PHILOSOPHICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE HISTORICAL *A PRIORI:* FROM KANT TO FOUCAULT

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Most accounts of the historical a priori can be traced back to Husserlian phenomenology. Foucault's appeals to the historical a priori are more problematic because of his hostility to this tradition. In this paper, I argue that Foucault's diplôme thesis on Hegel, his studies of Kant's Anthropology, his response to critics of The Order of Things, and his later work on Kant's essay "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" all suggest that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German philosophy helped to shape his conception of the historical a priori.

1. Introduction

Most accounts of the historical *a priori* in twentieth-century French philosophy can be traced back to Husserlian phenomenology. In *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, Husserl speculated that there might be an ideal structure guiding the development of the sciences that would serve as the *a priori* principle of their history.[1] Maurice Merleau-Ponty's studies of the texts associated with the *Crisis* extend Husserl's reflections on the origins of the sciences, while Jacques Derrida's introduction to the *Origin of Geometry* applies to philosophy itself the "historical reduction" that Husserl proposes to solve the problem of the relation between science and its history.[2] Michel

[1] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, (tr.) David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 349–50.

[2] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, (ed.) Leonard Lawlor and Bettina Bergo (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 62. See also Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, (tr.) John P. Leavey Jr. (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 116–17, 175–80. It should be noted that Husserl himself does not employ the term "historical reduction," though this is an accurate term to describe his undertak-

Foucault's hostility to phenomenology makes his appeals to the historical *a priori* more problematic.

In the Preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault calls the historical *a priori* "the starting point from which it was possible to define the great checkerboard of distinct identities established against the confused, undefined, faceless, and as it were, indifferent background of differences."[3] This suggests that, like Husserl, Foucault recognizes some kind of ideal structure or formal principle that stands behind the history of scientific knowledge and the forms of classification it employs. And yet he singles out phenomenology as the method most opposed to his own throughout his career. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault objects to phenomenology because it "gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to the act, which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity, which, in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness." "It seems to me," he continues, "that the historical analysis of scientific discourse should, in the last resort, be subject, not to a theory of the knowing subject, but rather to a theory of discursive practice."[4] In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault even claims that his archaeology is intended "to free history from the grip of phenomenology."[5]

These comments make Foucault's use of a Husserlian concept like the historical *a priori* even more puzzling. Some scholars have explained his use of this concept by arguing that Foucault's archaeology shares a common problem with phenomenology, namely, the attempt to overcome "pure transcendentalism" and historicize philosophy and science.[6] Others have argued that Foucault's understanding of the historical *a priori* derives from French epistemology, which promotes a very different view of the relation between history, science, and philosophy than phenomenology.[7] In what follows, I

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ing in the *Crisis*. See David Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 111–20.

[3] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), xxvi.

[4] Ibid., xiv.

[5] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (tr.) A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 203.

[6] Béatrice Han, *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical*, (tr.) Edward Pile (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 5. See also Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 44–52.

[7] See Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 9–12; Johanna Oksala, *Foucault on Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 40–69; David Peña-Guzmán, "The Nineteenth Century in Ruins: A Genealogy of French Historical

would like to add a third possible source of Foucault's conception of the historical *a priori*, which has not received sufficient attention in the scholarly literature. I will argue that Foucault's understanding of the historical *a priori* can be traced back to his early studies of Kant and Hegel. After a short survey of the historical turn in classical German philosophy, I will show that there is good reason to think that Foucault's conception of the historical *a priori* derives from this tradition, even if it also draws upon the language of Husserlian phenomenology and the methods of French epistemology.

2. The Historical Turn in German Philosophy

Karl Ameriks has argued that German philosophy underwent a historical turn in the period following the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.[8] Ameriks identifies Karl Leonhard Reinhold as the decisive figure in this turn, but it was already underway when Reinhold began publishing his *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*. Dieter Henrich maintains that it is Kant and not Reinhold who is the true inventor of "philosophical history of philosophy" that made history central to German philosophy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[9] Whether this turn begins with Kant or Reinhold, the idea that the history of philosophy is of not merely historical, but also philosophical interest, remains central to German philosophy at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

In the Preface to the first (A) edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant describes the history of philosophy as a kind of political drama, in which metaphysics is cast as the "queen of the sciences," whose authority is undermined by the internal conflicts among the dogmatic ministers, and whose rightful claims can only be estab-

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Epistemology," *Foucault Studies*, vol. 21 (2016), 159–83; David Webb, *Foucault's Archaeology: Science and Transformation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 1, 7–38. Kevin Thompson takes a unique position on this issue, claiming that the epistemology from which Foucault derives his archaeology can be regarded as a "phenomenology of the concept." See Kevin Thompson, "Historicity and Transcendence: Foucault, Cavaillès, and the Phenomenology of the Concept," *History and Theory*, vol. 47, no. 1 (2008), 1–18.

[8] Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Historical Turn: Philosophy as Critical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3–9.

[9] Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, (ed.) David S. Pacini (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 32.

lished through a critique of pure reason.[10] This narrative is replaced, in the Preface to the second (B) edition, with an account of the history of the sciences, in which Kant suggests that metaphysics has failed to find a secure course, like the ones followed by logic, mathematics, and physics.[11] These passages help explain the problem Kant's first *Critique* is meant to solve, but it is not until the very last section of the book, "On the History of Pure Reason," that their real significance becomes apparent. In this section, Kant considers the history of philosophy "from a merely transcendental point of view" and finds that "the ideas which occasioned the chief revolutions" in the history of metaphysics differ with respect to their objects, origins, and methods.[12] The objects are either sensible or intellectual, the origins are either empirical or pure, and the methods are either naturalistic or scientific. Kant identifies his critical philosophy with intellectual, pure, scientific philosophy and, after noting that Wolff's dogmatism and Hume's skepticism both follow a scientific method, asserts that "the critical path alone is still open," which means his critical philosophy is the only one that can "bring human reason to full satisfaction in that which has always, but until now vainly, occupied its lust for knowledge."[13] Note that Kant's claim is not merely a boast or a prediction, but a conclusion derived from a transcendental point of view on the history of philosophy.

Kant further develops the idea of a transcendental point of view on the history of philosophy in the drafts of an essay he planned to submit to a competition sponsored by the Prussian Royal Academy. Responding to the Academy's question about the progress of metaphysics in Germany since the time of Leibniz and Wolff, Kant argues that metaphysics is "the science of progressing by reason from knowledge of the sensible to that of the super-sensible."[14] Its history

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[10] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (tr.) Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Aviii–xii. References to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* use standard references to the first (A) and second (B) editions. All other references to Kant's works refer to *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant in Translation*, (ed.) Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992). These references are followed by a parenthetical reference the volume and page number in Immanuel Kant, *Gesammalte Schriften, herausgegeben von der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin: Reimer, later Walter de Gruyter, 1902–).

[11] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bvii–Bxxxvii.

[12] *Ibid.*, A852/B880–A855/B883.

[13] *Ibid.*, A855/B883.

[14] Immanuel Kant, *What Real Progress has Metaphysics Made in Germany Since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?*, (tr.) Peter Heath, in *Theoretical Philosophy after*

proceeds in three stages: a dogmatic stage concerned with *a priori* cognition; a skeptical phase that recognizes the impossibility of extending *a priori* cognition beyond the bounds of possible experience; and, finally, a critical phase in which the scope, content, and bounds of *a priori* cognition are determined, bringing the history of metaphysics "into a condition of stability, both external and internal, in which it would neither increase nor decrease, nor even be capable of this."[15] The progress implicit in this history is no accident. Kant maintains that the "temporal sequence" that one finds in the history of philosophy "is founded in the nature of man's cognitive capacity."[16] Although he acknowledges that "the state of metaphysics can continue to vacillate for many centuries, leaping from an unlimited self-confidence of reason to boundless mistrust, and back again," Kant is convinced that human beings possess a natural predisposition to ask metaphysical questions, which leads them to speculate about *a priori* cognition and also to engage in philosophical disputes about the nature of that cognition.[17] The critical determination of the nature, extent, and limits of *a priori* cognition is merely the logical consequence of that process. A transcendental point of view on the history of philosophy reveals the historical necessity of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Reinhold's view of the history of philosophy is less dependent on a transcendental point of view than the one Kant proposes. In the first of his *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, Reinhold presents the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a timely response to the indifference and even hatred for reason that resulted from the debate between dogmatic rationalists and religious skeptics in the Pantheism controversy.[18] Even though this problem was a contingent feature of recent

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1781, (ed.) Henry Allison and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 353 (Ak. XX:260).

[15] Kant, *What Real Progress?*, 357 (Ak. XX:264).

[16] *Ibid*.

[17] *Ibid*. Kant first suggests that it is natural for human beings to ask metaphysical questions in his discussion of the "peculiar fate" of human reason in the Preface to the first (A) edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. He later formalized this view in his discussion of a "natural predisposition" (*Naturanlage*) for metaphysics in human nature, which he discusses in the *Prolegomena* and in the Preface to the second (B) edition of the first *Critique*. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Avii–viii, B21–22. See also Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Gary Hatfield, in *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, (ed.) Henry Allison and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 150–53 (IV:362–65).

[18] Karl Leonhard Reinhold, *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, (ed.) Karl Ameriks, (tr.) James Hebbeler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1–17.

history when Reinhold wrote his letters, he insists that a satisfactory solution "must be apodictically certain through and through, and consequently it must be suited to the most universal conviction."[19] Recognizing that Kant's *Critique* "has in no way effected such a conviction in all of those who have read it," Reinhold submitted his own *Elementarphilosophie* as the ultimate solution to the problems of philosophy. Since Reinhold argues that this solution is found in a single foundational principle—the principle of consciousness, which states that "representation is that which is distinguished in consciousness by the subject from the object and subject, and is referred to both"—it would not be surprising if he presented his *Elementarphilosophie* as a timeless philosophical truth; yet Ameriks has shown that history plays a major role in the articulation of Reinhold's system.[20] In addition to beginning his *Attempt at a new Theory of the Human Faculty of Representation* with an account of "The Prior Fate of the Kantian Philosophy," Reinhold devoted two volumes to his *Contributions to the Correction of Previous Misunderstandings of Philosophers*, and then extended his criticism to the followers of Fichte, Schelling, Nicolai, and Jacobi in his *On the Paradoxes of the Newest Philosophy*. A few years later, Reinhold published his *Contributions to a More Convenient Survey of the State of Philosophy at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century* in order to secure the place of his *Elementarphilosophie* in the history of German philosophy, to which it was already being consigned. These works suggest that a solution to philosophy's problems would have to demonstrate its legitimacy historically, while also addressing the needs of the present.

One can see the influence of Reinhold's account of the recent history of German philosophy in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* and especially Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*, but Hegel's objections to Reinhold's version of the historical turn are especially important, because they suggest a very different way of approaching a philosophical history of philosophy. In the first chapter of *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, Hegel condemns Reinhold for suggesting the history of philosophy presents us with an opportunity "to develop the idiosyncratic views

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[19] Reinhold, *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, 17.

[20] Karl Leonhard Reinhold, *The Foundations of Philosophical Knowledge*, (tr.) George di Giovanni, in *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism (Revised Edition)*, (ed.) George di Giovanni and H.S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000), 72. See also Ameriks, *Kant and the Historical Turn*, 191–93.

of one's predecessors about the grounding of the reality of human cognition further in new views of one's own."[21] Hegel rejects this view because it makes philosophy "a kind of handicraft, something that can be improved by newly invented turns of skill," but also because it suggests that philosophy consists merely of the "idiosyncratic views" of philosophers.[22] Hegel rejects this view, because "in philosophy, reason comes to know itself and deals only with itself, so that its whole work and activity are grounded in itself."[23] Since philosophy is nothing other than the self-knowledge of reason, he concludes that, "with respect to the inner essence of philosophy, there are neither predecessors nor successors."[24] This might seem like a strange position for him to defend, since it suggests that philosophy is concerned with a single timeless truth, and Hegel is supposed to have devoted his philosophy to the progressive unfolding of reason in history.[25] Yet the position Hegel defends in the *Differenzschrift* does not deny that philosophy has a history; it simply makes the history of philosophy into a series of attempts to comprehend the truth of reason. Each attempt reflects its historical context, which imposes contingent limitations on the view of philosophy it presents. Still, Hegel thinks they remain genuine attempt to comprehend the truth of reason, which is why he concludes that "reason cannot regard its former shapes as merely useful preludes to it-

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[21] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, (ed.) and (tr.) H.S. Harris and Walter Cerf (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), 86. Helmut Grindt and Alexander von Schönborn have argued forcefully against Hegel's characterization of Reinhold's position. See Helmut Grindt, "Hegel und Reinhold," in *Philosophie aus einem Prinzip: Karl Leonhard Reinhold*, (ed.) Reinhard Lauth (Bonn: Bouvier, 1974), 222. See also Alexander von Schönborn, "Karl Leonhard Reinhold: Endeavoring to keep up the pace *mit unserem Zeitalter*," in *The Emergence of German Idealism*, (ed.) Michael Baur and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 39–41.

[22] Hegel, *The Difference*, 86.

[23] *Ibid.*, 87.

[24] *Ibid*.

[25] Hegel defends this more familiar view later in his career. In the Introduction to his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy,* delivered in Berlin in 1820, Hegel argues that the history of philosophy is the identical to the development of the science and the system of philosophy, whose aim is "to know [the] one Truth as the immediate source from which all else proceeds, both all the laws of nature and all the manifestations of life and consciousness of which they are mere reflections…." See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy (Vol. 1)*, (tr). E.S. Haldane (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 19–20.

self."[26] If they contain any truth at all about reason, then these attempts must be included in the system and science of philosophy that comprehends every aspect of reason as a whole.

There is obviously more that could be said about the historical turn in German philosophy, but for our purposes it is sufficient to note that the *a priori* plays a significant role in the understanding of both philosophy and history during this time. Kant thinks *a priori* cognition is the problem that philosophy is meant to solve. He also maintains that the temporal sequence of philosophy's historical development is governed by *a priori* principles, which eventually leads to a critical understanding of the nature, extent, and limits of those principles. Reinhold suggests that philosophy develops from a contingent historical problem, rather than *a priori* principles, but he still thinks the solution philosophy offers for that problem must have the absolute certainty that only *a priori* principles can provide. Hegel reproached Reinhold for thinking the problems philosophy attempts to solve are contingent and for reducing the history of philosophy to the "idiosyncratic views" of philosophers. The alternative Hegel proposes suggests that the truth philosophy seeks could in principle be known *a priori*, but is only known partially as a matter of fact, because knowledge of reason is limited by contingent historical factors. Even though he thinks historical attempts to ascertain the truth about philosophy are limited and incomplete, Hegel still thinks they can approximate that truth to some degree, and must be contained in any account of philosophy as a whole. *A priori* knowledge of philosophy must include the contingent forms that try to approximate knowledge of philosophical truth.

3. From the Historical Turn to the Historical *A Priori*

Foucault is thought to have been more concerned with the problem of history in Husserlian phenomenology and the new approaches to the history of the sciences developed by Bachelard and Canguilhem than the historical turn in German philosophy. But one need only recall the title of his *diplôme* thesis, "The Constitution of a Historical Transcendental in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," in order to realize that he was already concerned about the relationship between history and transcendental philosophy in his student years.[27]

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[26] Hegel, *The Difference*, 88–89.

[27] Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, (tr.) Betsy Wang (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 30.

When one considers Foucault's thesis along with his Introduction to Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View,* his account of the Kantian origins of his archaeology, and his later preoccupation with Kant's enlightenment essay, the connections between his conception of the historical *a priori* and the historical turn in German philosophy become apparent.

That Foucault would write a thesis on the historical transcendental in Hegel should not be surprising, given his admiration for Jean Hyppolite, who had taught a course on Hegel that Foucault attended in 1945, and whose masterpiece, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, was published in 1946, only three years before Foucault wrote his *diplôme* thesis.[28] The second chapter of Hyppolite's book begins with a discussion of the question of "the transcendental possibility of history" in Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* and the answer provided by Hegel's identification of spirit and history in the *Phenomenology*.[29] Hyppolite does not argue that the identity of spirit and history is transcendental, and throughout the book he goes to great lengths to distinguish Hegel's *Phenomenology* from the varieties of transcendental idealism defended by Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Perhaps these attempts to separate Hegel from the tradition of transcendental philosophy provided the young Foucault with an opportunity to reflect on their similarities and entanglements. His thesis is lost, so any speculation about its contents is idle; yet its title confirms that Foucault was already concerned in his years as a student with the problem he would call the historical *a priori* in later works.

Foucault continued to reflect on the relationship between history and transcendental philosophy in the Introduction to Kant's *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View* that he submitted as a secondary thesis accompanying his *History of Madness* in 1961. After explaining the development of Kant's text from the lectures he began

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[28] Foucault paid homage to Hyppolite in his inaugural lecture at the *Collège de France*. See Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 235–37.

[29] Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, (tr.) Samuel Cerniak and John Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 27–34. It is also possible that Foucault was familiar with Hyppolite's *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of History*, which was published in 1944. Hyppolite's *Introduction* contains a discussion of Hegel's critique of "dogmatic empiricism" in historiography, as well as his attempt to reconcile the "moral *a priorism*" of Kant and Fichte with the "positive realities" of history. Both of these discussions would have been relevant to Foucault's early work on Hegel. See Jean Hyppolite, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of History,* (tr.) Bond Harris and Jacqueline Bouchard Spurlock (University Press of Florida, 1996), 35–43.

to offer in 1772, noting that this is also the period in which Kant began to formulate his critical philosophy, and suggesting that Kant's anthropological reflections and his critical philosophy depend upon and repeat one another, Foucault turns to the problem of temporality. In order to avoid the temptations of a false anthropology—one that "would attempt to go back to a beginning, to an archaism of fact or law, to the structures of the *a priori*"—Foucault insists that we must "repeat the *a priori* of the *Critique* in the originary, that is, in a truly temporal dimension."[30] It is difficult to make sense of Foucault's suggestion, since it demands that we repeat the critical *a priori* so as to avoid the structures of the *a priori*; yet it is significant that he says the temporal dimension constitutes the critical *a priori* "in the originary." This claim refers back to an earlier discussion in Foucault's *Introduction*, where he contrasts "the time of the *Critique*" that presents "the multiplicity of the given only through a constructive activity that is at work" with "the time of the *Anthropology*," which is "assured by a dispersion which cannot be contained." (IKA, 89) While time subordinates the multiplicity of the given to the unity of the "I think" in the first *Critique*, Foucault maintains that "the dispersion of synthetic activity with regard to itself" in the *Anthropology* gives rise to a host of "unsettling slippages" that obscure the unity of the "I think" and "exchanges the sovereignty of the *Bestimmung* for the patient, brittle uncertainty under threat from an exercise called *Kunst*." (IKA, 90) I rather doubt the latter claim can withstand critical scrutiny, as there is little textual evidence to support Foucault's interpretation of the role time plays in the *Anthropology*. (IKA, 90)[31] His subsequent claim, that "the relationship

[30] Michel Foucault, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*, (tr.) Roberto Nigro and Kate Briggs (Los Angeles: Semiotexe, 2008), 93. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as IKA. For a discussion of this passage, see Webb, *Foucault's Archaeology,* 37–8.

[31] I am not certain what Foucault has in mind here, but perhaps he is thinking of the passage in which Kant writes "we often play with obscure representations and have an interest in throwing them in the shade before the power of the imagination, when they are liked or disliked. However, more often we ourselves are a play of obscure representations, and our understanding is unable to save itself from the absurdities into which they have placed it, even though it recognizes them as illusions." See Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, (tr.) Robert Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 25 (Ak. VII:136). The claim that we are a play of obscure representations to ourselves would seem to undermine the unity of the "I think," while the interest the imagination takes in obscure representations could be seen as contrary to Kant's view of the moral vocation (*Bestimmung*) of humanity. This is, of course, mere conjecture.

between time and the subject, which was fundamental in the *Critique*, in the *Anthropology* becomes the relationship between time and *Kunst*," strains the bounds of credulity even further. (IKA, 91)[32] Nevertheless, these claims can be seen as an attempt on Foucault's part to rethink the account of time Kant proposes in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, transforming it from a pure form of intuition—a transcendental condition of all possible experience that can be known *a priori*—to a dispersed framework that "harbors and reveals" relationships that are both "openings" and "bonds." (IKA, 92) If this dispersed temporal framework is the "originary" form of the *a priori,* as Foucault suggests, then it is reasonable to assume that Foucault found something like the historical *a priori* in his studies of temporality in Kant's *Anthropology.*

Foucault's reflections on Kant's *Anthropology* eventually gave rise to the archaeology of the human sciences that he presents in *The Order of Things*.[33] In the Preface, Foucault says the aim of the work is to rediscover "on what basis knowledge and theory became possible; within what space of order knowledge was constituted; on the basis of what historical *a priori*, and in the element of what positivity, ideas could appear, sciences be established, experience be reflected in philosophies, rationalities be formed, only, perhaps, to dissolve and vanish soon afterwards."[34] "Such an enterprise," he continues, "is not so much a history, in the traditional meaning of the word, as an archaeology."[35] Some recent commentators have noted the irony of this designation, since Foucault's archaeology bears little resemblance to the science that goes by that name.[36] Similar concerns were expressed in a review of the English translation of *The Order of Things* published by George Steiner in *The New York Times Book Review*. Steiner suggests that Foucault called *The Order of Things* an archaeology because this term has possessed "an aura of depth and

[32] The word *Kunst* appears twenty-nine times in Kant's *Anthropology*, but none of them suggest that the relationship between time and the subject is replaced by the relationship between time and *Kunst* in Kant's *Anthropology*. See (Ak. VII: 130, 132, 133,136, 139, 184, 185, 192, 207, 208, 210, 222, 225, 226, 240, 244, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 255, 295, 297, 300, 303, 314, 323, 324).

[33] On the relationship between Foucault's Introduction to Kant's *Anthropology* and *The Order of Things*, see Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, 156–60.

[34] Foucault, *Order of Things*, xxi–xxii.

[35] *Ibid*., xxii.

[36] Justin E.H. Smith, "The History of Philosophy as Past and as Process," in *Philosophy and its History*, (ed.) Mogens Laerke, Justin E.H. Smith, and Eric Schliesser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 30.

genesis, outside its normal field, since Freud."[37] In a peevish response called "Monstrosities in Criticism," Foucault corrects Steiner, who "does not know that Kant used this word in order to designate the history of that which renders necessary a certain form of thought."[38] Foucault claims to have "pointed to this use in another text," and though I can find no such reference in any of his works, it is still possible to identify the passage in Kant he seems to have in mind. In a fragment associated with his drafts for his essay on the progress of metaphysics, Kant describes "a philosophical history of philosophy" that he calls "philosophical archaeology."[39] What is significant about Kant's conception of philosophical archaeology is that it is a "philosophical" history, rather than an empirical account of "how philosophizing has been done hitherto and in what order."[40] Philosophical history appeals to *a priori* principles, instead of trying to borrow "facts of reason…from historical narrative," because it must explain the universality and necessity of philosophical principles as well as their historical development. Universality and necessity cannot be derived from experience, so the only alternative available to Kant is deriving them directly "from the nature of human reason, as philosophical archaeology."[41] This is quite different from the archaeology of the human sciences that Foucault undertakes in *The Order of Things*, since it aims at strict historical necessity, based on universal and necessary *a priori* principles; yet there are ways in which Foucault's archaeology is similar to the philosophical archaeology that Kant proposes. Instead of appealing to universal and necessary principles to explain the historical development of philosophy, Foucault reconstructs the order of scientific knowledge in different historical periods. Kant might have argued that this order is founded "in the nature of man's cognitive capacity," but Foucault treats it as the effect of a contingent, historical principle that orders scientific knowledge that follows from it.[42] The historical *a priori* is

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[37] George Steiner, "The Mandarin of the Hour – Michel Foucault," *New York Times Book Review*, vol. 8 (1971).
[38] Michel Foucault, "Monstrosities in Criticism," (tr.) Robert J. Matthews, *Diacritics*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1971): 57–60, here 60. For discussions of Foucault's exchange with Steiner, see Marc Djaballah, *Kant, Foucault, and the Forms of Experience* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 10–11 and Colin McQuillan, "Philosophical Archaeology in Kant, Foucault, and Agamben," *Parrhesia*, vol. 10 (2010), 39–49.
[39] Kant, *What Real Progress?*, 417 (XX:341).
[40] *Ibid.* (Ak. XX:340–41).
[41] *Ibid.* (Ak. XX:341).
[42] *Ibid.*, 357 (Ak. XX:264).

simply the name he gives to the quasi-transcendental principle that orders scientific knowledge within a given period.

In a footnote to "Monstrosities in Criticism," the editors of Foucault's *Dits et Écrits* suggest that Foucault discusses Kant's philosophical archaeology in Part IV of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.[43] Unfortunately, Kant's name does not appear anywhere in that part of the book. It is also difficult to see the attack on the history of ideas that Foucault undertakes in these pages as a defense of the view that archaeology is concerned with "the history of that which renders necessary a certain form of thought."[44] Perhaps the closest Foucault comes to discussing Kant's philosophical archaeology is his discussion of "the formal *a priori* that is also endowed with a history" in the chapter on "The Historical *A Priori* and the Archive" at the end of Part III. The principles of Kant's philosophical archaeology could be described as formal, because they are universal and necessary principles that are drawn from reason *a priori*. When formal principles such as these are given a history, Foucault says, they become "a great, unmoving, empty figure that irrupted one day on the surface of time, that exercised over men's thoughts a tyranny that none could escape, and which then suddenly disappeared in a totally unexpected, totally unprecedented eclipse: a transcendental syncopation, a play of intermittent forms."[45] It is possible that Foucault has Husserl's account of the origin of geometry in mind here, but Kant's claims about the alternation between dogmatic and skeptical periods in the history of philosophy also seems to fit the description. Dogmatic and skeptical philosophies emerge from human nature at distinct points in history and then alternate back and forth in "transcendental syncopation."[46] Kant's insistence on the historical necessity of the *Critique of Pure Reason* could likewise be described as inescapable or tyrannical, since he declares that every other path in the history of philosophy has closed. Yet it should be noted that Foucault introduces his discussion of "the formal *a priori* that is also endowed with a history" as a contrast for his resolutely empirical conception of the historical *a priori*, which can only be drawn from the archive of statements available for a given period after the fact.[47]

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[43] Michel Foucault, "La monstruosités de la critique," in *Dits et Écrits (Vol. I: 1954–1975)*, (ed.) Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, 2011), 1089.

[44] Foucault, "Monstrosities in Criticism," 60.

[45] Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, 128.

[46] Kant, *What Real Progress?*, 357 (Ak. XX:264). See also Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, 353–78.

[47] Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, 129–31.

The historical *a priori* may be prior to the knowledge it orders, but it is discovered *a posteriori* in Foucault's archaeology—another reason why it is, at best, quasi-transcendental.

Kant's absence from the works Foucault published in the years that followed *The Archaeology of Knowledge* might suggest that the transition from archaeology to genealogy marked the end of his Kantianism and his quasi-transcendental conception of the historical *a priori.* Yet Foucault's reflections on Kant's "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" from the late 1970s and early 1980s suggest that he did not abandon his Kantian preoccupations entirely. Foucault regarded Kant's essay as the first time that philosophy had engaged "contemporary reality alone," apart from questions of origin and teleology.[48] By identifying the "difference" that marks contemporary reality, he thought this kind of reflection could provide a way out of the present order. Kant identifies that order with the immaturity of relying on someone else's authority, so the way out he proposes is the freedom to think for oneself championed by the enlightenment.[49] To the surprise of those who saw him as an opponent of the enlightenment, Foucault praises Kant's conception of enlightenment as a form of resistance and a critical attitude that inaugurates "a permanent critique of our historical era."[50] These reflections might seem far removed from his earlier work on Kant's *Anthropology* and the account of the historical *a priori* in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, but they share a number of common features. Just as he argued that the relationship between

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[48] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," (tr.) Catherine Porter, in *The Essential Foucault,* (ed.) Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (New York: The New Press, 2003), 44–5. Foucault's claim seems to be contradicted by the last sentence of Kant's essay, in which he writes "Thus when nature has unwrapped, from under this hard shell, the seed for which she cares most tenderly, namely the propensity and calling to *think* freely, the latter gradually works back upon the mentality of the people (which thereby gradually becomes capable of *freedom* in acting) and eventually even upon the principles of *government*, which finds it profitable to itself to treat the human being, *who is now more than a machine*, in keeping with his dignity." This sentence seems to identify the origin of the capacity for free thinking (human nature) as well as its goal (self-government). See Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?," in *Practical Philosophy*, (ed.) and (tr.) Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 22 (Ak. VIII:41–42).

[49] Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," 45.

[50] *Ibid.*, 51. See also Jürgen Habermas, "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present: On Foucault's Lecture on Kant's *What is Enlightenment*?," in *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*, (ed.) Michael Kelly (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 149–54.

truth and freedom is "the privileged theme of transcendental philosophy" in his Introduction to Kant's *Anthropology*, Foucault emphasizes the "direct bond" between "the progress of truth and the history of liberty" that defines "a certain manner of philosophizing" in "What is Enlightenment?" (IKA, 92)[51] And just as he recasts the universal and necessary *a priori* principles that lie at the heart of Kant's philosophical archaeology as quasi-transcendental principles of order in *The Order of Things*, he also transforms Kantian critique from a reflection on limits and a search for formal universals to a "historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying."[52] Foucault's meditations on Kant's enlightenment essay also share with his earlier works a common origin in the historical turn in German philosophy. While Foucault's thesis draws on Hegel and his Introduction to Kant's *Anthropology* and *The Order of Things* engage with Kant, Foucault's interpretation of Kant's enlightenment essay gives Kant credit for the approach to history that Reinhold pioneers in his *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*. Instead of formulating timeless answers to timeless questions, Reinhold addressed his philosophy to the problems of the present and tried to provide an appropriate solution. Foucault's solution is a critical attitude rather than the complete philosophical system that Reinhold imagined, but they share a singular concern for the historical moment in which they are thinking and writing. That is rare enough in the history of western philosophy to merit serious consideration and thoughtful comparison.

4. Conclusion

I have argued that Foucault's engagement with the historical turn in German philosophy is already evident in the title of his *diplôme* thesis "The Constitution of a Historical Transcendental in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," which shows that his concerns about the relationship between history and transcendental philosophy began during his student years. The same concerns are also apparent in his Introduction to Kant's *Anthropology*, where Foucault defends the view that the *a priori* of Kant's critical philosophy is originally temporal. In its originally temporal form, Foucault argues, the *a priori* disperses the synthetic activity of transcendental subjectivity. This

[51] See also Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," 51.
[52] *Ibid.*, 53.

anticipates the account of the historical *a priori* Foucault presents in *The Order of Things*, where the historical *a priori* becomes a principle of order that determines the form scientific knowledge will take in different historical periods, undermining any claim that scientific knowledge is constituted in and by the consciousness of transcendental subjectivity. It is also significant that Foucault says he derives the term "archaeology" from Kant in response to criticisms of *The Order of Things*, establishing a connection between Foucault's archaeology and the philosophical archaeology that Kant proposes in the drafts for his late essay on the progress of metaphysics. Foucault's archaeology is concerned with the historical *a priori*, rather than the universal and necessary *a priori* principles Kant attributed to the philosophical history of philosophy, but Foucault's account of the historical *a priori* retains a conditional necessity that is crucial to the articulation of scientific knowledge. By denying the universality and necessity of the *a priori*, while at the same time affirming its significance as a condition of the order of knowledge that obtains in a particular historical moment, Foucault positions the historical *a priori* as a quasi-transcendental principle: one that conditions the order of knowledge, without being universal or necessary. He also manages to do, in his archaeology of the human sciences, what he claimed Kant did in his *Anthropology:* he returns the *a priori* to its "originary" temporal dimension, emphasizing its place in history and its role in the constitution of particular orders of knowledge, rather than all possible experience. And although he does not emphasize the Kantian sources of his conception of the historical *a priori* in *The Order of Things*, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, *Discipline and Punish*, or *The History of Sexuality*, the German philosophical tradition remains an important part of Foucault's thinking about history at the end of his life. This is apparent in his reflections on Kant's enlightenment essay, where he attributes to Kant the way of thinking about philosophy that Reinhold used to promote Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* during the Pantheism controversy. By rethinking philosophy as a reflection on the present and a critical attitude that provides a way out of contemporary problems, Foucault develops an alternative to the epistemic conceptions of the historical *a priori* he had employed in his earlier works.

The account I have proposed makes it unlikely that Foucault derived his conception of the historical *a priori* from Husserlian phenomenology or French epistemology. Given his hostility to phenomenology, it is improbable that Foucault took anything more from the phenomenological tradition than the name of the historical *a priori*. The suggestion that Husserl and Foucault were both trying to over-

come the problem "pure transcendentalism" is compelling, though it does not establish a strong connection between phenomenology and archaeology, because Husserl's and Foucault's responses to that problem are entirely different. While Husserl tries to preserve phenomenology as a form of transcendental philosophy, constituted by a transcendental subject that is essentially ahistorical, Foucault embraces historicism, treating even the *a priori* principles that order scientific knowledge as subject to historical transformation. Foucault's acknowledged respect for Bachelard and Canguilhem makes the epistemological tradition a more likely source for this conception of the historical *a priori*, especially if one regards works like *History of Madness*, *The Birth of Clinic*, and *The Order of Things* as contributions to the history and philosophy of science. Yet there can be little doubt that Foucault's concerns extend well beyond this discipline. Throughout his career, he was troubled by the relationship between history and transcendental philosophy. We do not know how he dealt with this problem in his *diplôme* thesis on Hegel, but his Introduction to Kant's *Anthropology* and *The Order of Things* make it very clear that Foucault thought that problems inherited from transcendental philosophy lay at the heart of the human sciences. These works also show that Foucault appropriated different aspects of Kant's transcendental philosophy for his conception of the historical *a priori*, which helped him undermine the claims of transcendental subjectivity, establish the conditional necessity of scientific knowledge within a historical period, and show how the order of scientific knowledge is subject to historical transformation.

Foucault's appropriations from the Kantian tradition are significant, because they allow his archaeology to compete with phenomenology at a level of philosophical generality that other approaches to the history of the science do not achieve. Instead of investigating the particular histories of particular sciences and revealing the contingent origins of all their elements, Foucault's archaeology traces the scientific knowledge of a historical period back to a small set of principles, which stand in a relation of conditional necessity to what follows from them. This approach owes much to Kant's drafts for his essay on the progress of metaphysics, which suggests that there are some *a priori* principles that make certain ways of thinking necessary, even if Foucault denies that those principles are universal and necessary in themselves. It also reflects Reinhold's insight into the contemporaneity of philosophical problems, which acknowledges their historical contingency as well as the urgency of finding solutions. Foucault's late reflections on Kant's enlightenment essay propose a very different set of solutions to these problems than

anything found in classical German philosophy, but they continue the historical turn that began with Kant and his immediate successors.[53]

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