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# How to Take Aim at the Heart of the Present and Remain Analytic

*Adi Ophir*

## Abstract

In his famous lecture on Kant's essay 'An Answer to the Question What is Enlightenment' Foucault distinguished between two traditions in modern philosophy coming out of Kant's work: 'an analytic of truth' and 'an ontology of present reality [*actualité*]' or 'a genealogy of ourselves'. The paper presents this distinction as a fruitful displacement of the distinction between 'analytic' and 'continental' philosophy, which gives the latter precise cultural and philosophical meaning. The paper clarifies the distinction and argues that almost without exception, analytic philosophers are not interested – in their capacity as philosophers – in interpreting and understanding their historical present. Some possible reasons and some possible consequences of this lack of interest are examined briefly. Within the continental tradition itself, two major contemporary forms of 'an ontology of present reality' are distinguished, one exemplified by Habermas and the other by Foucault. The difference between these two forms of 'taking aim at the heart of the present' (to use Habermas' phrase) is explicated as a difference between distinct genres of critical discourse, or forms of critique. The difference is presented in respect to two major aspects: historical time and historicity, and critique's mode of engagement with 'an analytic of truth'. The last point, namely the presence of a crucial analytic moment in the philosophical interpretation of present reality, suggests a possible modification of the initial distinction between the two philosophical traditions.

**Keywords:** Foucault; Habermas; ontology of the present

There is nothing obvious or self-evident about the distinction between analytic and continental philosophy, except for the fact that many if not most of the philosophy departments in the West today embody it in one way or another. On this level of description the 'divide' is a feature of the sociological map of the philosophical field. Many questions may be asked about the historical formation of this map and its current cultural

and political function, but these would only serve to blur further the conceptual distinction itself, which is not at all clear to begin with. Moreover, bearing in mind that this distinction supposedly constitutes a crucial element in the self-identity of contemporary philosophers, it is a wonder how little philosophical reflection it has been given. In what follows I would like not so much to question the distinction itself as to displace it in order to extract what seems to me its most important conceptual aspect. I assume that this aspect accounts for the relative lack of philosophical interest in the divide as well as for its cultural significance.

The displacement is proposed quite incidentally in one of the versions of Michel Foucault's famous lecture on Kant's text 'What is Enlightenment?' Foucault distinguished between two modes or traditions of modern critical philosophy, 'the analytics of truth' and 'an ontology of the present'. The two have their origin in Kant:

In his great critical work Kant laid the foundations for that tradition of philosophy that poses the question of the conditions in which true knowledge is possible and, on that basis, it may be said, that a whole stretch of modern philosophy from the nineteenth century has been presented, and developed as the analytics of truth. But there is also in modern and contemporary philosophy another type of question, another kind of critical interrogation: it is the one we see emerging precisely in [Kant's text on] the question of the *Aufklärung* or in [Kant's] text on the [French] Revolution. The other critical tradition poses the question: what is our [historical] present (*notre actualité*)? What is the present field (*le champ actual*) of possible experiences? ... It seems to me that *the philosophical choice confronting us today* is this: one may opt for a critical philosophy that will present itself as *an analytic philosophy of truth in general*, or one may opt for a critical thought that will take the form of an ontology of ourselves, *an ontology of the present*.<sup>1</sup>

I find Foucault's distinction illuminating in three ways:

- (a) it gives a coherent conceptual basis for explaining some cultural aspects of the divide, without trying to mirror the sociological map of the philosophical field or pretending to derive a concept of the divide from that map;
- (b) it locates the emergence of the divide in a well-defined historical and philosophical moment and offers a plausible framework for the reconstruction of its genealogy;
- (c) finally, it may help us explain the relative lack of philosophical interest in the issue in the past, and the emergence of such an interest in the present.

The analytic tradition, according to Foucault, is concerned with a critique of the conditions for the possibility of truth claims. However, despite Foucault's emphasis on truth, it seems to me justified, given his reference to Kant's three *Critiques*, to understand the analytic critique in reference to validity claims in general.<sup>2</sup> What lies at stake in this kind of philosophy is valid constraints on the extraction of meaning, on the production of knowledge, and on normative – moral or aesthetic – judgement. It is also the question of the limits and scope of these claims and of the philosopher's ability to come to know these limits a priori. To analyse means in this context to show under what conditions something – a meaningful utterance, a truth claim, a moral or aesthetic judgement – can claim validity, or legitimacy, or even attention, or response, or any other exchange value within a communicative situation.

The analytic tradition is opposed to 'an ontology of the historical present'. This is the tradition in which Foucault places himself, an heir to Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, and the Frankfurt School, who share a 'form of reflection' whose object is the present. The present is 'our present', and what we are is what we have come to be in and through this present. The ontology of the present is closely associated with a genealogy or 'an ontology of ourselves', and it is preoccupied with reconstructing different aspects or dimensions in the historical constitution of the modern subject. The 'we' which Foucault implies by the 'ontology of *ourselves*' is the group of Western individuals who have become or grown to be modern subjects. But at the same time it is a collective of individuals who have grown to become the subjects of modernity, those arrested, colonized, and yet empowered by modern apparatuses of subject (*assujétissement*), those informed by modern discursive regimes at modern disciplinary sites. The emphasis on the modern is crucial for understanding Foucault's distinction between the two philosophical traditions. The 'historical ontology of ourselves' can be spoken of as an 'ontology of the present' because it concerns the modern. Whether it consists of an ontology or a genealogy<sup>3</sup> of modernity, of the present, and of ourselves, the second tradition is certainly more interpretative than analytic. However, for simplicity's sake I will call it non-analytic.

Whereas 'the analytics of truth' seems a more or less familiar concept, it is less common to think about the reflective interest in the historical present as the main characteristic of the non-analytic tradition. However, Foucault is not the only one to emphasize it as a key philosophical motive. Hegel was probably the first to say that the task of philosophy is 'grasping its own time . . . in thought'. Habermas quotes this passage in his lecture on 'Modernity's Consciousness of Time and its Need for Self-Reassurances',<sup>4</sup> and refers to some of the same texts evoked by Foucault in the Enlightenment lectures.<sup>5</sup> Philosophy's 'own time' meant for Hegel 'the modern age [that was] marked universally by a structure of self-relation

that he calls subjectivity'. Habermas then uses his reading of Hegel's concept of modernity in order to frame his presentation and critique of 'the philosophical discourse of modernity'. This quest for the meaning of the modern is but one form of the more general interest in the historical present.

When analysis, conceived as a search for conditions of possibility of meaning and judgement, is opposed to quest for the meaning of the historical present, some unexpected consequences follow. For example, the linguistic turn and the turning away from foundationalism are first and foremost recent events within the history of the analytic tradition. The linguistic turn has shifted the philosophical terrain and made language an object and a limit of philosophical analysis, and not simply a means and a medium. Anti-foundationalism has shifted the telos of the philosophical quest and redefined its scope. The analysis of validity claims becomes a study in the life and logic of the different language games within which these claims are pronounced. The quest for an ultimate ground of these claims becomes a quest for the specific historical and changing conditions for specific kinds of claims. And yet one is still looking for the conditions of the production of meaning, understanding, truth, and other normative claims. It is language and linguistic practices that have come to dominate the entire domain of the philosophical. Within the non-analytic tradition the linguistic turn has had less dramatic effects. There has never been a total break between consciousness-centred philosophy (e.g., Hegel's dialectic or Husserl's phenomenology) and language-centred philosophy (e.g., Heidegger's later philosophy or Habermas' since the 1970s). Contrary to a widespread prejudice, even Derrida, let alone Heidegger, Foucault or Lyotard, never abandoned his interest in the non-linguistic.

As indicated above, Foucault's distinction is not consistent with any conceivable sociological map of the field of philosophy. Many continental philosophers have not been interested in 'an ontology of the present', while many who have practised the 'analytics of truth' have not been analytic philosophers in the sense used in the English-speaking world since the 1950s. More specifically, prominent continental brands of philosophy such as Husserl's phenomenology, some kinds of hermeneutics, Habermas' theory of communicative action, and Foucault's own discourse analysis fall under the category of the analytics of truth. And yet the Foucauldian definition of the analytic tradition is even broader than that. It can be applied to Heidegger's analytics of *Dasein*, as well as to Sartre's early phenomenology and even to the earlier, more systematic phase of Derrida's deconstruction.

It is important to note that Foucault distinguishes between two philosophical *traditions*, not *discourses*. The distinction does not concern the entire apparatus of a discursive regime, but a cluster of common questions that seem to persist despite the transformations of the discursive field.<sup>6</sup>

When the *history of philosophy* is conceived of as part of a general archaeology of knowledge (as Foucault might have conceived of it), these transformations are more crucial than the persistence of some leading philosophical questions. But for *philosophy* itself, it is the questions that matter. The divide between the two philosophical traditions must first of all be understood as a difference between two sets of questions based on two very different primordial philosophical interests. When interests differ so dramatically, as I think they do in the case of the two 'traditions' about which Foucault speaks, there is no sense in bridging the gap between them. Bridging is not logically impossible; it is simply impracticable, or *uninteresting*, because it serves no real interest. In the case of the analytics of truth and the ontology of the present, the problem is not that the two sides do not understand each other, but that too often *they are not really interested* in each other's question. Each side fails to see how answers to the other's questions may bear on one's own philosophical quest. When philosophical interests are brought to the fore, a key feature of Foucault's distinction begins to make sense as a valid sociological observation. The critical tradition engaged in ontology of the present has been mostly continental. Analytic philosophers, in the common Anglo-American sense of the term, have not been interested in the interpretation of the historical present.<sup>7</sup>

The difference between 'tradition' and 'discourse' should be further emphasized. Tradition consists of shared questions and a web of themes, concepts, proper names, and the narratives and arguments that connect and relate them. Discourse, in Foucault's strict sense of the term, designates a more rigid phenomenon: a regime of linguistic acts and modes of observation that enables and limits what can be said and seen, as well as possible relations between words and objects, authorized speakers and legitimate phrases, and insiders and outsiders. The division about which Foucault speaks is between two *traditions* of critical philosophy. However, in its best years, during at least three decades of the 20th century (from the 1950s to the 1970s), the split between analytic and continental philosophy has become a clash between a more or less coherent discursive regime on the analytic side and a cluster of loosely associated regimes of discourse on the continental side. The two options about which Foucault speaks were consolidated as two opposing projects and became mechanisms of distinction and marks of loyalty and legitimacy (that were in fact secretly related, because they needed each other), and the opposition between them was made to appear exclusive. It has become part of the *habitus* (to use Bourdieu's term) of anyone who grew up as an analytic philosopher to look with disdain at anything that came out of the continent, especially when it was associated with certain names of individuals, which changed according to the change of intellectual fashion. These names did not serve as knots in a web of narratives and arguments but as marks of distinction and demarcation.

At the same time, those who grew up among continental philosophers were often too ignorant even to know the names. Analytic philosophy was associated with truism, banality, sham scientism, and ideological reproduction. In short it stood for the end of critique and the beginning of intellectual and political stupefaction. To a large extent this is still the case in many philosophical departments even today. But those strategies of distinction and demarcation have diminishing effects today because the mutual infiltration of texts and thinkers by the two camps has become so widespread and the discursive regimes have become so fragmented. Bridging has become both possible and desirable because philosophical discourses today (at least some of them) are too fragmented and unsure of their own rules, and hence allow and even look for infiltration of 'foreign' discursive elements.

There has certainly been a great difference in the degree of discursive formation and consolidation on the continent and outside it. Continental philosophy has always been more variegated, more deeply divided both ideologically and intellectually than its rival. In fact, it was only from the analytic point of view that continental philosophy could appear as a distinct cultural unit, and it is only with respect to the critique and growing power of analytic philosophers that the discursive unity of their rivals could be conceived, and to some extent developed as well.<sup>8</sup> This difference may be one of the reasons for the different fates of the two critical traditions in the two philosophical camps. Continental philosophy has never abandoned or denied the legitimacy of either of these traditions. There has been some division of labour, and often there has been a back-and-forth movement between the two philosophical interests. Usually, in the works of individual thinkers, one of these interests has gained primacy and presided over the other, without, however, obliterating or de-legitimizing the other.

Analytic philosophy, on the other hand, has ignored the ontology of the present altogether and by and large restricted the analytics of truth to its linguistic form. In this climate it became almost impossible for an analytic philosopher even to conceive of the question of the meaning of the historical present as a legitimate philosophical question. Analytic philosophers may be preoccupied with reflection upon their 'historical now' and may even be deeply engaged in it politically, poetically, or in any other way, but – without exception, I think – they are not doing this in their capacity as philosophers. The aggressive critique of (the positivist version of) analytic philosophy launched by Marcuse in the mid-1960s is still valid in this respect, even when some contemporary analytic philosophers have abandoned the natural sciences as a model of rationality, and even if they have withdrawn their claim for constituting the tribunal for clear and well-ordered statements:



[In analytic philosophy] the object of analysis, withdrawn from the larger and denser context in which the speaker speaks and lives, is removed from the universal medium in which concepts are formed and become words. What is this universal, larger context in which people speak and act and which gives their speech its meaning – this context which does not appear in the positivist analysis, which is *a priori* shut off by the examples as well as by the analysis itself? This larger context . . . today is still that of the gas chambers and concentration camps, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, of American Cadillacs and German Mercedes . . . of brainwashing and massacres. But the real empirical world is also that in which all this is taken for granted, forgotten, repressed or unknown.<sup>9</sup>

Generally speaking, in the Anglo-American analytic tradition it very seldom happens that the analysis calls upon questions related to the historical present or guides philosophical interest in that present. The analytics of truth simply gives way, temporarily, to certain amateurish, unprofessional, and often uncritical modes of engaging with the present. The hard-core analytic philosopher is simply unable to deal philosophically with his or her present. The exclusion of the question of the philosophical meaning of the historical present seems to be a limiting and enabling condition of the Austrian-Anglo-American branch of the analytics of truth. This is a condition that cannot be thought or addressed from within that branch itself. Neither the excluded question nor the act of exclusion can become a legitimate object of analytic analysis, at least not for the hard core of this tradition. At the same time, these very objects of analysis are privileged objects of interpretation and critique in the non-analytic tradition within continental philosophy.

However, the act of exclusion conceived as a condition of possibility of a certain philosophical discourse is a perfectly legitimate object of the continental analytics of truth. It may thus serve as an example of a common ground that exists between the two traditions within continental philosophy and of a possibility of a back-and-forth movement between the two forms of critical reflection. More generally, for continental philosophers engaged in the analytics of truth, the interest in the historical present generally stems from a certain problem situation articulated in terms of the analytics of truth and investigated within its frame of reference. And vice versa. Continental philosophers who adhere to the other tradition and are primarily preoccupied with the historical present often appeal to and make detours through analytical critique, but their interest in it is guided and dominated by an ontological or genealogical critique of the present.

Let me demonstrate my point briefly with respect to two exemplary cases: Habermas and Foucault. Both philosophers have a distinct analytic

phase in their career: Habermas in his theory of communicative action and Foucault in his systematic analysis of the concepts of discourse and archive (presented in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*). It is this part of their works that is most accessible to analytic philosophers, who too often miss the fact that the analysis is dominated by a preoccupation with questions emerging from the non-analytic critique of the historical present. For both thinkers this present is modernity.

Some major methodological and stylistic differences between Habermas' historical reconstruction and Foucault's genealogy may be ignored here, in order to foreground their common project. It is a shared attempt to understand modernity as what constitutes 'us', to understand ourselves as modern and modernity as that which has made 'us' what we *are*, what we have become, but also what we *may become*, and in this respect the future of modernity partly depends upon 'us', and is shaped by this project of self-understanding. The latter becomes an understanding of an epoch, with special emphasis on this epoch's boundaries. However, Habermas and Foucault have quite distinct conceptions of temporality, and consequently of the boundaries of modernity as an epoch, and of 'us' as the product of this epoch. This difference also determines the role assigned to the analytics of truth within the work of each thinker.

For both thinkers there is a straight line that links Baudelaire and the whole aesthetic experience of modernity to Kant and to the whole question of modern critique: 'the problem of grounding modernity out of its self'.<sup>10</sup> Foucault would have agreed, I believe, with Habermas' formulation: 'modernity can and will no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch; it has to create its normativity out of itself'.<sup>11</sup> Modernity, a period that has released itself from its 'self-incurred tutelage', to use Kant's formula of the Enlightenment, and has given up on the authority of tradition and the transcendent, must overcome the temptation of fashion and rely on something less transient than mode. It needs a ground from which to resist and criticize its own systems of power, the market, and the state. Being the first epoch to be so busy with its own identity and limits, it needs a point of view for its self-understanding, for articulating what separates it from its past and constitutes it as an epoch, determines its 'epochality'.<sup>12</sup>

Even if the two thinkers share an interest in modernity and its self-understanding, their theoretical approach to its critique seems radically different. Habermas thinks that the modern questions of normativity and self-understanding call for a rehabilitation of Kant's project of transcendental critique of reason, except that now reason is conceived as inter-subjective and dialogical. He extracts from the experience of the historical present conditions of communication that make validity claims possible and backs this historical reconstruction with a quasi-transcendental analysis of communicative action. He thinks that from both

epistemological and moral points of view, the search for limiting conditions of possible judgement is inevitable, for these conditions are implied even at the moment of their denial. Foucault would have described the project of epistemological grounding as yet another gesture of self-fashioning, not entirely different from the aestheticians's striving, à la Baudelaire, to turn a current mode into a classic. He thinks that the very question of modernity's normativity and self-understanding should become an object of a radicalized critique of the historical present; the analytics of truth, i.e., of discourse, only serves to accentuate the historicity of this present, its structures of rationality and its systems of power. Resistance to these is a matter of personal self-fashioning, for which ancient Greek ethics may serve as a model.

According to Foucault's concept of power, power relations pervade any speech situation, even an ideal one, and threaten to deconstruct Habermas' communicative theory at the moment of its inception. Habermas and his followers quickly push this critique into a historicist and relativist impasse,<sup>13</sup> and a quite stale debate between the two positions has been going on since Foucault's death. But how crucial is the question of grounding? How important is it to secure (once and for all?) the conditions for rational discourse and communication and for just and proper action? It is crucial only when philosophy assumes the role Kant assigned it in his three *Critiques*, i.e., to be the embodiment of reason and constitute its own tribunal, as well as to be the supreme tribunal of every competing claim coming from 'the outside'. This is the role of critique inherited by the entire tradition of the analytics of truth, which Habermas joins when he starts his studies in pragmatics in the late 1960s.

In the other tradition, however, the difference between those who care for grounding and those who don't does not make so much of a difference. Or rather it resembles the difference between the 'genius' and the 'normal' artist: both are products of the modern field of art and are entirely dependent on its structure and practices. Here critique does not assume the role of reason's supreme tribunal. It rather resembles reason's secret agent, who goes back and forth between the self-understanding of a self embodied in its own epoch and culture and an understanding of the epoch and culture that has constituted that understanding self and shaped the field of its possibilities. From the point of view of the ontology of the present the issue is not to decide whether grounding is impossible or inevitable. What is at stake is the stance one should take vis-à-vis the limits of the possible in the realms of thought and action, as they are articulated in the heart of the historical present. The task of grounding as philosophy's ultimate vocation is part of this present's horizon of possibilities. Critique too turns upon itself and becomes an object for a genealogical investigation. Such an investigation reconstructs the various forms critique has taken since Kant and seeks to understand how it has

become the modern philosopher's mission and how its various forms have come to occupy the place they currently hold on the philosophers' agenda and in their imagination.

Both Foucault and Habermas may be described as thinkers who conceive the history of modern philosophy as a genealogy of different forms and images of critique and interpret the historical present from the perspective of critique's possibilities at this historical moment. But for Foucault, critique is associated first and foremost with freedom: 'it is the art of not being governed',<sup>14</sup> while for Habermas, its main stake is justice. There is a distance here that cannot be erased even from the perspective of an ontology of the present, and it is quite informing. Let me dwell shortly on this 'local' divide before going back to the main divide of modern philosophy.

What is at stake, to repeat, is the stance one should take vis-à-vis the limits of the possible in the realms of thought and action. Habermas wants to determine these limits as a set of necessary, inevitable conditions; Foucault wants to expose them in order to transgress them, or better, to expose them by way of transgression.<sup>15</sup> The difference may be summed up in reference to Habermas' phrase quoted above: 'Modernity sees itself cast back upon itself without any possibility of escape.' In the last analysis, Habermas accepts this dictum. It is precisely because there is no escape and no beyond that a limit to the possible must be set from within. Foucault would inverse this dictum. For him, one thinks in order to transcend the limits of the possible, in order to escape. Transgression becomes a form of thought and action. Of course, there is no transcendence to reach to – the transcendent is created alongside the act of transgression. Modernity indeed creates its normativity out of itself, and too many people, cultural mechanisms, and state apparatuses are busy in that work of normalization. The task of the intellectual is not to join them in that work or set its limit but to assess its price, not to create a foundation for normativity but to break it wherever it becomes excessive. After all, the intellectual's first commitment is to what Foucault calls the 'patient labour that gives form to the impatience of freedom'.<sup>16</sup>

Habermas is committed to justice and thinks that the only way to serve its cause is by an analytics of validity claims conceived as communicative acts. Foucault is committed to freedom and thinks that the only way to serve its cause is 'to work on our limits', to resist what pretends to be unavoidable and to look for its contingent genealogy. He needs for this purpose some rudiments of discourse analysis, and he even implies some 'quasi-transcendental' presuppositions about discourse and power,<sup>17</sup> but these may be considered incidental to his main project. Habermas must extract his procedure of grounding from within the historical present, and therefore there will always be something in the present he would like to preserve and canonize. He is the guardian of the 'good present'.<sup>18</sup> Foucault

too must extract a ground for resistance from within the historical present, for he must find a piece of the present that is not at peace with the present. He finds it in dead documents, deep in the archives,<sup>19</sup> which he plays against the living presence of history, against a past that refuses to pass. But no grounding is involved here, only an 'improper' use of unexpected cultural resources found in the present's archive. While Habermas is a guardian of the good present, Foucault is an archive thief who excels in expropriating pieces of a 'bad' past and using them against an even worse present, for the sake of a freer future, which is always already a different present.

A key difference between these two forms of non-analytic critique is the rule that constrains the relation between the present and its past. For Habermas, the past is multi-faceted and contains conflicting forces and tendencies, which the present, while accentuating some and diminishing others, still preserves without resolving their contradictions. In this respect, Habermas was and remains Hegelian: history is still conceived from the perspective of universal history, and its understanding means understanding of a whole in relation to its parts. The multi-faceted past supplies the parts while the present is the indefinite whole. Of course, this whole is missing and it is growing and changing as time and thought go by (being a de-totalized totality, as Sartre said), but it must be anticipated by the historian of the present in order to make intelligible the very drive to understand this present. Foucault is a Nietzschean. For him the present has multiple pasts and there is no *one* present either. Who are we? It depends on (but is not determined exclusively by) whoever we are trying to become. Since our self-identity includes, and is partly constituted by, our past, our becoming that 'us' that we are trying to become determines our past as well. From the archive's point of view this is quite clear, for there are many ways to tailor a past out of the immense multiplicity of the archive's materials. The archive is freedom's true playground. But from the point of view of 'the good present' this is hard to swallow, for 'the good present' demands a unified past in order to remain the same for the future.<sup>20</sup> Freedom should not be allowed to play as it wishes: some order must be maintained. Habermas, as is already noted, opts for justice, and justice is the name he would probably give to this order.<sup>21</sup>

The opposition seems unavoidable – justice versus freedom; one is called to take sides. This seems to be Habermas' position. For him it is a question of either – or. One sides either with the good forces of Enlightenment or against them. Even Foucault himself must take sides. When he understands Foucault's interest in the Enlightenment in the last years of his life Habermas asks 'How can [his] self-understanding as a thinker in the tradition of the Enlightenment be compatible with his unmistakable critique of precisely this form of knowledge, which is that of modernity?'<sup>22</sup> But what Habermas sees as a contradiction may be resolved when the question

is raised within the framework of a Nietzschean genealogy, in which a multiple past becomes a scene for the creation of a multiple, ever-changing self. Even the Enlightenment has more than one past, certainly more than one archive. It is possible to use one archive for the purpose of an 'unmistakable critique . . . of modernity' and another for the purpose of reviving critique as an 'art of not being governed' and giving it new discursive and literary forms. In other words, a sense of contradiction too depends on the sort of game of truth within which a difference is articulated. From a Foucauldian perspective, the contradiction becomes a simple difference, but in order to show this in detail one must fall back on Foucault's concepts of discourse and archive, i.e., on his own analytics of truth. From a Habermasian perspective, the difference seems insurmountable, but this is only because one has already subscribed to something like Habermas' analytic of validity claims.

We need not dwell any longer on the debate between Habermas and Foucault, for its lesson for the purpose of our discussion is already clear enough. The very existence of the debate forces one to move back and forth between the two philosophical traditions and philosophical interests. The debate takes place at the heart of contemporary continental philosophy,<sup>23</sup> and the parties share a strong interest in what Foucault calls the ontology of the present and Habermas (following Weber) calls 'a philosophical diagnosis of the times'.<sup>24</sup> But even these facts cannot obscure what should have been evident from the beginning: an analytics of truth is – at least – a necessary tool for the ontology of the present. It makes no difference whether the analytics of truth is highly developed, as it is in Habermas' case, or underdeveloped, as it is in Foucault's case, for the place for critical analysis is prepared in advance in both forms of non-analytic critique.

Looking back at the Austrian-Anglo-Saxon analytic tradition that has developed in this century in the English-speaking world, one sees a precise inversion of this discursive situation. The place for 'a philosophical diagnosis of the times' has been closed off in advance. As a peculiar language game with its own rules, analytic philosophy has precluded the possibility of more than a casual interest in the historical present. The tendency to dissociate concepts from their changing historical contexts and language from its concrete, material, and practical institutions, to ignore the historical 'forms of life' of various language games, and to overlook the constitution – let alone the *historical* constitution – of the modern subject as both analysand and analyser have all contributed to his foreclosure of the question of the historical present.

It is impossible to support this claim in the context of the present discussion, and it is too late to ask how this situation has come about. One thing, however, seems clear to me: these questions about the structure and genealogy of the non-continental tradition of the analytics of truth cannot even be asked, let alone answered, from within its own frame-

work. The problematization of the philosophical divide has become a possible object of interest for analytic philosophers only with the recent decline of ‘analytic philosophy’ (in the Anglo-American sense of the term) as a more or less solid academic discipline that contains a more or less coherent cluster of discourses. Less certain in their own position in the academy and in their role in culture at large, many (but not too many) analytic philosophers are now ready to look at their continental counterparts without excluding in advance their interests, genres of writing, and modes of argumentation. They are responding not only to problem situations emerging out of their own discourse, but also to radical changes in the cultural climate and ‘the spirit of the age’, for the understanding of which they lack the appropriate tools. For these changes to be understood, an ontology of the present that includes a genealogy of modern forms of critique and of critique as a form of modernity is necessary. Such a genealogy would account for the emergence and consolidation of the philosophical divide and for recent attempts, including the present one, to bridge it. This genealogy is still awaiting its author.

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### Notes

- 1 The lecture was originally published as ‘Que’est-que les lumières?’, un cours inédit, *Magazine Littéraire*, 207 (June 1984), pp. 35–59. There exist at least two English translations of this lecture that have since appeared in several collections of essays. The above quotation is taken from Alan Sheridan’s translation: Michael Foucault, ‘The Art of Telling the Truth’, in *Critique and Power*, ed. Michael Kelly (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1994), pp. 147–8. My italics.
- 2 Foucault opposes Kant’s ‘great critical work’ to his minor political and historical writings, and hence the analytics of truth should include the analytics of morals, and of the beautiful and the sublime.
- 3 The two notions seem synonymous for Foucault in this context.
- 4 Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p. 16.
- 5 There are two different published versions of Foucault’s lectures and an earlier, unpublished one, ‘What is Critique?’, that covers some of the same ground from a different perspective. See an account of these three versions in James Schmidt and Thomas E. Wartenberg, ‘Foucault’s Enlightenment: Critique, Revolution, and the Fashioning of the Self’, in *Critique and Power*. It is especially interesting to see how both Habermas and Foucault make similar use of Baudelaire’s essay ‘The Painter of Modern Life’. See pp. 000ff. below.
- 6 Still, the gap between the ‘tradition’ which Foucault invests or projects backwards and the history of philosophy as a cultural field and an academic discipline may be too wide. I don’t wish to defend Foucault on this point and would like to leave the question open. I believe that the merit of his distinction lies elsewhere, as I am trying to show below.
- 7 Note that I do not claim that continental philosophers are not engaged with

the analytics of truth. I am using one side of Foucault's distinction as a demarcating line for the analytic–continental distinction.

- 8 I am aware of the possibility that this judgement is biased because I am a student of continental philosophy and not familiar with analytic philosophy. But my point about the separation between two exclusive philosophical interests will only be strengthened if the relation between the two traditions is symmetrical, i.e., if analytic philosophy appears as a distinct cultural unit and a coherent discursive entity only from the continental point of view.
- 9 Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), ch. 7, 'The Triumph of Positive Thinking: One-Dimensional Philosophy', p. 180.
- 10 *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 8.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 12 Foucault, 'The Art of Telling the Truth', pp. 140–1. For the notion of 'epochality' see Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1983), part IV, ch. 1: 'The Epochs of the Concept of an Epoch'.
- 13 For Habermas see chs. 9 and 10 of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. For some of the others see Kelly, *Critique and Power*.
- 14 Michel Foucault, 'Qu'est-que la critique [Critique et Aufklärung]?'. This theme was first presented in 1978 in a lecture before the French Society of Philosophy, but was raised again in Foucault's interviews and some of his writings in the 1980s (and not only in the lectures on the Enlightenment). See, for example, 'Le Souci de la vérité', in *Dits et écrits*, vol. IV, pp. 668–78.
- 15 Michel Foucault, 'Preface to Transgression', in *Language, Counter-Memory, and Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).
- 16 Foucault, 'Qu'est-ce que les lumières?', pp. 57–8.
- 17 I have elaborated on this topic elsewhere. See Adi Ophir, 'The Cartography of Knowledge and Power: Foucault Reconsidered', in H. J. Silverman (ed.) *Cultural Semiosis: Tracing the Signifier* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 239–64, especially part VII.
- 18 The expression is mine, but its sense is common to many of Habermas' readers. Here is one example: describing Habermas' itinerary since *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* Craig Calhoun writes: 'Despite, or perhaps in a way because of his move away from critique of history and ideology, Habermas remains centrally engaged in the project of identifying *the still valuable* normative ideals of modernity.' In his earlier work he extracts this out of specific socio-historical conditions; in his later work he calls upon universal characteristics of human communication, which – I would add – are extracted in their turn from everyday language, i.e., the common language of the present (Craig Calhoun, introduction) to *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1992), p. 40. For a recent example in Habermas himself see his attempt to point out certain positive, progressive historical trends currently at work at various levels of social reality, as the twentieth century is coming to its close, in his 'Learning by Disaster? A Diagnostic Look Back on the Short Twentieth Century' *Constellation*, 5(3) 1998, pp. 307–20.
- 19 I am not using the notion of the archive in the peculiar sense Foucault gives it in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (part III, ch. 5), but in the colloquial sense that may designate, among other things, the real sites where Foucault was digging for his documents.



- 20 Shouldn't Habermas too admit multiple pasts? There is one for the transformation of the public sphere, another for the changing relation between theory and practice in modernity, yet another for the crisis of legitimation in modernity, another for the Holocaust and its memory, and another for the philosophical discourse of modernity. It is not clear that all these pasts are intertwined in a coherent texture along a unified temporal axis. Habermas may find it hard to admit this reading, but since he has already multiplied his narratives he may also find it hard to avoid it.
- 21 Rationality may be another name. But since justice is conceived as procedural, the difference between justice and rationality is meagre, a matter of context, neither of content nor of form.
- 22 Habermas, 'Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present', in Kelly, *Critique and Power*, p. 152.
- 23 Even though most of the contributors to this debate today are Anglo-American philosophers who practise and preach continental philosophy outside Europe.
- 24 See, e.g., 'Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present', p. 154.