The Social Significance of Michel Foucault’s Dialectical Negations

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For here is the chief and most confounding objection to excessive skepticism, that no durable good can ever result from it; while it remains in its full force and vigour.

David Hume
An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding

Introduction

I am going to speak here of the dialectical thought manifest in the work of Michel Foucault. I am aware that labeling Foucault a dialectical thinker appears quite curious and I have no doubt that Foucault himself would not be at all pleased with this designation. After all, he states quite clearly in his discussion of what is to be our attitude toward the Enlightenment:

...one has to refuse everything that might present itself in the form of a simplistic and authoritarian alternative...And we do not break free of this blackmail by introducing “dialectical” nuances while seeking to determine what good and bad elements there may have been...¹

Dialectical thinking does not, he believes, get us out of the difficulty of having to understand our historical and social frameworks as determinative factors in our philosophizing itself. Resorting to dialectics simply evades but does not address the issue at hand. But whereas Foucault refuses to be enticed by the both/and alternative that certain dialectical projects employ, I will maintain that his own critical project often opts for an analysis that utilizes what I would term a

dialectical negation, a type of 'neither/nor,' in which both aspects of given determinations are, in the final analysis, negative moments which resist critical evaluation and refuse critical praxis. Because the dialectic stops at this negation, it remains closed and incomplete, unable to resolve itself. It must therefore, either deny itself completely or fall back (quite unwillingly) into its positive moments.

But what exactly do I mean by dialectics here? For the purposes of this analysis, I am referring most specifically to the dialectic of the *Verstand* (understanding) in which the 'object' falls apart into contradictory determinations which nevertheless are united in the 'object': "...in the assertion of two opposed propositions about the same object; [finding], moreover, that each of the propositions must be affirmed with equal necessity." What I hope to reveal is that Foucault's use of dialectical thinking determines each of the moments as negative formulations without overcoming (sublating) either of them, and that these moments must ultimately deny their occupation in any independent "object," but must rather constitute their object in totalizing negativity. This feature generates two outcomes: (1) it makes Foucault's use of dialectic a purely assertive verbal gesture and thus renders it ineffective and, (2) it makes normative social critique an impossible outcome of his genealogy, revealing his rhetorical practice of such critique to be self-contradictory.

I will examine specifically Foucault's writings in *Discipline and Punish*, because I believe that this dialectical opposition is particularly visible in the complex interplay between the elements of the contemporary power regime: knowledge/truth/discipline/ punishment/power that are presented in this work. I do not intend this analysis to be a 'polemic' against Foucault in the detrimental sense which he quite rightly opposes in his interview with Paul Rabinow. (FR, 382-3) I sincerely hope to shed light on the intricacies and validity of his analysis of modern power structures, but I cannot in good faith, in my sincere dialogue with the text, follow his project to its inevitable conclusions. Or, rather, I wish to go further than Foucault will allow. Perhaps the


analysis offered here will reveal that the project of critical thinking has been neither completed nor overcome and that, if we are to continue social critique in the future, we will need to discover adequate ways of discussing the types of changes incurred in and by the social body and the individuals that comprise it that will allow for a real discourse of liberation. It is precisely because Foucault’s critique rings so true that I want us to address what I believe is the ultimate problematic it raises: the possibility of consciousness of oppression which can allow us to move beyond it. Therefore, in the following analysis the critical moment will, I hope, arise precisely from an honest, open, and rational dialogue with the text.

This critical moment will be unfolded as follows: the dialectical moments of Foucault’s analysis will be highlighted by textual examples; each of these opposing dialectical moments will be exhibited as negations; Foucault’s “critique” will be discussed and revealed to be problematic; finally, I will evaluate whether such critique can be socially or politically efficacious.

The Dialectic of Discipline

The various local disciplinary practices which Foucault discusses in *Discipline and Punish*: those occurring in the army, hospital, school, prison, etc., utilize the “means of correct training”: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgements, and examination to constitute certain kinds of individuals in and as their power structures. The disciplines are themselves ‘architectural’ (positively constructive) in that they define a local space (the range of normal behaviors) in which to construct the social body within that space by means of comparison, differentiation, quantitative measurement, conformity to values, and exclusion of difference. (DP, 170-95). When necessary, the maintenance of this order is enforced by various direct and indirect forms of punishment. The individuals who (or which) are the building blocks of this meticulous, fussy architecture are constituted and constructed by these practices. This reveals a large scale dialectic of the individual and collectivity of constructive power.

These mechanisms can only be seen as unimportant if one forgets the role of this instrumentation, minor but flawless, in the progres-
sive objectification and ever more subtle partitioning of individual behavior. (DP, 173)

The examination as the fixing, at once ritual and "scientific," of individual differences, as the pinning down of each individual in his own particularity ... clearly indicates the appearance of a new modality of power in which each individual receives as his status his own individuality, and in which he is linked by his status to the features, the measurements, the gaps, the "marks" that characterize him and make him a "case." (DP, 192)

Out of this creation of absolutely specified heterogeneity, this calculated multiplicity, arises a homogeneous social normalization (ref. DP, 173). "In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes..." (DP, 184). Hence, the members of this body are at one and the same time, multiple and single, heterogeneous and homogeneous, distinct and indistinct, and their functions as one determination support their functions as the other. This is not just an opposition, therefore, but a unity of differences.

Disciplinary power also functions to form a docile body, but again we encounter an interesting interplay of contradictions in this production. In order for the individual to be actively useful in and for the power network it is necessary to render her/him passively docile.

The historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, or at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely. (DP, 137-8)

Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, "docile" bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). (DP, 138)

In such a process the active body is pacified (made docile) to become the productive (active) cog (passive) in the mechanism of power, or, in the case of knowledge production, the 'soul' is constituted as a case-file: the individual's factual identity is produced as a quasi-fictional account and source of knowledge which imprints that identity. Each
of these contradictory forms produces and re-produces the disciplined individual. The moments necessarily feed into one another, each constituting the other.

Because of the manner in which these individuals serve to constitute the social body, they discipline both themselves and others. Thus it is not just the practiced individuals who are caught in contradictory formations. The methods themselves also exhibit a dialectical nature. Given that the external discipline is internalized in the individual constituted by the disciplines, power is able to operate not only from the top-down, but also from the bottom-up; the gaze is both outside and inside simultaneously; the discipline is in this way both direct and indirect, both violent and coercive. The knowledge which constitutes the case-files of school children, prisoners, and patients imposes an ignorance of its own function and position. As such, disciplinary power is

...both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert, since by its very principle it leaves no zone of shade and constantly supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising; and absolutely “discreet,” for it functions permanently and largely in silence. (DP, 177)

The prison system itself, which is a failure in its re-habilitative role, is an absolute success in its role as constituting a power regime (Ref, DP, 257-292). The list of these kinds of opposed, contradictory moments which at the same time support and re-create each other is practically endless. This dialectic is thoroughgoing. And this is precisely what allows Foucault to claim that these disciplinary forms constitute a new historical modality of the operations of power. What was once merely direct, violent, top-down control has, by virtue of this new social and psycological “architecture” been modified such that it infiltrates more completely, cutting always two ways at once, entering through every possible door, infecting each social individual such that we all become carriers for this social disease. It is not surprising then that we can locate no “other,” no “outside” here.

Finally, there is a large-scale dialectic occurring in this text. On the one hand, Foucault uncovers particular, differentiated local mechanisms of power but these mechanisms themselves, although operating in specific modalities, mesh together into a general (one would be
tempted to say, universal) social/political web of power relations. The specific practices are the content of a large general form; power is both specific and general, particular and universal.

However, what is important to note in the nature of these moments is that they are both, in all cases, negative formulations. It is not as though an original, individual subject is re-constructed by a disciplinary mechanism; it is rather that a pre-constituted ‘subject’ is caught even deeper in the web of power that, in its circulation through the opposed moments, will continuously reproduce that very constitution and in so doing will invariably strengthen and extend the influence of its ‘positive’ production. It is not as though the un-practiced body is transformed into a utilizable mechanical element; but that the power-constituted body is itself utilizable and as such its docility/utility is endlessly re-produced.

...let there be no misunderstanding: it is not that a real man, the object of knowledge, philosophical reflection, or technical intervention, has been substituted for the soul, the illusion of the theologians. The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already himself the effect of a subjugation much more profound than himself. A “soul” inhabits him and brings him into existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. (DP, 30)

All elements are entangled in webs of local power — there is no ‘original’ subject, no un-practiced body, no independent soul. “In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth.” (DP, 194)

Likewise, the dialectical moments of the methods are negative. Power is constructive of the irreducible normalized individual whether it is operative from the top-down or the bottom-up. The gaze objectifies, fixes, and mobilizes from both the outside and the inside. Discipline is effective directly and indirectly; punishment functional in both its subjugating and coercive modes. The local knowledge and ignorance which pass as ‘truth’ automatically reproduce their specific norms, rules and power arrangements. As a result, both the specific and general formulations of the power regime are negatively self-enclosed. One has no access to the structures themselves. They are self-perpetuating, interlocking, and utterly insidious. We cannot use
one to escape the other. On both sides of all these split, inconsistent determinations of the individuals, the techniques, and the structures we find essentially the same power regime — wherever we turn we are confronted with another negative alternative — it is a lose/lose situation.

We might like to take recourse in humanistic conceptions of freedom, liberty, or equality as positive moments, but we find that these too have been adopted into negative determinations of the Foucaultian power structure, wherein their function is purely one of mystification. There is another entire series of conflicting moments in which these lofty ideals become masks for the operation of disciplinary power. The agreed upon social contract is a cover for the coercive control of disciplines; an egalitarian legal system masks asymmetrical penal disciplines (Ref. DP, 223-4), an humanitarian ideal serves only to hide stilling objectification and manipulation. Ideology becomes a relatively meaningless term here, for what would we be comparing it against? As there is no “original” subject outside of discipline, so there is not ‘original’ discourse outside of discipline.

Historians of ideas usually attribute the dream of a perfect society to the philosophers and jurists of the eighteenth century; but there was also a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to general will but to automatic docility. (DP, 169)

On Foucault’s model, education and treatment are only corrective punishment, objective knowledge is really normalizing labelling, moral ideals are imposed normative judgements, liberating discourse is productive of disciplinary, medical, familial, and sexual standards. Again, one could continue this list almost indefinitely. The point is, that where we would like to be able to begin discussing positive alternatives, they have all been transformed into configurations so alien to our original idea that we can no longer put them to any critical or constructive use. They are only myths and illusions constructed by the power structure. Any attempt to call upon such ‘ideals’ would just be another smoke-screen for power. All good intentions here go for naught.
The Dialectical Dilemma

This is, of course, Foucault's point precisely. There is no "outside" to power. But then, if it is indeed true that all the contradictory dialectical moments in Foucault's analysis are negative moments, we find ourselves in a bit of a quandary. We must ask ourselves if, formulated as such, they are really contradictory at all? Certainly they display themselves as verbal contraries, but it appears that they are mutually supportive in such a pervasive manner that their contradiction falls by the wayside and they become just moments of the same negative discipline. If this is the case, can we really speak of them as "negative" at all, given that there is no alternative position? In other words, this may not be dialectic at all, and there may be no negation at all; and here I believe that Foucault could be relieved of the burden which I foisted on to him at the beginning of my analysis. But then, another question arises: Why does Foucault repeatedly draw our attention in his texts to these diametrically opposed formulations? Each avenue of possible exit, we are repeatedly told, is blocked. Our social heterogeneity and social homogeneity, our differences and samenesses, subjective activity and subjective docility, internal dialogue and external dialogue, self motivation and external motivation, direct and indirect means of control, subjective construction and objectivization, etc., all are functions of power. All, therefore, reduce to one. So where then lies their difference? Where lies their dialectical destruction? But why then, if there is no genuine positive moment in contrast to which these formulations could even be negative, does Foucault's rhetorical presentation so often sound like critique? Take, for example the following passages:

"..."confinement" conceals both a metaphysics of government and a politics of religion; it is situated, as an effort of tyrannical synthesis in the vast space separating the garden of God and the cities which men, driven from paradise, have built with their own hands. (FR, 139)

...the body becomes a useful force only if it is a productive body and a subjected body. This subjection is not only obtained by the instruments of violence or ideology; it can also be direct, physical, pitting of force against force, bearing on material elements, and yet without involving violence; it may be calculated, organized; it may be subtle,
make use neither of weapons not of terror and yet remain of a physical order. (FR, 173)

One cannot read such passages (or myriad others) without recognizing the very blatant critical stance adopted in them. However, given the situation caused by the negative dialectic, in which there is no possible alternate formulation to the moments, Foucault has no logical position from which to produce such critique. If the power structure is as complete and closed as it appears to be, he leaves himself no stance from which to develop this condemnatory rhetoric - no 'right' to opposition. Therefore, in order to be self-consistent, Foucault must do away both with the attention he pays to the apparent semantic 'contradictions' contained in these power regimes, and with the negative rhetoric. In other words, the negative dialectic which he produces must, ultimately, according to the conclusions of his own project, be summarily denied. "And so Foucault's radical abolitionism, if it is serious, is not anarchist so much as nihilist." The dialectical moments, true to form, must collapse in upon each other and, in their Foucaultian negativity, pull into themselves any potency and purpose which the genealogy may have had. The good news for Foucault is that his own position must be, in the final analysis, power-less.

But this result produces some startling internal inconsistencies in the entire project. How, we may ask, if the web of power is so complete, so negative, so closed, can Foucault himself, being a member of this contemporary structure, even begin to witness this structure and its practices outside its potent masks and norms? The answer is supposed to lie in the genealogical method itself - that by tracing the origins of this form of power we are supposed to be able to view this particular power regime. But the totalizing nature of the regime revealed by the genealogy seems itself to deny the very possibility of an 'honest' genealogy. And again, as indicated earlier, it certainly excludes the possibility of passing judgement, even on one's own local situation. It appears that we have no where to come from, and no where to go.

I am reminded at this point of Sartre’s description in The Family Idiot of the “Knights of Nothingness,” those who, like Gustave Flaubert, attempted to practice “art of art’s sake.” These artists, he says, attempted to flee from the existing reality by retreating into pure negativity. They tried to opt out of reality but in so doing actually ended up opting, through their own self-negation, for the absolute triumph of reality.

The purpose of the work of art, according to them, is to manifest the inconceivable. Nothingness is not only the disintegration of the totality into molecules whose movements are governed from the outside by laws of exteriority; it is at the same time the condemnation of mechanism in the name of that impossible totality. Thesis, in effect, would be merely the application of bourgeois thought to the mendacious syntheses of history and religion. But if antithesis were re-formulated and now defined as mechanism itself as nothingness (a nothing without unity) even while destroying it, the writer would attempt to retain in himself that arrested double movement and present it as the world’s negation of itself.

...the woolgatherer who chose his own failure, and on that basis the failure of the imaginary, does not comprehend that he opted, in fact, for the triumph of reality.5

I sincerely want to take Foucault’s texts seriously, because I believe that there is (dare I say) “truth” in what he has revealed about contemporary social, political, economic existence. But when I earnestly confront the material, when I do rationally put all the pieces of his genealogy into a whole, when I do openly dialogue with the texts, I repeatedly run headlong into this wall of contradictions which I cannot, for all my efforts, seem to circumvent. If I pay strict attention to the critical function, I cannot see how the totalizing effect of power is to be justified; whereas, if I focus upon the thoroughgoing normalization, I cannot see how the critique is possible. It looks like another ‘no win’ situation. Perhaps this is Foucault’s aim — “loser wins”.6 Perhaps


6Sartre, Family Idiot. This phrase, says Sartre, summarized Flaubert’s ultimate affirmation.
he intends to throw us into this full contradiction in order to invoke a desperate motivation to extricate ourselves from it. If this is his intention, it is certainly most subtle and the search for any liberating alternatives, which such a design would seem to demand, is most assuredly not satisfied in his texts, where such alternatives are summarily denied. I find this suggestion possible, but highly improbable in that it would lead us to ask what motivation Foucault could possibly have for disguising his project in this manner?

In addition to the internal inconsistencies however, there are, I believe, even more devastating external implications. The questions that arise for the social agent as a direct result of taking Foucault's enterprise to heart are overwhelming. How am I to know what to do? How am I to know whether my action will produce positive or negative results? How am I to judge the actions of others? How am I to determine misuses of power or identify those who are responsible and answerable for them? How am I to know whether I am motivated by "false-consciousness" when I cannot determine whether my alleged "good-conscience" is not just an ideological product of my normalization? How am I even then to call it "ideological"? It seems quite clear that the overpowering difficulty of determining any viable answers to these questions could freeze the most concerned moral/political agent in inactivity indefinitely. In fact it will most severely freeze those with the greatest social concern. At very least, we are forced to conclude that Foucault's analysis of contemporary power provides a much greater support for apathy than it does incitement to action. It would be perfectly easy to respond to Foucault's texts by saying, "Well, there you go. If I do anything at all it is most liable to be dangerous, but since I don't know that there will be any positive effect resulting from my action, I really shouldn't bother. After all, leaving things to go their own way probably has as good a chance of producing positive change as I do. And when you come right down to it, being determined by the normalizing functions of the local power disciplines to which I am subjected, I probably wouldn't be able to identify the benefit or detriment of any development honestly."

This response is, unfortunately, not at all inconsistent with Foucault's position, which allows (and compels) us to ask, whom does his analysis work for, and whom does it work against? Does his genealogy actually produce a state of affairs which tacitly supports
this systematic infusion of power? Is it possible to see Foucault himself as a symptom of the contemporary power regime, who has bought into the myths of its totalizing control and so has been coopted into subtly serving its needs? Is it possible that all this critical rhetoric is itself just a mask for a stance which will ultimately repress disruptive social action? I would find even a remote possibility of answering these questions affirmatively very problematic and very troubling.

The denial of praxis goes to the heart of the matter. What Foucault has been trying to realize all along — the movement of power itself as the force of our historical being — is ultimately the agency of derealization. In his genealogical disclosure the flow of power finally consumes its own potency as it consumes human agency by determining it. The agent is constructed by power but power is the agent's agency. So, the agent is the power and the result of the power — passive and active. And this very determination now stagnates the operation. Why? Because Foucault failed to follow dialectics where it must lead. Dialectics is about movement; but Foucault's analysis freezes agency.

If only he could conceive of the dialectical process and understand that men make history of the basis of previous circumstances — by assuming them, surpassing and preserving them — he would approach the idea of praxis....he would be able to grasp his own thought as an idea-in-motion, whose falsity appears only if it is stopped, would grasp the real as evolved truth, and would grasp the content of his doctrine, given that it is born within him and is stopped by him so as to become his ideological interest...

Interestingly enough, in this preceding passage Sartre is referring to analytic thought. But one sees how appropriate the description is here as well. Perhaps we could say that such postmodern thought reveals itself as the negative image of analytic thought but that both ultimately end in the same difficulty: movement is denied and praxis with it.

I am not willing to go all the way with Foucault's project, and where I take my leave of him I would like to proceed in a different direction. I am deeply impressed with the revelations of his geneal-

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7Ibid, pp. 241-2.
ogy. His presentation of the pervasive local disciplines operative in contemporary social life are strikingly familiar and resound with empirical validity. I believe also that he has provided us not just with an interesting, enlightening genealogical exposition, but also with a genuine, sincere critique. But I do not, and cannot in good faith, declare this unsatisfactory contemporary situation, as he seems to, inescapable.

I desire more than anything to do justice to Foucault's insightful presentation, but at the same time I wish to find a way out of its negativity. We can, I believe, justify the dialectic and retain the critique without falling prey to an in-authentic ideological mask. It is possible to find a basis for normative judgement that will not utterly violate Foucault's system by referring to a concept which has been induced, implanted, or constructed by power, and which will thereby free the empathy, action, and discourse necessary for liberatory praxis.

At some point we have to realize that the disciplines and punishments of the contemporary power structures are practiced on living human beings. Philosophers have a tendency to keep at a certain distance from the emotional content of social analysis. They tend to prefer, on the whole, to remain on the level of theory — it comes as a much lower cost: one does not need to invest interest, one need not carry any responsibility or pay the high price of commitment. What is particularly unfortunate is that Foucault's position allows us to remain on this level. However, the real atrocity of the disciplinary society only arises when we witness for ourselves and others what living in such a society actually feels like. We are talking about practices that objectify human beings, that alienate and hierarchize human beings, that set person against person, that use and abuse bodies and souls while masking themselves under grand universalizing terms like "liberty" and "freedom." What we need to admit is that these practices are antithetical to human life. I am not referring here to some kind of mystical, mythical, universal human subject; a natural or original human being. I am perfectly aware that there is never a way to step outside one's own framework, standpoint, or horizon. However, there is, I believe, validity (even for Foucault) in saying that at very least, we are living beings, and that the objectification and reification which on his account must accompany normalization, is a process which treats living beings as non-living, mechanistic cogs in a
productive machine or as quantifiable elements of a hierarchy or as passive subjects of the medical or legal or educational scrutiny. And I do not think that there can be much argument with the statement that living beings are not inanimate objects. If this is the case, any absolute constitution of human life as object is logically impossible because it would imply the complete negation of that life. Therefore, the constitution of individuals as cogs in the power structures cannot be absolute or the individuals themselves would not exist - the dialectic cannot in reality be totallyizingly negative and this means that there must exist a dialectical other. Additionally, if there is an objectifying tendency inherent in these disciplines, we can say that this practice is destructive to human life and that they can, therefore, honestly be judged as wrong without any reference to the idealistic, enlightenment notions so maligned by Foucault. Simply by referring to life it appears that we have a stance by which to revive both the dialectic and the critique.  

On yet another level, I believe that we could draw attention to the relational character of human life. We are, in a purely factual manner, beings in a world with others; in Heideggerian formulation, Dasein is always Mit-sein. If we allow the negative Foucaultian formulation of human beings as hierarchized objects set in opposition to one another we are again referring to a practice that is incongruous with a necessary condition for life itself. If such practices are total we lose life itself, if they are only a partially enacted mode of operation, we have grounds for critique.

We have returned movement quite simply through the organic development which is life. Even if, as Nietzsche says, you are a "will to power" and nothing else, this invokes accumulation and growth. It involves processive development. Power is life and life is movement. The dialectic is unfrozen.

If the practices of reification and hierarchization are themselves antithetical to human life and human inter-relation, then it seems that we are warranted to also pass judgement on any practices which

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8One has the impression, judging his the last interviews, that Foucault himself sensed that the answer to his dilemma lay in the constitution of human life. In those interviews he indicates a turn toward ethical self-constitution, and I believe that if he had had the opportunity to develop this line of thought he might have arrived at the conclusion that this self-creative ability relies upon the very nature of human life itself.
produce, continue, or further this end. In this way, it seems to me that we can resurrect the authentic critical moment without resorting to any normatively subjugated ideals. This ability to formulate critique squares much better with our actual experience of disciplinary society. It gives us a position from which we can legitimately witness such practices as harmful to ourselves and others. It accounts for the fact that we do witness such practices as ethically and socially unacceptable. Human beings are not just interesting subjects for a philosopher's genealogy. They are the men and women in prisons, they are the patients in the hospitals, they are the children in school, they are each and every one of us who is exposed to media and advertising, each and every one of us raised in (or outside of) a "proper" heterosexual family: we are all caught in this restrictive web of power/knowledge/discipline. The tragedy of practiced bodies, the suffering of disciplined individuals must be allowed its proper place in critical discourse, because, if what Foucault says is indeed correct, then we are chin deep in forms of life, ways of being, which are essentially self-destructive, and we are sinking fast. Wordsworth said that 'we murder to dissect'. This is more heinous still, we are murdering as we dissect. How can one be judgementally indifferent to the implications and ramifications of Foucault's genealogical visions? I do not think we can be; I do not think we need be; I know we should not be.

The interesting thing about dialectic is that, as Hegel quite rightly points out, you cannot go half-way with it. If you stop at negative and contradictory moments, if you use it with the one-sidedness of the understanding, you will inevitably fall into the confusion of stifling contradiction. If we remain with Foucault in this contradiction the results are intolerable: nihilism and apathy surrounded by irrational inconsistency or, as Sartre calls it, anti-praxis and anti-humanism. However, I hope to have shown that, through the value neutral level of the relational process of life itself, we can escape these conclusions, turn over into the positive moment and, with the proper care and caution so legitimately recommended by Foucault's analysis of power and its immanent dangers, move forward to social critique and social action.
And I have known the eyes already, known them all-
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out the but ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?

T.S. Eliot

*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*