses the question of "what is critique?". I want to address this question by engaging with another enigma in the history of modern European ideas. This is the enigma posed to us by Michel Foucault's later texts on Kant's work, culminating in the 1984 essay: "What is Enlightenment?" Foucault's essay marks both the 200th anniversary of Kant's essay on the same question, and one of Foucault's own last written texts. The enigma here is that Kant stands as an avowed philosophical champion of the modernity whose epistemic, disciplinary and biopolitical parameters Foucault had devoted much of his career to 'revaluing', in avowedly Nietzschean terms. Yet, in Foucault's "What is Enlightenment?":

> ... we do not meet the Kant familiar from *The Order of Things*, the epistemologist who thrust open the door to the age of anthropological thought and the human sciences ... instead we encounter a different Kant- the precursor of the Young Hegelians, the Kant who was the first to make a serious break with the metaphysical heritage, who turned philosophy away from the Eternal Verities and concentrated on what philosophers had until then considered to be without concept and nonexistent, merely contingent and transitory.[3]

In the face of this apparent disparity, critics have questioned whether Foucault's late works on Kant enact a substantive break with all his other work. In "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present", Habermas' tribute to Foucault, Habermas famously suggests that this break amounts to something of a last minute recantation:

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2   Quoted in Daniel Breazeale, "On Kant's Method". (Unpublished paper, delivered at Bicentennial Immanuel Kant Conference, University of Auckland, 2004), 1.

3   Jürgen Habermas, "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present", *The New Conservatives* edited and translated by Sherry Weber Nicholson (London: Polity Press 1989), 174.

"Of the circle of those in my generation engaged in philosophical diagnoses of the times, Foucault has had the most lasting effect on the *zeitgeist*, not least because of the earnestness with which he perseveres in productive contradictions ... Equally instructive is the contradiction in which Foucault becomes entangled when he opposes his critique of power, … with the analytic of the true in such a way that the former is deprived of the normative standards it would have to derive from the latter. Perhaps it is this contradiction that drew Foucault, in this last of his texts, back into a sphere of influence he had tried to blast open, that of the philosophical discourse of modernity ..."[4]

My thesis is this. In order to sustain any strong hypothesis of a 'final Foucault', critics have to elide several important things. First, there is the fact that "What is Enlightenment?" is not a 'stand alone' piece of Foucault's on Kant. Foucault's later, positive interest in Kant dates back at least as far as May 1978, when he gave a lecture entitled "What is Critique?" to the French Society of Philosophy.[5] This fact alone dates the later Foucaultian interest in Kant as very nearly coterminous with his much more widely remarked 'return to the ancients' after Volume I of *History of Sexuality*. (See Conclusion) We should also recall, in this connection, that the young Foucault translated Kant's *Anthropology*, and that his *these complementaire* was a commentary on Kant's last published text, and its bearing on the question *what is man?* that he was to take up in *The Order of Things*. [6]

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4   Habermas, "Taking Aim …", 178-179. For an authoritative survey of Habermas' response to Foucault, cf. Dreyfus, Hubert and Rabinow, Paul (1986) `What is Maturity? Foucault and Habermas on "What is Enlightenment?" ', in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 109-121. Cf. also Michael Kelly ed. *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (Cambridge: MA: MIT Press, 1994).

5   Judith Butler, "What is Critique", p. 20, note 4.

6   We cannot discuss in detail here the vexed question of the role of Kant in the earlier Foucault. It suffices for the position here to say that Han and Allen have differently but convincingly shown that the position of (for example) Thomas Wartenberg and James Schmidt that in The Order of Things, Kant figures only negatively, as that figure who "had the dubious honor of awakening philosophy from its 'dogmatic slumbers' only to lull it back into what Foucault dubbed the 'anthropological sleep'", is overly simplistic. (James Schmidt and Thomas Wartenberg, "Foucault's Enlightenment: Critique, Revolution, and the Fashioning of the Self", in Kelly ed. *Critique and Power*, 146) It is not only that, for Foucault, Kant stands as the inaugurator of "our modernity", with its post-classical episteme, within whose scope we cannot help but think. (Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 242) As Foucault comments in "A Preface to Transgression", a contemporaneous piece to *The Order of Things*, for him Kant "opened the way for the advance of critical thought", both in his exposure of the classical episteme as metaphysical, and in his attempt to think human finitude in the transcendental orbit, which resists anthropologisation. As I will argue in the conclusion, I thus follow Han and Allen in asserting a continuity in Foucault's

Second, there are Foucault's denials of any break of his later texts with his earlier work. In the "Preface" of *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault already proclaimed that the later work on the ancients "made it possible to go back through what I was already thinking, ... and to see what I had done from a different perspective ... I seem to have gained a better perspective on the way that I worked ..."[7] In "What is Enlightenment?", which is more in point, Foucault denies that the Kantian work of 'critique' simply opposes what "the historical ontology of the present" that he had been constructing since the 1960s. Rather, as Beatrice Hans in particular has interrogated, he proposes an "archaeological" and "genealogical" transformation of it, as we shall comment in Conclusion.[8]

With these markers pointing towards a closer proximity of Foucault to Kant than might be thought, what I want to propose here is something even more apparently unlikely, and as far as I am aware, unprecedented. In his essay on Descartes, "My Body, This Paper, This Fire", Foucault centrally criticises Derrida for not reading Descartes' *Meditations* as a textual practice in *askesis*: the ethical process of self-formation. A "meditation", Foucault stresses, is a form of what he elsewhere calls "self writing", written techniques through which individuals in Stoicism and Christianity monitored and transformed his *rapport a soi* (relationship to her/himself).[9] Descartes' famous text in 'first philosophy', Foucault agrees in a different register with both Heidegger and Derrida[10] is not the complete break with the past that it presents itself as. Whatever we might be drawn to say about its enunciated content, there is another, *performative* level of the text, as a practice in *askesis*. On this level of its enunciation, a continuity with the tradition is harboured:

> "On the other hand, a "meditation" produces, as so many discursive events, new utterances that carry with them a series of modifications of the enunciating subject [: through what is said in meditation, the subject passes from darkness to light, from impurity to purity, from the constraint of

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appraisal of Kant, one which has a lasting bearing on the construction of his critical project. Cf. Beatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, translated by Edward Pile (Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 17-37, esp. 19-20; Amy Allen, "Foucault and Enlightenment: A Critical Reappraisal". *Constellations*, Volume 10. No. 2: 183, 184-186, 187.

7   Michel Foucault, *Use of Pleasure* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 11

8   Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?", in *The Essential Works of Foucault, Volume I, Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth,* ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York: New Press, 1997), p. 315; cf. Beatrice Han, Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical translated by Edward Pile (Stanford University Press, 1998).

9   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 207 ff.

10   Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* trans. Macquarie and Robinson (London: Blackwell, 1983), #18-21],

passions to detachment, from uncertainty and disordered movements to the serenity of wisdom, and so on]".[11]

My hypothesis here, put simply, is that we should- and *can* productively- read Kantian 'critique' as Foucault reads Descartes' meditative philosophical practice. To do this will be to analyse 'critique', as Foucault only suggested, as a modern "technology of the self" that stands in the line of older methods of *askesis*. To say this is not to commit oneself to the untenable idea that 'critique' is, or is even directly continuous with, pre-modern forms of *askesis*, "self writing" or philosophy in general. As Robert Pippin writes:

> ... the issue [Kant] virtually invented, the 'conditions of the possibility of possible experience' is ... a radically new formulation of philosophy's task. and so provides for the first time the appropriate way of thinking about the deepest philosophical issues in the modern revolution.[12]

If we are to read 'critique' as a 'technology of the self', that is, we shall have to recognise that it introduces new elements, instruments deep changes, and- not least- lays claim to a universal validity, proffering its work of *askesis* as repeatable by anyone. Nevertheless, the 'gains' of this procedure, if it is tenable at all, are evident, as I shall expand in Conclusion. On the side of Kant scholarship, we will have made a provocative intervention in the continuing debate concerning Kant's method. On the side of Foucault scholarship, we shall have provided a significant foundation for understanding why Foucault might have turned to Kant at the same time as he apparently returned to the Greeks. It is telling here, I would suggest, that Foucault himself says in "What is Enlightenment?" that the "modernity" Kant's critiques are tied to is:

> ... an attitude ... a voluntary choice made by certain people ... a way of thinking and of feeling that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and a task. *A bit, no doubt, like what the Greeks called an ethos*.[13]

I: The Primacy of Practical Reason, and the Ideal of the Highest Good

We have mentioned the plethora of understandings of Kant's practice in the three *Critique*s. These vary nearly as much as the more well-known opinions about the significance of his achievement. The enigma here can be stated economically: Kant's *Critique*s trace our intellectual, aesthetic and moral

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11 Michel Foucault, "My body, this paper, this fire" Translated by Geoff Bennington, slightly modified, in J. Faubion, ed., *Aesthetics, method and epistemology* (New York: New Press, 1998), 406

12 Robert Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem* 2nd edition (London: Blackwell, 1999), 46.

13 Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?", 309 (my italics).

capabilities back to the workings of our cognitive 'faculties' or 'powers'. Yet the very *performance* of this 'tracing back' does not exactly match what Kant tells us that any of these faculties can achieve, either alone or in conjunction. The statements that comprise the *Critiques* can clearly not be the products of either pre-discursive "intuition"[14] or of "imagination" that synthesises the 'intuitions' and performs the mysterious work of the schematism.[15] But neither do Kant's texts 'match' the described accomplishments of the "understanding" whose possibility they explain. The *Critique*s are not works in natural science.[16] Nor however do their conclusions or method map exactly onto the described achievements of theoretical "reason", which inferentially and asymptotically works to unify the totality of given judgments into a coherent whole.[17]

What all purely 'theoretical' stagings of Kant's work overlook, however, is Kant's repeated avowal of 'the primacy of practical reason' to his critical endeavours. And it is this 'primacy' that I want to problematise here. To be sure, following Kant's own texts, this 'primacy' is most often taken to refer to Kant's rethinking of the Ideas of Reason (Freedom, God, Immortality)-which were hitherto the province of theoretical metaphysics- in terms of his thinking about morality.[18] Where speculative reason was, as we could say, there now practical reason shall be; or, in the famed words of the B preface to *The Critique of Pure Reason*: "I have found it necessary to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith".[19] Yet, I think Velkley is clearly right to argue that any position that would assert that this Kantian operation exhausts the meaning of the 'primacy of practical reason' falls short. In several different ways, this 'primacy' is a more involved matter.

In a 'Reflection' of 1869, Kant wrote:

> 'The practical sciences determine the worth of the theoretical. What has no such [practical] employment is indeed worthless. The practical sciences come first in relation to intention, because ends must precede means. But in execution, the theoretical sciences must be first'.[20]

And this passage is far from 'standing alone' in Kant's *oeuvre*, as Velkley highlights. The opposition that it establishes, between a priority in 'execution' (where theoretical work must come first) as against a priority in significance

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14   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* translated by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), A19 ff.

15   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A100-102, B103, A136/B176 ff.

16   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A148/B187 ff.

17   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A302/B359

18   Richard Velkley, Freedom *and the End of Reason: On the Moral Foundation of Kant's Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 9.

19   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxx.

20   At Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason*, 5

(where moral or practical concerns must come first, because ends orient means), anticipates Kant's 'mature' insistence that his critical theoretical work was 'propaedeutic' to work in metaphysics, conceived primarily as a metaphysics of morals.[21] This is a key position Kant defends in the first Critique's "Doctrine of Method" in general, and "The Canon of Pure Reason" in particular. "All the interests" of reason coalesce around three Ideas, Kant claims in Sections I and II of the "Canon"- God, freedom, and immortality.[22] Yet, according to Kant, in a position that clearly anticipates the "Postulates" in the second *Critique*, our reason-able interest in these Ideas is in its turn animated by "practical" concerns, and the orienting question "what we ought to do?"[23] Reason is "impelled by a tendency of its nature", Kant contends in Section II, towards conceiving what Kant he calls the "ideal of the highest good": a natural world in which moral autonomy would yet converge fully with the just distribution of happiness[24]. And it is "only for the sake of this convergence [that] reason postulate[s] God and a future life".[25]

Highlighting such Kantian testimony, Beiser and Velkey have argued that the key figure in awakening Kant from his metaphysical slumbers was not David Hume but Jean-Jacques Rousseau. According to Velkley, Rousseau's significance arises from his well-known ethico-political criticism of the enlightenment, which Kant encountered in 1764-65.[26] Rousseau's criticism introduced to Kant the possibility that the unchecked development of reason in its post-Baconian, instrumental forms may produce a culture no less inhumane than the nature which it allows humans to master. In Beiser's account, Rousseau's defence of human autonomy in *The Social Contract* occasioned not only Kant's break with 'moral sentiment' theories, and 'relocation' of the moral substance in a reason above and beyond 'natural' affects.[27] It also instituted a "primacy of the political" in Kant's thinking. Rousseau taught Kant that "metaphysics undermined rather than supported morality", "alienating" humans from a recognition of their own moral autonomy by "hypostasising" its products- the laws of human morality- as the expression of the will or 'natural law' of God.[28]

In both Beiser's and Velkley's accounts, then, Kant's critical philosophy- conceived as decisively post-Rousseauian[29]- is situated as a

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21   Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason*, 5

22   Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A805/B833.

23   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A800/B828.

24   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A808/B836.

25   Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason*, 141.

26   Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason*, chapter 1.

27   Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 30.

28   Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 32.

29   Compare also Robert Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, 48-49.

response to its particular ethico-political context, or what Leo Strauss calls "the first crisis of modernity".[30] The reservation of space for 'private' belief, as a kind of beneficial side effect of the critique of cognition, is thus *far* from being all that is in play in Kant's claim that critique is primarily practical.

And pertinently for us here, it is such an ethico-political understanding of critique that Foucault also defends in his later works on Kant. In an astonishing paragraph connecting Kant's short "Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'" to his larger critical philosophy, Foucault writes in his "What is Enlightenment?" paper exactly:

> Kant, in fact, describes enlightenment as the moment when humanity is going to put its own reason to use, without subjecting itself to any authority; now, it is precisely at this moment that critique is necessary: since its role is that of defining the conditions under which the use of reason is legitimate in order to determine what can be known [*connaitre*], what must be done, and what may be hoped ... The critique is, in a sense, the handbook of reason in the age of enlightenment and, conversely, the Enlightenment is the age of critique.[31]

It is at this point that I want to introduce my exegetical hypothesis directly, of reading 'critique' as a 'technology of the self'.

II: Technologies of the Self, and Foucault's Stoicism

Foucault does not use the term 'technology of the self" in Volume II of *History of Sexuality*. It is developed in the context of Foucault's work on the Hellenic and Imperial periods, and in particular in his work on the Stoics.[32] Kant's debt to ancient scepticism, mediated via eighteenth century German thought and David Hume, is well established.[33] Yet Kant also repeatedly avowed his admiration of the Stoics. To quote *The Logic*:

> The Stoics … were dialectical in speculative philosophy, dogmatic in moral philosophy, and showed an unusual dignity in their practical principles, by which they sowed the seeds of the most sublime ethos that ever existed …[34]

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30   Leo Strauss, "The Three Waves of Modernity", in *Introduction to Political Philosophy* edited by Hilail Giblin (Wayne State University Press: USA, 1990).

31   Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", 308.

32   Michel Foucault, *Care of the Self . The History of Sexuality Volume* III translated Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, `986), 45 ; Michel Foucault, Ethics, 208 ff, 223-250.

33   Cf. Giorgio Tonelli, "Kant and the Ancient Skeptics", pp. 69-98 in Richard H. Popkin et al (eds.) *Scepticism in the Enlightenment* (Kluwer Academic Publishers: Dordrecht, 1997), 69-98.

34   Immanuel Kant, *Logic* translated with an Introduction by Robert S. Hartman and Wolfgang Schwarz (Dover: New York, 1974), 34; Cf. Richard Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason: On the Moral Foundation of Kant's Critical Philosophy*, 105 ff.

Foucault's appraisal of the Stoics is concerned, in the programmatic terms of his later 'genealogy of ethics', to trace the continuities and discontinuities of Stoic ethics with the Greeks'. In contrast both with 'Platonic' philosophy but also the Christian 'hermeneutics of the self'[35], Foucault in particular underscores how, in Stoicism, the truth that the self must orient its *askesis* around hails from outside himself, in the *logoi* of the teachers and the masters.[36] The particular Stoic *technes* that he examines- the written *hupomnemata* that the subject produces and keeps close[37], the bodily *gumnasia* [38] or such meditative practices (*melete*) as the famous *praemeditatio malorum* [39]- are all then conceived by Stoicism as "ethico-poetic" [Plutarch] ways in which this external truth is *made personal* or "subjectivised".[40] *Mutatis mutandis*, the *ergon* of the ascetic techniques of the Stoics was not the confessional unearthing or "reactivation" of guilt about abhorrent 'internal' desires. It was instead a question of periodically and deliberately (re)activating in the individual's mind the "rules of action"[41] he would internalise: of "a set of practices by which one can acquire, assimilate, and transform truth into a permanent principle of action".[42]

Two things from Foucault's reading of the Stoics need to be singled out here. First, at the level of what Foucault calls the ethical "substance": the Stoic practices, for Foucault, are not concerned primarily with the individual's ideas and impulses, whether to interpret their concealed origins or otherwise. As Foucault specifies in reading Epictetus' conception of "self-examination", "he means [that] as soon as an idea comes to mind"- to emphasise, *from whence ever this idea might have come*- "you have to think of the rules you must apply to evaluate it".[43] It is a question, that is, not of one's ideas or impulses themselves but of *how one responds* to them, *in the light of* the true *logoi* that one is striving to subjectivise. As Foucault writes: "the subject is not the operating ground for the process of deciphering but the point where the rules of conduct come together in memory".[44] Secondly, the *telos* of Stoic ethics, as in Greek ethics, remains self-mastery: "the progressive consideration of self ... attained not through the renunciation of reality [as in Christian ethics] but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth".[45] Stoic ascetic practices serve this end by standing as a kind of periodic testing of one's self: "it is a question of

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35   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 83-86, 241-249
36   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 237, 238.
37   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 209-214.
38   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 240.
39   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 239.
40   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 209.
41   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 238.
42   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 239.
43   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 240.
44   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 237.
45   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 239.

testing the [self's ethical] preparation. Is this truth assimilated enough to become ethics so that we can behave as we must when an event presents itself?"[46]

III: Critique as Technology of the Self

In the "Preface" to *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault introduces a quadripartite schema in order to analyse different ethical modes of *rapport a soi*, which interestingly evokes the four causes of the Greeks. Each historical form of ethical self-relationship is analysed as to its "substance" ("the material that is going to be worked over by ethics"[47]); a mode of subjectivation ("the way in which people are invited or incited to recognise their moral obligations"[48]); the means by which the ethical self-transformation is undertaken[49], and the *telos* that orients the entire *rapport*.[50]

Applying this schema to Kantian critique, what can we say? At the level of the *telos* or 'final cause', we have already seen that Kant names the *telos* of his critical philosophy "the ideal of the highest good": a world where nature has been harmonised with autonomy. The "substance" which "critique" would "work over" as a "propadaeutic" to this end is evidently the most distant "aspect" of critique from any of the ethical practices Foucault examines.[51] As Kant makes clear from the 1781 "Preface" to The *Critique of Pure Reason*, 'critique' is a practice in philosophy conceived as metaphysics. The "substance" it will problematise is a reason that would be impersonal, universal and *a priori*, whether theoretical or practical. What remains to be investigated, then, is the not-inconsiderable problem of how the *means* of critique, together with its *mode of subjectivation*, are to work upon this impersonal and apparently theoretical reason, in order to move towards this avowed practical, ethico-political ideal.

Means

The decisive point that Foucault singles out in the quote from "What is Enlightenment?" above, alongside Velkley and Beiser, is that Kant's "critique" of reason does *not* issue in a wholesale rejection of reason's authority.[52] Such a rejection would presuppose access to some foundational Truth higher or deeper than reason, in whose name the rejection could be enacted. Yet, as

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46   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 241.
47   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 263
48   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 264,
49   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 265.
50   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 265.
51   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 263.
52   Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason*, 3 ff.

O'Neill argues, Kant's "Doctrine of Method" in *The Critique of Pure Reason* emphasises that "critique" simply does not aim to resolve the *aporias* that the "Transcendental Dialectic" shows insist whenever rational systems have tried to render themselves wholly systematic.[53] Kant's issue with both scepticism and dogmatism is of a different kind. Each, according to Kant, presupposes that the ideal of philosophy ought to be an account that could speak knowingly and/or wholly about Things-in-themselves. The one side (dogmatism) claims successes in achieving this ideal, while the other, in accepting defeat, denounces (and potentially renounces) reason itself. For Kantian critique, however, what is at issue is *rather the inherited presupposition of this very ideal- whether affirmed or denied*.[54] To quote Robert Pippin:

> Kant's idealism … replaces the great classical and early modern theme of 'nature' (the discovery of which originally made philosophy possible) with a new issue …[55]

In other words, the practice (or, in Foucault's terms, the "means") of "critique' is simply *not situated at the same level as previous philosophical accounts*. There is then a formal parallel to be drawn here, as can be seen, between how all previous 'metaphysical' claims to the Truth stand for Kantian 'critique', and how the "ideas" and impulses of the individual stand in Stoic technologies of the self: to recall, not as contents to be affirmed, denied, or interpreted, but to be tested "administratively" against the *logoi* that the Stoic subject has made his own.[56] One could not be more wrong for this reason to assert, as Zygmunt Bauman has done, that Kant's 'critical philosophy' is totalising, and hence implicitly (at least) totalitarian.[57] "Reason is no dictator", Kant argues.[58] To paraphrase Foucault on the Stoics, Kant's *Critique*s are not the operating ground for the location of any One Truth of the Whole, to which all would have to accede. They are rather the point where the rules of reason are brought together, and reason itself is held up not as a claimant to metaphysical Truth concerning Things-in-Themselves, but *as a tribunal wherein all such claims can be evaluated, and to which they can be duly referred*. This, I would contend, is the reason why, as has been pointed out[59], one of the

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53   Onora O'Neill, "Vindicating Reason." *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. P. Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 282 ff.

54   Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 30 ff.; cf. Hannah Arendt, Lectures *on Kant's Political Philosophy* edited with an interpretive essay by Ronald Beiner (USA: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 32-33, 34.

55   Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 46.

56   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 208 ff.; 238 ff.

57   Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991)

58   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A786/B814; Cf. O'Neill, "Vindicating Reason", 296.

59   Stanley Rosen, *Hermeneutics as Politics* (Oxford University Press: UK, 1987), 35-36.

predominant metaphorics Kant draws on to describe his own philosophical practice is juridical: in fact "patterned on a specific legal tradition within the late Roman Empire" (sic.), as Daniel Breazeale and Dieter Henrich have noted.[60] In "The Doctrine of Method", Kant describes the 'negative' aspect of critical philosophy- in terms that are very evocative, given Foucault's later work- as a "discipline".[61]

All of this might however seem to situate Kantian critique as- precisely- the most sublime exercise imaginable in begging the question. We might well accept that "critique", like Stoic self-examination, is a kind of 'second-order' philosophical activity that would evaluate 'first order' metaphysical claims. Yet none of this resolves the prior question of *from whence* the critical subject could itself derive and justify the 'juridical' principles with which this edifying activity would be accomplished.[62]

To this question Kant's answer is simple and decisive. To quote the A "Preface" of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, "critique" responds to a call he claims to hear resounding in the "age" itself: a "call to reason to undertake the most laborious of all tasks- that of *self-examination*".[63] In Foucault's terms in "The Ethics of Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom", that is to say, "critique"- certainly no less than Greek ethics although in a different register- is a considered practice of *self-reflection*.[64]

In order to understand how this is possible (sic.), let us consider Kant's "transcendental deduction" of the categories. Kant proclaimed this to be both his hardest and most important labour on behalf of metaphysics.[65] Two things are decisive about this 'labour' for us here:

* First, Kant's argument does not proceed by showing simply and directly that, since there is an evident disparity between the manifold diversity of our intuitions and the ordered unity of our intelligible experiences, *some* work of active cognitive synthesis must be presupposed. Such an argument, by itself, would not have stood for anything against Hume, and/or would not have demonstrated the imputed *a priori* necessity of the categories. Kant's argument rather proceeds by way of nothing short of a transcendental demonstration that *all consciousness is implicitly self-consciousness*. It is only a philosophical recollection of what Kant calls "the unity of apperception", in virtue of which "it must be possible for the "'I think' to accompany all my representations"[66], that Kant thinks allows us

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60   Breazeale, "On Kant's Method", p. 3.
61   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A708-712/B736-740.
62   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A710/B738.
63   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Ax (my italics).
64   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 284.
65   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Axvi.
66   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B131.

to 'deduce' the necessity of the categories. And why is this? Kant's claim is that if, *per impossible*, consciousness did *not* have access to such formative *a priori* concepts, neither could it ever stand at a sufficient *distance* from this manifold as to be *able* to conceive of its diversity as one unity which 'I think'.[67]

* Second, the terms in which Kant differentiates "transcendental deduction" from other types of inquiry, which draw on the Roman juridical tropes noted above, are crucial. Transcendental deduction does not ask a question of fact (*quid facti*) about what it aims to explain, Kant specifies. It asks a question of a *legalistic* nature, "about that which is rightful (*quid juris*)".[68] What is decisive here is that the question *quid juris* will then not be satisfied by recourse to some event, property, cause, or sufficient reason for what is to be explained. Rather, it demands that its respondent- to take up Kant's juridical language- him/herself 'take a stand' *by adducing (a) principle(s) in whose name s/he has acted*. What a transcendental deduction asks about, that is- and also what it anticipates- are that *normative rules* will be found, even in the heart of the most 'pre-reflective' human experiences. It is a question of rules and proprieties, if you like, not things and their properties. As Robert Brandom in particular has highlighted, for Kant (as later for Frege or Wittgenstein), to be a subject is to be a rule-following being.[69] To quote Robert Pippin:

> "Kant attempts to show that in all empirical experience, or representation of objects, and in all intentional activity, there simply are, necessarily, spontaneously, self-legislated rules or conditions, that human awareness and action is spontaneously self-determining, whether we recognise it as such or not".[70]

Mode of Subjectivation:

The meaningfulness of reading "critique" as a "technology of the self" begins to emerge. The "means" of Kantian critique is a self-reflection of the subject of reason, or what Kant calls in "The Amphibology of Pure Reason", "transcendental reflection".[71] This practice would make explicit the rules that this subject has implicitly been bound to all along, and in virtue of which it is constituted as the subject that it is. What remains, from the perspective of the later Foucault's schema, is only the question of the *mode d'assujettissement*, through which the subject of reason would be hailed as a subject of critique.

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67   P.F Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Methuen, 1966), 96-97.

68   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A84/B114

69   Robert Brandom, *Articulating Reasons* (Harvard University Press: USA, 2000), 158-164.

70   Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 49.

71   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A260/B310 ff.; Cf. Breazeale, "On Kant's Method", p. 13.

Answering this question, I contend, will also allow us to resolve the still-opaque connection between the means of critical self-reflection, and the ethico-political end of human autonomy.

For if we ask about the way in which the subject of reason is "invited" by critique to undertake its self-reflective work, we must answer that for Kant, the answer is not simply that it is "because we are rational beings".[72] The thing that calls forth the 'critical' or negative aspect of critique, according to him (and we recall here our remarks above about Rousseau), is rather that, as rational beings, we are always (potentially) divided against ourselves, and liable to actively fall into one or other form of heteronomy.[73] As Kant commences the "Canon of Pure Reason" by saying:

> It is humiliating to human reason that it achieves nothing in its pure employment, and indeed stands in need of a discipline to check its extravagances, and to guard it against the deceptions which arise therefrom.[74]

Gilles Deleuze has observed, in *Difference and Repetition* that, with the notion of "transcendental illusion", Kant introduces into the history of ideas a profoundly new notion of what philosophy should rightfully oppose.[75] For, in what amounts to a truly striking anthropological hypothesis, Kant effectively suggests in the "Transcendental Dialectic" that the origins of humanity's inveterate interests in God, Freedom, and the Truth of the Whole ('Nature') lie in nothing more august than the rational practices (like counting or dividing) of our most everyday thinking.[76] The problem is that, if these 'all-too-human' modes of reasoning are simply iterated, they eventually generate the "transcendental illusion[s]" of some Noumenal entity or event that would close the series, but whose (non)existence can in no way be verified. The reason is that- if we can conceive or *believe* in the existence of such Things as God or a first cause- we can only conceive them as beyond the scope of the possible operation of the categories that lay out the framework of what we can legitimately discursively assert.[77] Intuitions without concepts are blind, as Kant says, but also concepts without intuitions must remain empty.[78]

And it is here – with this recognition of the mode of subjectivation of critique as the "call" to us as divided rational beings – that the connection of

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72   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 264. Foucault is here speaking of the Stoics.

73   Cf. Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 32. "Using his own mind, Kant discovered the 'scandal of reason', that is, that it is not just tradition and authority that lead us astray but the faculty of reason itself".

74   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A795/B823; cf. A850/B878.

75   Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* translated by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 150.

76   Cf. O'Neill, "Vindicating Reason", p. 291.

77   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A756/B784.

78   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A51/B75.

critique's peculiar *means* of rational *askesis* with Kant's interest in autonomy emerges. In "What is Critique?", Foucault comments that critique as such is always concerned with "how not to be governed, or, better, the art of not being governed like that at that cost".[79] Foucault's comment in "What is Enlightenment?" is however more precise, when he says that, for Kant:

> ... illegitimate uses of reason are what give rise to dogmatism and heteronomy, along with illusions; on the other hand, it is when the legitimate use of reason has been clearly defined that its autonomy can be assured.[80]

And why is this? "Uses of reason" are illegitimate, according to Kant, when they lead subjects to make claims to truth or rightness that yet cannot be justified except in terms of 'ghost seer'-like access to foundations beyond the legitimate scope of the rules that critique has shown necessarily underlie intelligible experience.

> In Kant's general view … to be 'premodern' or in any sense less enlightened than one should be, is to be 'uncritical'. In the obvious sense of that term, this just means claiming to know something, or to make a claim on someone, without being able to justify such a claim against objectors.[81]

A further parallel between critique as ethical and classical ethics announces itself here, then. In classical ethics, the tyrant was conceived of as someone who "exceeds the legitimate exercise of one's power" insofar as s/he had not mastered her own "fantasies, appetites and illusions", as Foucault puts it.[82] But *just so*, for Kant, a potential tyrant is s/he who has not tested her/his ideas by critique, and so can think to impose their unmastered claims about the Whole monologically upon others.

Kantian autonomy, on the other hand, is not some untutored negative liberty from all norms or constraints, as conservative critics will probably always repeat. It is thinking and acting on principles (*nomoi*) that "defer to no 'ungrounded' authority"- whether philosophical or political[83]- but rather hail from what Kant calls variously the "spontaneity" or "epigenesis" of one's own (*auto*) reason. To quote "What is Orientation in Thinking?":

> To think for oneself is a matter of seeking the highest touchstone of truth in oneself (that is, in one's own reason), and the maxim of thinking for oneself at all times constitutes enlightenment...[84]

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79   At Butler, "What is Critique? Foucault's Virtue", p. 9; Stefan Bohm and Sverre Spoelstra, "No Critique" *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization* (2004), p. 96

80   Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", p. 308.

81   Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 55.

82   Foucault, Ethics*: Subjectivity and Truth*, 288.

83   O'Neill, "Vindicating Reason", p. 299.

84   At O'Neill, "Vindicating Reason", p. 300.

In other words, although Kant's presentations very often suggest that the *telos* of critique lies even asymptotically only at the end of the process of self-reflection, it is as true- and arguably more historically singular- that this *telos* of autonomy in another sense also *coincides with the means of critique itself*. Herbert Marcuse put this idea much later when he argued in "Philosophy and Critical Theory" that, after Kant, "freedom is the 'formal element' of rationality, the only form in which reason can be".[85]

Conclusion

So, to schematise, the claim is that Kant's critique is a technology of the self whose parameters can be analysed fruitfully in terms of Foucault's four-fold schema for the analysis of such techniques. The schema looks like this:

Substance	Mode of subjectivation	Means	*Telos*
Pure Reason - theoretical - practical	The Internal Dividedness of Rationality ('dialectical' tendency to illusion)	Self-reflection on the conditions of possibility and limits of the rules governing one's reason	Autonomy: Ideal of Highest Good : harmony of happiness with autonomy

There are at least two reasons to oppose such a reading. The first is what Ian Hunter, drawing on Foucault, calls the "abstract and academic character of modern philosophy [which] means that it is no longer cultivated as a way of life".[86] This manifest abstractness of Kantian critique is registered in the schema in the would-be substance of critique conceived as a*skesis*, which is reason in its *a priori* potentialities. The second and deeper hesitation concerns a correlative of this 'abstract and academic character': namely, that critique is directed at the subject of reason, who could be anyone at all. As Foucault specifies in "On the Genealogy of Ethics", Descartes' *Meditations*, themselves an *askesis*, nevertheless set in place a methodological procedure that could be followed by anyone. This meant that for the first time, "evidence is substituted for *askesis* at the point where the relationship to the self intersects with the relation to others and to the world".[87] Kant's subject of reason, however divided, would seem, no less than the nameless subject of Descartes'

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85   Herbert Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory", in *Negations* (Penguin: London, translated by Jeffrey Shapiro, 1968: 137

86   Ian Hunter, "The Morals of Metaphysics: Kant's Groundwork As Intellectual Paideia." *Critical Inquiry* (Chicago) 28 (2002), 908; Cf. Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 279-280.

87   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 279.

Meditations, to be no one in particular and so hardly a likely basis for any technology of 'self'-formation.

The 'gains' of this manoeuvre can however now be spelt out. On the level of Kant scholarship, to read Kantian critique as an- albeit impersonal- *ascetic* practice, is to reinstall the 'primacy of practical reason' at the heart of our understanding of Kant. In doing so, we would be placing the ongoing debate about Kant's method on a quite different, and less 'abstract and academic' footing. If critique is seen, as Foucault defines ethics as such, as a "considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection"[88], all depictions of Kant as a proto-analytic philosopher, or unwitting 'synthetic' empiricist, are by-passed. This is not the type of account that is required, any more than a new statement in traditional metaphysics was the type of account that Kant was after. Rather, Kant's chimerical naming of the concern of philosophy as the 'synthetic *a priori*' could be read as registering Kant's new conception of philosophy as a practice in self-reflection, at a different level than speculative attempts to systematically account for the Truth of the whole. We would here be joining recent work by Daniel Breazeale on Kant, which locates the ground of his procedure in the capacity for "transcendental reflection". As Breazeale says: "An apt motto for transcendental philosophy might therefore be the Delphic dictum: 'Know Thyself'"[89].

The work such a reading of critique does is even clearer in terms of our understanding of why Foucault might have been drawn to describe himself shortly before his death as a thinker "if … indeed perfectly at home in the philosophical tradition, it is within the critical tradition of Kant".[90] Critics who would suggest that the later Foucault enacted a nostalgic return to the Greeks need always to recall his citation of Baudelaire's principle 'You have no right to despise the present" in "What is Enlightenment?", let alone his own denials of any such move.[91] Surely the deepest problem with this reading of Foucault's later work, however, is that, in order to valorise the Greeks even so much as he does, Foucault needs to bracket or de-emphasise any references to the cosmological framing of Greek ethics- witness for example Book I of the *Nichomachean Ethics*. As Charles Taylor nicely puts it, "the underlying ideal" (or *telos*) of Foucault's later reflections, in terms of the history of ideas, seems to be patently un-Greek; indeed "some variant of that most invisible, because it is the most pervasive, modern goods, unconstrained freedom".[92]

What reading critique according to the methodology that Foucault used to read the Greeks and Romans shows, though, is how *close* critique stands to the type of self-forming activity that Foucault is clearly attracted to

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88   Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 284.

89   Breazeale, "On Kant's Method", 13; Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, 55.

90   At Bohm and Spoestra, "No Critique", p. 95.

91   Cf. David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 206

92   Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 489.

in the self-mastery of the Greeks- one which is carried out, that is, out of the reach of norms imposed asymmetrically by authorities external to the subject. To quote the first *Critique*:

> Reason must in all its undertakings subject itself to criticism, should it limit freedom of criticism by any prohibitions, it should harm itself … nothing is so important through its usefulness, nothing so sacred, that it may be exempted from this searching examination, which knows no respect for persons. Reason depends on freedom for its very existence.[93]

Moreover, if we read critique as a procedure in "self-discipline"[94] whose only 'product' is not a doctrine, but a *subject* who reserves the autonomy to ask the *quid juris* question about *any* and all claims that it makes or that are made upon it, we can see how such a methodological program can have been 'owned' by Foucault late in his career. Amy Allen in particular has emphasised this in her "Foucault and Enlightenment: A Critical Reappraisal".[95] Foucault in no way renounces his critique (sic.) of the disciplinary and biopolitical aspects of modernity in his texts on Kant. This is the force of his scathing remarks about humanism, and the "blackmail of the enlightenment", in "What is Enlightenment?"[96] In this context, it is not just that Foucault now says that he is "inclined to see enlightenment and humanism in tension rather than identity".[97] This new insight is grounded in his owning of critique as an *ethos* or "work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings"; and of enlightenment, as in Kant, as an ongoing *task* rather than some already-achieved accomplishment whose completed forms we could passively admire.[98] Such a self-reflective *ethos*, in particular, is always able to see in modern humanism simply one more type of- albeit institutionalised and historical- metaphysical position (like dogmatism or scepticism in the first *Critique*) that would lay claim to normatively determine the subject. As such, it too should be subject to the "self-discipline" of critique, although such a self-reflection, for Foucault no less than for Hegel and Nietzsche, is deeply *historical* in ways Kant's *Critique*s were not.[99]

So, let me make a final point to close. The point of this paper is in no way an attempt to absurdly 'collapse' either Foucault into Kant, or *visa versa*. Pivotal differences remain between the projects of the two authors. In terms of their respective re-framings of philosophy as an "attitude" or *ethos*, which is

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93   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A738-9/B766-7.
94   Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A709/B737.
95   Allen, "Foucault and Enlightenment", 200.
96   Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", p. 312 ff.
97   Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", p 304.
98   Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", p. 316.
99   Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", p. 315; Allen, "Foucault and Enlightenment", 190-191.

the central point of similarity I have tried to emphasise between their works, in fact, this very fact that such differences between them remains is of the essence. If we were to try to locate the principle of the existing differences between Foucault and Kant, though, it would seem to lie exactly in their orientation towards the question and the possibility of epistemic and moral *universality*. As the predominant reception of Foucault's work bears out, Foucault's work reads at times as opposed to any form of universality *per se*, and to indeed see within it- after Nietzsche- the reactive rationale for the levelling of individuals and *singularity* as such.[100] Foucault hence differentiates his form of 'critique' in "What is Enlightenment?" from that of Kant in the following terms:

> But if the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge has to renounce transgressing, it seems to me that the critical question today has to be turned back into a positive one: in what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints?[101]

Kant's work, by contrast, inaugurates the tradition that runs through German Idealism into the work of Marx, and which sees in universality precisely that dimension which *frees* humans as humans from immediate immersion in the particularity of sensuous existence. As Marcuse puts this type of position in "The Foundations of Historical Materialism", talking of Marx's notion of the 'species'- or universality- of a type of being, which discursive human understanding can uncover beneath the manifold appearances:

> The species of a being is that … is the 'principle' of its being that is common to all the particular features of what it is: the general essence of this being. If man can make the species of every being his object, the general essence of every being can become objective for him: … It is for this reason … that he can relate *freely* to every being: he is not limited to the particular state of the being and his immediate relationship to it, but he can take the being as it is in its essence beyond its immediate, particular, actual state …[102]

We saw above how Kant stakes exactly this type of contention, in examining the "Transcendental Deduction" of the first *Critique*. As Kant's argument runs, without the categories, there could be no possibility of self-consciousness; and without this possibility, there could not be any consciousness of objects at all,

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100   Cf. for example David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, chapter 10.

101   Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment". Accessed 13/12/04. Available at http://foucault.info/documents/whatIsEnlightenment/foucault.whatIsEnlightenment.en.html

102   Herbert Marcuse, "The Foundation of Historical Materialism", in *Studies in Critical Philosophy*(Western Printing Services: Bristol, 1972), 26-27

let alone a possibility of critique. Universality is in and after Kant then seen not as a cloying equalization but something that- in the distance it allows vis-à-vis the particular- is an enabling thing: indeed, the condition for the possibility of anything like autonomy and individuality.

It is surely a sign of the force of the thought of Foucault and Kant that, in many ways, the stake of this key philosophical disparity stands at the philosophical basis of the most lasting contemporary debates about the providence of modernity, and the possibility and *desirability* of any 'post-modern condition'. As for any terminus of these debates, perhaps we can do no better to close than to cite Foucault's famous response when asked about his politics, and whether it embodied a kind of pessimism or rationale for apathy:

> My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger.[103]

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103   Michel Foucault, quoted at Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, p. 206.