

# Reading the Althusserian Axis of Foucault's Genealogical Antihumanism



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“Althusser performed a similar task when he elaborated his criticism of French Marxism, which was imbued with phenomenology and humanism and which made the theory of alienation, in a subjectivist key, into the theoretical basis for translating Marx's economic and political analyses into philosophical terms. Althusser reversed this point of view.”

“This condensed set of problems that I have summarily described - in which the history of science, phenomenology, and Marxism were to be identified - was absolutely central then: a great many problems were refracted there as in a lens. And I still recall the influence that Althusser himself had on me in that regard, who was slightly older than I but already a young professor.”<sup>1</sup>

In Foucault's writings from the mid-seventies, a concern emerges in which he attempts to answer the question: ‘How is the Modern subject constituted’? In the “Afterword” to Dreyfus and Rabinow's *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*,<sup>2</sup> Foucault states that the *central* concern of his writings all along has not been to develop a theory of power, but rather “to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects” (D&R, 208). Though this concern exists as early as *Madness and Civilization*, it takes a prominent role in his genealogical writings.

Several scholars emphasize the Nietzschean roots of Foucault's

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<sup>1</sup> R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito ed. and trans., *Remarks on Marx* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991, first published in Italy by Cooperativa editrice, 1981), 57, 160.

<sup>2</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, second Edition, 1983). Hereafter cited as D&R).

genealogical writings, in which subjectivity is viewed as an inward reaction to external forces.<sup>3</sup> The subject was fabricated through punitive practices and exercises of authority first and foremost to make individuals accountable for their actions, to sear memories into the "souls" of those punished, and to regulate the behavior of the herd by instilling rules for correct behavior in the forefront of the consciousness of the herd. Keith Ansell-Pearson holds that the Nietzschean reading of power and the subject described here enables Foucault to employ a Nietzschean conception of power for political purposes: "Above all, Foucault's Nietzschean understanding of power aims to combat the prevalent view in political thought which conceives of power exclusively in negative terms...Foucault argues that power is productive."<sup>4</sup> Foucault's appropriation of Nietzsche's conception of power applied to Modernity entails a reversal of the traditional enlightenment subject-power relation. Under an enlightenment conception, power is an effect of the subject's potency; under a genealogical conception, power produces the subject.

Though this reading suggests a plausible way of making sense of Foucault's writings from the seventies, I hold that the Nietzschean axis of Foucault's genealogical writings fits inside of an antihumanist, structural Marxist framework. Antihumanist historiography begins with the elimination of the category of the subject as the organizing principle of historical thought. Humanist histories, which Foucault directly confronts, reserve a central role for the subject in two ways: some treat the history of various social sciences (e.g. 'psychopathology') or certain concepts (e.g. 'madness') as the history of the unfolding truth of the latent metaphysical properties of the individual subject; others treat the history of thought itself as a subject which evolves in a determinable, progressive manner. Foucault's '*theoretical antihumanism*', a phrase borrowed from Louis Althusser's article "Marxism and Humanism,"<sup>5</sup> refers to his attempts to write histories of various social phenomena with-

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Michael Mahon, *Foucault's Nietzschean Genealogy: Truth, Power, and the Subject* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> Keith Ansell-Pearson, "The Significance of Michel Foucault's Reading of Nietzsche: Power, The Subject, and Political Theory," in *Nietzsche: A Critical Reader*, Peter R. Sedgwick, ed. (New York: Blackwell, 1995), 17.

<sup>5</sup> This article appears in Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, Ben Brewster trans. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970).

out reference to either of these conceptions of the subject as the theoretical basis of his writings.

I have argued elsewhere that in each of his major published works from *Madness and Civilization* to *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, Foucault finds novel ways to criticize humanism while he introduces new methods for comprehending the manner in which the apparent order of thought in various periods is constructed. The framework for reading Foucault's work which I propose treats his methodological shifts (from archeology to genealogy) as refined strategies to develop anti-essentialist approaches to the history of Western thought. In his work dating from the late sixties and beyond, Foucault reads the constitution of Modern subjectivity as a function of discursive practices. His genealogical antihumanist accounts of subjectivity begin with a combination of Nietzsche's and Althusser's antihumanist conceptions of history, with priority given to the latter. Here, I would like to offer some considerations for placing Foucault's writings from the seventies back into a structural Marxist framework.

Althusser uses the phrase "relative autonomy" to describe the relationship between institutional practices such as law, schooling, religious worship, etc., (often referred to as 'organic phenomena'<sup>6</sup> in the Hegelian-Marxist tradition) with the economic base of a given social formation. Foucault employs a similar framework in writing the histories of social practices-forms of discipline, treatments of sexuality, etc. which emerged in the capitalist West. *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* both target new forms of social control whose 'origins' can be traced to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which (not coincidentally) is the period of rapid colonial and industrial expansion in Western societies. The techniques found in the discursive practices centered on punishment (DP) and sexuality (HS) are thought through, refined, and applied in a host of 'superstructural' institutions such as prisons, schools, churches, hospitals - all of which underwent rapid changes and development in the nineteenth century. The power established and exercised through disciplinary practices in these institutions is not reducible to, or inevitable from, the laws of capi-

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<sup>6</sup> See Isaiah Berlin's chapters on the "The Philosophy of the Spirit," and "Young Hegelians" in *Karl Marx* (Oxford UP, 1963).

talism. That is to say, the laws of supply and demand, the division of classes, the profit motive, etc., do not necessarily impart a given form that institutions must embody; reading the specific forms institutions take does not consist in reading the economic elements present in them. A science of history is necessary as a tool to analyze the specificity of these practices - the specific modes by which subjects are produced through these practices, and the specific links these practices have to production. For both Althusser and Foucault, the histories of organic phenomena which center on the subject also center on the bourgeois problematic of individualism and essentialism. For humanist historians, 'organic phenomena' are interrelated because they express an underlying, unchanging unity.

In Foucault's antihumanist historiography, informed by Althusser's structural Marxism, the historical development of institutions is specific or "local;" however, the specific functions these institutions perform cannot be understood apart from their relation to quite general economic practices. This implies that discursive practices such as the institutionalization of imprisonment as a new mode of punishment have a unique historical development even though they tie into general modes of economic exploitation.

This does not suggest that Foucault attempts to reduce 'organic phenomena', or sets of social practices, to an underlying economic structure. Instead, Foucault reads the economic element present in practices such as imprisonment, internment, schooling, etc. through the *utilitarian rationality* which permeates these practices. Thus, he analyzes specific discursive practices in which power is exercised and subjects are produced at a local level in a relatively specific manner, while showing that these practices are linked in a general way to an economic rationality. In *Discipline and Punish*, for instance, Foucault claims that the reforms in penal tactics instituted at the beginning of the nineteenth century were grounded in, and justified according to their ability to make the distribution of power more cost effective.<sup>7</sup> Discursive practices which center on forms of punishment and sexuality each have their own historical trajectory and specificity, yet within each one finds

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<sup>7</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan trans. (New York, Vintage Books, 1979), 78-82.

economistic rationalities which tie these practices into larger economic and political practices. Thus, these specific practices are colonized easily by economic practices. The model of prison discipline, and the reasons given for it, were soon taken up in a host of institutions by the mid-nineteenth century.

Foucault's articulation of the general elements present in local discursive practices open them up for critical commentary, reflection, and radical intervention. By locating the plastic economic rationalities present in the rationality of local practices, Foucault draws an epistemological link between institutions and the economy; thus, his specific insights into the rationality of local regimes of power also tie into the rationality of larger exercises of power and domination. These insights constitute the critical aspect of Foucault's genealogical work.

Foucault is not strictly a structural Marxist. At the genealogical stage of his writings, Foucault's claims to write "the history of 'truth,'"<sup>8</sup> an historiographical method borrowed from Nietzsche. On a parallel with Nietzsche's conception of the will to truth, Foucault claims that a discursive practice can be viewed as "an anonymous and polymorphous will to knowledge, capable of regular transformations and caught up in an identifiable play of dependence."<sup>9</sup> However, discursive practices are not simply "anonymous and polymorphous" social practices. If they were, there would be no normative, critical element present in Foucault's genealogies, as Nancy Fraser<sup>10</sup> has suggested. However, discursive practices are also ensared in a "play of dependence" with both institutional and economic practices.

Foucault adopts his Nietzschean conception of the will to truth as a way of analyzing the manner in which disciplinary practices define, and operate through an interior fabric of the subject which they themselves construct. He looks upon disciplinary practices in the Modern period

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, "Truth and Power" in the *Power/Knowledge* anthology (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), or "The Subject, Knowledge, and the 'History of Truth'" in *Remarks on Marx*, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth (Volume I of The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984)*, Paul Rabinow ed. (New York: The New Press, 1997), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Society* (University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

as practices which engage claims about the 'truth' of the subject as a means of exercising power through the subject. 'Truth' is a legitimizing technique which a new class of professional administrators - doctors, prison wardens, psychoanalysts, criminal experts, etc. - deploy as a means of "objectifying" the subjects of disciplinary training; 'truth' is also deployed as a means of securing professional authority, whereby institutional administrators bolster their authority to act upon the 'truth' of human subjects; finally, 'truth' is an effective means for making disciplinary practices take hold in the disciplinary subject.

'Truth' is never idle - it always functions as a means of exercising power. As disciplinary training infiltrated a host of institutions and practices by the mid- nineteenth century, it served the economic function of normalizing the population. The functional role that discursive practices play in the industrial economy has to be read specifically to the extent the "subjectivizing techniques" employed in a practice such as medicine differ from those employed by other educational or punitive practices; nevertheless, each of these practices is legitimated because of its cost/effectiveness, its ability to penetrate the interior of individuals, define them, and organize their behavior.

In an essay which precedes *Discipline and Punish* by a few years entitled "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," (1970)<sup>11</sup> Althusser discusses the role that cultural institutions (ISAs) play in advanced industrial societies. These apparatuses, which function in the realm that traditional Marxists label the "superstructure," are comprised of both institutional and what Foucault would later call "discursive" elements, or rationalities. In the essay, Althusser speaks of the 'topographical metaphor', or the 'metaphor of the house' often used in the Marxist classics (Engels, Lenin, Kautsky, etc.). This metaphor is a theoretical device used as a starting point for analyzing the functional role the ISAs play. The 'house' consists in three storeys - the first storey represents the economic base of a society (consisting in both materials used to produce goods, or "the forces of production"; and the specific form of class or-

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<sup>11</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, B.R. Brewster, trans. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971). This essay was written in 1969 and was subtitled "Notes toward an investigation." It was first published in *La Pensée* in 1970. (Hereafter ISA).

ganization, or "the relations of production"). The second storey represents the state apparatus, consisting in political and legal institutions, military organizations, and police, which act as a 'shield' around the economic base. The third storey is occupied by the ISAs, which function to reproduce the ideology of the ruling class. (ISA, 134-140)

Althusser claims that the 'topographical metaphor' offers the substance for the development of a descriptive theory of advanced industrial societies based on the principle of reproduction. The notion of reproduction refers to the classical economic concept pointing out a corporate entity's need for re-investment in its infrastructure for long term survival in the marketplace (ISA, 126-128). Althusser holds that the reproduction of the material conditions of production by themselves is not sufficient for capitalists to survive in the long run. A second form of reproduction is also necessary, involving an investment in 'labour power'. This form generally takes place at the superstructural (cultural) level through various types of ideological training. In late Medieval societies, the Church played a dominant role in maintaining feudal class relations through its rituals involving obedience and submission to a hierarchy of authority; in Western capitalist societies, the school ISA has become the dominant apparatus for producing individuals as economic subjects by instilling moral codes, nationalist fervor, and class-role preparation. Class relations, the division between white collar and blue collar labor, are first reproduced in the setting of the school. A number of other 'regimes' for making school children more efficient workers are also reproduced in the school.

Throughout the past 150 years, the educational apparatus has gained a central place among cultural institutions as a means of creating a disciplined population which conforms to basic cultural codes and regulations, which themselves are shaped and demanded by economic practices. In school, children learn a number of 'techniques' (the three R's) which make them useful members of the labor force, while they also learn how to be docile, punctual, polite and orderly. (ISA, 132)

Althusser maintains that each 'element' in the superstructure - whether it be the church, school, family, forms of leisure, etc. - has a specific "index of effectivity" which can be determined only through historical analysis. That is, the manner in which the ideology of the ruling class is instilled and reproduced can vary greatly between societies, depending on which rules and which techniques tend to be the most

effective at meeting the industrial base's demands. Often a complex mixture of elements operates. In any case, the laws of capitalism (supply and demand, the profit motive, etc.) do not predict the manner in which class relations are maintained. That story can be told only through a historical analysis.

In several cases ISAs can combine (eg. family-school-education) in a specific way. Again, the description of these combinations are only available to historical analysis, because the fusion of a series of cultural practices is never predictable from a prior set of laws. The specific formation of ideological apparatuses is not foreseeable from purely economic considerations, largely because the ISAs develop out of *ad hoc* responses to social conditions, and also because they can develop a life of their own, a "relative autonomy," largely, but not absolutely independent of economic relations. One last important point is that the ISAs have a "reciprocal action" on the economic base. Technological education, for instance, has the economic effect of increasing worker productivity. The reciprocal action of cultural elements is also historically and culturally variable. Thus, on Althusser's reading of Marxist theory, a science of history is necessary as a means of spelling out the functions that cultural practices ('organic phenomena') have on economic practices, and vice versa. In imperialist Western societies, education serves as an important tool for the advancement of technological industry; moreover, as a labor force of technologists is called upon, the reproduction of technological skills on a mass scale can be used as a means of diminishing labor costs. The relationship between educational practices and economic practices is thus bidirectional, or reciprocal.

Althusser calls the way individuals are conditioned to accept and adapt to ideological training "interpellation." Interpellation refers to the manner in which individuals are created as subjects (i.e. subjects of the law; responsible moral agents; legal subjects; etc.) through ideological training: "I shall say that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects from among individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation*..." (ISA, 174). In advanced industrial societies, interpellation works through techniques of control which so thoroughly permeate the culture that they are rarely called into question. These techniques are effective on a



general scale because they mask the power relations which they function to both establish and reproduce: "ideology never says, 'I am ideological'" (ISA, 175).

The structural Marxist framework for reading the functions of ideology is not the same as the critical theorist, or "para-Marxist" framework. For several para-Marxist authors, a hard and fast distinction is made between truth and ideology. Herbert Marcuse, in *One Dimensional Man*, discusses the creation of false needs among the consumer class in advanced industrial societies as a method for eliminating any possibilities for criticism.<sup>12</sup> Consumerism is a disguised tactic for gaining the consent of the masses by operating on desire and clouding reason. Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, finds functional accounts of ideology based on a repressive model akin to Marcuse's troubling; what is troubling with repressive models of ideology is that they presuppose an enlightenment model of the subject as a natural given. A conception of the truth of the humanity of subjects operates behind such views - a humanity which is distorted through industrial exploitation and kept from expressing itself. Capitalist ideology masks the exploitive, domineering nature of capital. In the Althusserian tradition, ideology functions to produce individuals as subjects. A subject cannot be acted upon by ideology, as Marcuse's model suggests, because the subject qua subject does not precede ideological training. In other words, ideology produces individuals as subjects.

Foucault rejects the critical theorist's conception of ideology because it fails to account for the "subjectivizing" functions of power, or interpellation. Fundamental to Foucault's antihumanism is the notion that the subject is produced by Modern disciplinary practices. Thus, Foucault attempts to rid himself of discussions centering on ideology, which makes it appear as though he abandoned the structural Marxist framework as well as the critical theorist one. However, Foucault's deviation from the framework offered by Althusser's theoretical antihumanism is minor, consisting in his replacement of the critique of ideologies with the analysis of 'truth regimes'. Instead of searching for the ideological functions that discursive practices serve, Foucault researches the "regimes of truth" which are integral to these practices. Foucault holds to

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<sup>12</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

his antihumanist principles by locating truth outside of subjects, in discursive practices. The phrase "regimes of truth" refers to the manner in which discursive 'truths' concerning the nature of the subject take hold in society in such a manner that they are taken to be natural truths. Regimes of truth establish relationships between disciplinary subjects who are a source of knowledge, and professional organizations which possess the knowledge of subjects.

In the interview "Truth and Power" (1977)<sup>13</sup> from the *Power/Knowledge* anthology, Foucault speaks of a "battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays" (TP, 132). Foucault claims that a link between truth and power should be researched instead of searching for a ground for the distinction between truth and ideology. Along these lines, he offers a few "suggestions to be further tested and evaluated" (TP, 133). The first suggestion has to do with the role that truth plays within the "economy" of discourse: "'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements" (TP, 133). The terms "production...distribution," etc., themselves suggest that discursive practices operate through an economic epistemological structure. The second "suggestion" has to do with the relationship between 'truth' and power in Modern societies, which is one of the essential relationships his genealogies set out to describe: "'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth. This regime *is not merely ideological or superstructural; it was a condition for the formation and development of capitalism* [my italics]" (133). As this statement indicates, truth regimes have a reciprocal action on economic relations. Insofar as 'truth' is a function of discourse which selects among speaking subjects and defines individuals, 'truth'-relations are essential to the manner in which discursive practices exercise power. The prison model became effected because it was centered on a set of truths concerning the criminal - namely, the criminal disposition - which could only be seen by scientists, administrators, and professionals. An effect of these practices is that disciplinary subjects internalized their 'truth'.

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<sup>13</sup> Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *Power/Knowledge*, op. cit. (Hereafter referred to as TP).

“Regimes of truth” are central to the development and effective deployment of disciplinary practices. The disciplines require “regimes of truth” in order to achieve the effect of subjectification. Three examples of these technologies are confinement, the confessional, and examination procedures. Through the practice of confinement, the “truth” of the madman was sought; this practice later became central to psychopathology and criminology. In what Foucault calls “confessional” practices, such as those found in psychoanalysis, the “truth” of the subject under analysis, which is actually possessed by certified analysts who are members of the psychiatric community, drives the activity. In the “examination” procedures carried out in nineteenth century prisons, the “truth” that was demanded of the prisoner was thought to be linked to the prisoner’s disposition, or “dangerous” tendencies,<sup>14</sup> rather than to specific acts s/he committed. Not only do truth regimes function to define and limit individuals, they shape the manner in which doctors, judges, teachers, etc., perceive individuals, are certified and authorized, and conduct research. Regimes of truth thus not only limit subjects, but they factor into the manner in which subjects are produced.

Another difference Foucault establishes from Althusser is that he does not insist on preserving elements from the “topographical metaphor,” or the base-superstructure model of the social whole. Though Althusser tried to abandon the deterministic implications of this model, he nevertheless held the economic sphere as the dominant sphere which shapes all other social relations. Thus, Althusser views all social relations as being economic “in the last instance,” a formulation which does not effectively displace the base-superstructure model. For Foucault, the economic sphere overdetermines disciplinary practices *primarily through discourse*. The ‘regimes of truth’ Foucault examines infiltrate all levels of the social structure without giving priority to any social relation.

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<sup>14</sup> In a lecture given at York University in 1978 entitled “The Dangerous Individual,” in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, Lawrence Kritzman, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1988), Foucault claims that the ‘dangerous individual’ is not a personality which represents a threat to public security. The dangerous individual arose from the conjunction of practices: penology, psychiatry, and political economy - through methods of risk assessment. The dangerous individual is a criminal subject in terms of the risk he presents to society; thus it is not the specific acts he commits, but the threats his illness disposes him to that justifies intervention from institutional authorities.

The treatment of disciplinary practices as “truth regimes” has a sharper critical aspect from a Marxian perspective than a treatment of them as “ideological apparatuses” does. The “truths” of discourses on sexuality, imprisonment, etc. gain a power over individuals through their purported self-evidence. The ‘truths’ of penology, criminal anthropology, psychology, etc., not only reflect, but they create forms of docility. The deployment of truth is cost/efficient to the extent that disciplinary subjects begin to discipline themselves as they begin to internalize their ‘truth’. As these truths are institutionalized, the repetition of disciplinary forms takes hold across the social whole in a manner which largely escapes critical examination. Thus, in addition to its discursive aspect, the ‘truth’ of disciplinary training has a general, effective role in shaping Modern subjects as economic subjects.

Criticism of discursive practices begins with the history of their uses, their deployment, their institutionality, and their indispensability to economic practices. Foucault, like Gramsci, holds that the function of intellectuals in advanced industrial societies consists mainly in doing the necessary research to unmask the economic relations embedded in cultural practices. Nietzsche was concerned with casting off the schemes of reason, language, etc. which inhibited his individuality; Foucault, when read through the lens of structural Marxism, is concerned with casting off the forms of individuality which defeat social development.

In closing, I shall sketch out a few key points which can be extracted from Althusser’s work for the sake of clarifying Foucault’s genealogical antihumanism:

1. *The ideological function of the ISAs:* Whereas the state apparatus (again, consisting of a political administration, courts, military, and police) functions largely through violence and repression to secure market shares, and to secure the material interests of the ruling class, the ISAs function in common institutions, most of which lie outside of the state’s control. The ISAs are subtle, yet creative forms of class reproduction, because they consist in a base of cultural forms which shape the daily lives of individuals. Foucault, in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, utilizes a similar notion in criticizing the “repressive hypothesis” of the discourse on sexuality, and the “juridical conception” of society. A juridical conception focuses on a nature-mystification/repression model. Foucault holds that power may restrict individuals but only after it produces individuals as subjects. Discursive practices cen-

tered on the "self" - criminology, sexuality, etc. function first of all by creating modes of subjectivity which appear to be readings of the true nature of the subject only because they define the subject in advance.

2. *Nominalism*: The ISAs are "historically specific," and "relatively autonomous" - which is to say that neither their logic nor their development is reducible to a core essence or substance. Again, in writing his genealogical histories, Foucault sees it as a necessary first step to specify his domain, and seeking the kinds of rationality specific to each of the disciplines he analyzes before he looks at the applications a given disciplinary rationality might take on. Specific discursive practices nevertheless contain general elements. Imprisonment was justified as a means of punishment because of its cost/effectiveness, and sexuality became a concern in relation to a statistical conception of a population control.

3. *Structural causality*: Not only do economic relationships bear on the development of the ISAs, but quite often there is what Althusser calls a "reciprocal action" of the ISAs on economic relations. By looking at a social formation as a series of autonomous elements which interact and effect one another, Althusser seeks to avoid the kind of reductionism implicit in the economic determinist reading of Marx. Using an antihumanist conception, he sees the social formation as a complex, "decentered whole." Foucault utilizes what he calls an "ascending analysis"<sup>15</sup> of disciplinary practices to examine the manner in which specific techniques which are developed in specific disciplines are taken up in a number of different applications, achieving a level of generality. Foucault arrives at a general analysis by looking upon the production of discourse as a kind of practice.

4. *The principle of overdetermination*: Even though the ISAs achieve a "relative autonomy" from economic determination, they nevertheless produce economic effects. According to Althusser, all social practices are economic practices "in the last instance." Though Althusser shies

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<sup>15</sup> In "Two Lectures," from the *Power/Knowledge* anthology, Foucault claims: "One must rather conduct an ascending analysis of power, starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been - and continue to be - invested, colonized, utilized . . . by ever more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination."

away from this language in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," it is still the case that the ISAs serve economic functions. In Foucault's case, each discipline is an 'economic practice' in a specific sense. The effects of certain disciplinary techniques, such as imprisonment, are conceptualized in an utilitarian/economistic manner to the extent that the rationality of prisons centers on techniques to produce the maximal effects of imprisonment across society as a whole in relation to a minimal set of the costs of imprisonment. Moreover, punishments are meted out like currencies in the Modern period. Each crime is considered to have a quantifiable value which must be paid back in kind through punitive procedures, lending the rationality of the practice of imprisonment a certain economic self-evidence. Finally, imprisonment was viewed in the early nineteenth century as a means of correcting the flaws in the working class, and returning those capable of producing back into the labor force through moral training and a 'rehabilitation' model. Thus, in a slightly different sense, Foucault conceptualizes the rationalities of punishment as being "overdetermined" by a utilitarian/economistic rationality which underwrites the logic of most disciplinary practices, a point which John O'Neill notes in his article "The Disciplinary Society: From Weber to Foucault": "We might speak of the social sciences as strategies of power designed to minimize the cost of power, to maximize its coverage and to link 'economic' power with the educational, military, industrial, penal and medical institutions within which the docility and utility of populations can be maximized."<sup>16</sup>

Nietzsche's conception of 'truth' as a function of scientific activity fits neatly into a structural Marxist package, because it enables one to preserve the critical elements of a theoretical antihumanist approach to history by allowing one to discard the truth/ideology distinction in favor of a truth/power relation. However, the critical aims of Nietzschean genealogy are rather elitist and suspicious. Commentators like Charles Taylor,<sup>17</sup> who read Foucault as a new kind of Nietzschean, considers Foucault's antihumanist approach to be politically conserva-

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<sup>16</sup> John O'Neill, "The Disciplinary Society from Weber to Foucault," in *Critical thought Series 2; Michel Foucault* Peter Burke, ed. (Cambridge UP: Scholar Press, 1992) 168. Originally published in *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. xxxvii, 42-60.

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, Charles. "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," in David C Hoy, ed. *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

tive because it removes the critical function of reason. If we focus on the Althusserian aspects of Foucault's genealogies, however, we can avoid criticisms of this variety and read his works as ways of penetrating the economic rationalities found in particular discursive practices. By specifying the relationship between specific disciplinary 'regimes' and the larger nexus of social relations, we can define new fronts for effective political action. ↪