

CHAPTER 5

Critical Problematization in Foucault and Deleuze: The Force of Critique without Judgment

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“One thing haunts Foucault – thought . . . To think means to experiment and to problematize.”

(Gilles Deleuze on Michel Foucault in 1986, 116)

“The freeing of difference requires thought without contradiction, without dialectics, without negation . . . We must think problematically rather than question and answer dialectically.”

(Michel Foucault on Gilles Deleuze in 1970, 359)

THE FORCE OF CRITIQUE

In a 1972 conversation concerning the role of philosophy in the work of social critique, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze put forward a conception of critical theory that resonates widely throughout the varied terrains of their work. At the heart of the conception they constructed together in “Intellectuals and Power” is a radical revisioning of the work that philosophy should expect of itself insofar as philosophy can legitimately expect itself to engage present social, cultural, ethical and political problems. Foucault and Deleuze clearly expected such engagements of themselves. Much of their work is located, in different ways of course, at the interface of the sciences of the human and the politics of ourselves. How we take ourselves to be known, as subjects of, say, psychiatric normalization or biological specification or economic calculation, raises questions for how we take ourselves to be related to one another, for example as shared agents and subjects of governance. In engaging such problems, Foucault and Deleuze recognized, or at least affirmed,

the need for a new conception of philosophical practice. Foucault concisely captured the specific difference in the 1972 discussion when he said that, "theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice . . . it is an activity conducted alongside those who struggle for power, and not their illumination from a safe distance."¹ To this Deleuze replied with his now-famous statement that, "A theory is exactly like a box of tools."² But what does it mean to construe the work of theory, or what I would just prefer to call the work of philosophy, as a box of tools, as a practical instrumentality whose primary purpose is that of functional engagement in a local struggle? What conception of philosophy is at work here? And how can those who find this conception attractive develop philosophical practices with the aim of fashioning philosophical tools, rather than conceiving of philosophy in some grander, possibly even hyperbolic, style?

Consider a prefatory image to these questions insofar as they could be taken as questions about philosophical engagement. There is a famous photograph of Foucault and Deleuze portraying Deleuze on the left beside a young official, who appears to be a policeman, placing a gloved hand on his back, and Foucault on the right making a very emphatic face to someone else who is just out of frame, but possibly also a cop as indicated by another gloved hand reaching from out of the frame right into the heart of the picture in order to lay itself on the chest of the bald philosopher. The image itself is a tumult. One need not know anything about its context to be able to see it as exemplifying philosophy as a work of critical engagement. Here is philosophy becoming an explosive box of tools. Interestingly, in the background of the photograph, standing a few feet behind Foucault and Deleuze, and squarely between the two of them within the composition of the image, stands Jean-Paul Sartre. In one sense Sartre was the paradigm of the engaged philosopher for Foucault's and Deleuze's generation. Among the most important engaged intellectuals in the decades in which they were young upstart philosophers, Sartre must have given Foucault and Deleuze a great deal of confidence in their many attempts to bring their philosophy to bear on the demands of their day. But in another sense Sartre is most certainly not the model of that which relayed between Foucault and Deleuze in their practice of philosophy. For on one reading Sartrean philosophy was all about bringing the lessons of existentialist phenomenology to bear on the realities of social practice. Sartre, as it were, applied the insights of philosophical theory to the realities of political and social practice. Sartre was, on any accounting, an engaged philosopher. This no doubt thrilled younger philosophers of Foucault's and Deleuze's generation. But, they must have been asking themselves all the while, must we model our engagement after Sartre, or should we search out some other way of putting philosophy into contact with politics? They sought different ways of making a difference. In Foucault and Deleuze, and between them, philosophical critique became a practical enactment of philosophy within social contexts. The possible difference from Sartre, and it is crucial for understanding not only Foucault and

Deleuze but also for how we might activate them midst the perils of our own present, is between applying philosophical insight in contexts of practical engagement and constructing philosophical insight through and also for the work of practical engagement. The latter, I shall argue, is the model offered us by Foucault and Deleuze (leaving Sartre now to the side though he will make an oblique return below in my discussion of French Hegelianism). This difference, I shall argue, has everything to do with a metatheoretical watershed for which Deleuze and Foucault are paradigmatic figures.

In the vicinity of that range of philosophic thought that is somewhere between Foucault and Deleuze we find a crucial philosophical watershed for the twentieth century. This is the divide between a negative dialectics that would ceaselessly pursue the work of *contradiction* and an experimental methodology that would engage its reality by way of a work of *problematization*. The separation between a dialectical and an experimental methodology represents a decisive divide in our philosophical present. For this divide has everything to do with the possibilities open to philosophical engagement in the present. If our work of critique is to engage the realities in which we find ourselves, then much hangs out how we vision and implement the work of critique. Critical engagement, according to Foucault and Deleuze, has everything to do with a new role for “the intellectuals” vis-à-vis “the powers” in which we so often find ourselves implicated. The classical role of the intellectual was to speak the truth to power by telling power how it ought to be organized – laying down a law of justice or a rule of morality, for instance. For Foucault and Deleuze, something else was always at stake – Deleuze captured this in “The Intellectuals and Power” dialogue when he said to Foucault that, “you were the first to teach us a fundamental lesson, both in your books and in the practical domain: the indignity of speaking for others.”³ A philosophical labor that would be critical without speaking for others, telling them what they ought to do, has everything to do with a mode of philosophy that would be critical without being judgmental. This, for Foucault and Deleuze, points directly to the basic divide between a negative dialectics of contradiction and the productive work of experimentation.

CRITICAL, IMMANENT, EXPERIMENTAL, PROBLEMATIZING

One way in which Foucault and Deleuze have been important for the philosophical transformations of the past half century, and thus why they remain important for us today, concerns their practice of philosophy as a mode of experimental immanent critical problematization. There are four terms in my attribution. Each of them is crucial for understanding both Foucault and Deleuze.

First, Foucault and Deleuze are Kantians in that for them philosophy is *critical* philosophy. Second, there are different ways of taking up the project of a critical

inquiry into conditions of possibility, and Foucault and Deleuze remained rigorously *immanent* in their pursuit of critique. Third, while others have pursued the work of immanent critique through the facilities of a negative dialectics of contradiction, Foucault and Deleuze by contrast rigorously avoided the negative work of contradiction in favor of pursuits facilitated by an *experimental* methodoteutic. Fourth, within the space of experimentation one might experiment with an eye toward the stabilizations gained by answering a question, or one might with Foucault and Deleuze experiment with the different aim of destabilization as facilitated by posing a problem, or *problematizing*. I shall detail each of these four cuts in turn in order to situate the stakes for us today of learning through Foucault and Deleuze's philosophical mode of experimental immanent critical problematization.

Critique as a mode of philosophy

With respect to the first decisive cut, Foucault and Deleuze here follow the familiar contours of the Kantian critical project. Their shared debt to a certain aspect of Kantian philosophy has not been recognized often enough. Foucault and Deleuze inherited from Kant the work of critique. Critique was Kant's philosophical alternative to the unending philosophical vacillations that were the promises of early modern philosophy, perhaps paradigmatically the back and forth between metaphysics and skepticism. Critique for Kant meant an interrogation of limits or bounds, which Kant most often figured as conditions of possibility. A critical philosophy is a philosophy that asks of its objects of inquiry, "What makes this possible?" This question is radically different in form from the classical philosophical interrogation of definitions most famously taking the form of, "What is this?" Whereas the metaphysicians are brazen in their answer to the classical question of definition, the skeptics are skittish.

One of Kant's key insights was that any response to the definitional question leaves philosophy painfully out of touch with what is actually going on with respect to its objects of inquiry, a pain that can only be removed by pressing philosophy into different modalities. Definition has its place, to be sure, but the delusion of metaphysics and skepticism is the delusion that definition is everything. What Kant taught us was that only someone under the sway of that particular illusion would muster the bravado to think themselves capable of knowing what really is, and for the same reason that only someone under the sway of that illusion would feel disappointment in not being able to know what really is. Kant's project was thus an attempt to get philosophy out from under the sway of that picture, so that it could see itself instead as inquiry into the conditions of possibility of whatever objects of inquiry present themselves to us. The philosophical promise of the critical philosophy was that of a critique of judgment, which can only be understood as an inquiry into the conditions of possibility of judgment such that the work of

a critique of judgment must itself rigorously refrain from judging.⁴ The promise of critique, then, is the promise of a philosophical labor that is preparatory for judgment without itself being judgmental.

Immanence as a mode of critique

This brings us to the second decisive cut. The force of the Kantian project persists for us today only insofar as that project has been subjected to severe revision in the wake of Kant. Critique in Kant's own hands, though full of the promise of the evasion of metaphysics, finds itself falling again and again back into a philosophical mode that is hardly distinguishable from metaphysics. This is because Kant could not help but forward his project of critique as one of specifically transcendental critique, that is critique that concerns itself with objects which can be thought, or cognized, a priori.⁵ One familiar way of glossing the work of transcendental critique concerns the scope and modality of a priori thought, such that the work of critique would concern that which is universal in scope and necessary in modality. In Kant's unmodest hands, then, the project of critique comes to be identified with transcendental critique, and thereby cannot avoid slipping back into the metaphysics which it wanted to show us the way out of. To put this in other terms, Kant had wanted to perform a critique of judgment without himself undertaking to judge but could not but help himself to the vast range of judgments enacted by his own transcendental perspective.

It is important to recognize the lengths to which Kant went in order to avoid lapsing back into a dogmatic metaphysics. Kant wanted to be rigorous about avoiding the transcendence of metaphysics, and so he invented the idea of transcendental critique by explicitly distinguishing the transcendent and the transcendental.⁶ For Kant, a transcendent principle contrasts to an immanent one in that it passes beyond the limits of possible experience, while the transcendental use of a principle contrasts to an empirical use in employing a principle to extend beyond the limits of experience. Kant tells us that a principle that commands the transgression or disruption of limits of the empirical is transcendent, but that a transcendental use of a principle that takes us beyond these limits without commanding their removal is not itself transcendent. The distinction is quite fine. But it fails to hold up in Kant's own critical philosophy, for instance where he transcendently invokes the immortality of the soul from the perspective of moral reason but insists that this is not the assertion of a transcendent principle concerning immortality from the perspective of speculative reason.⁷

The sway of metaphysics, the stretch of its shadow, proves just enormous. Metaphysics is like a shark – you cannot play games with it. You need to either keep away or accept that you could get bit. Kant thought he could dip into the seas and stay safe simply because he was not calling into question the limit between the uncertain

ocean and the safety of land. But as soon you use reason transcendently to wade out into the waters beyond, you cannot cry foul when metaphysics sees you as actually trying to transcend. From the perspective of the shark there is no difference between the shy swimmer who only wants to test the waters for a second and the fish who lives there all the time. That is why metaphysics swallowed Kant. Some contemporary philosophers take the voraciousness of metaphysics as a sign that it is unavoidable, using this view to argue against the basic promise of the Kantian critical project – but these metaphysical revivalisms, no matter how rigorously argued and exquisitely developed, are throwbacks that we should guard against.⁸ That the critical promise is difficult to deliver on does not mean we should just give up – my view is that Foucault and Deleuze offer us a unique way of appreciating the continuing force and viability of the Kantian project.

Deleuze and Foucault, on my reading, did manage to avoid the bite of metaphysics. They are part of a long tradition of critical philosophy which would severely reject the tendencies of transcendental critique in favor of the initial promise of a purely immanent critique. Foucault expressed this well in his “What Is Enlightenment?” essay named after a famous essay by Kant of the same title: “The point is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible crossing. Criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value but, rather, as 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. In that sense, this criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making a metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method.”⁹ Note the specific contrasts here: Foucault is cautious about the quintessential Kantian ideas of necessary limitation, formal structure, universal value, transcendental critique, and metaphysics, contrasting these to his own genealogical-archaeological mode of critique. For Foucault, then, critique would be an inquiry into immanent conditions of possibility rather than a search for transcendental conditions of possibility. For Foucault, the work of critique would, for example, take the form of inquiries into how we have been made into the subjects we are by processes that are immanent to and wholly within the history of our very modes of subjectivation. Deleuze sought to transform the Kantian project from within in quite similar terms, looking to rescue an immanent critique of judgment from the judgmental tendencies of a critique turned transcendental: “Kant did not invent a true critique of judgment; on the contrary, what the book of this title established was a fantastic subjective tribunal.”¹⁰

There are many ways, after Kant, of attempting to shift critique from the search for transcendental conditions to the search for immanent conditions. This is, perhaps most famously, a Hegelian project, for it is Hegel who described philosophy as the work of “observ[ing] the subject matter’s own immanent development.”¹¹

To be sure, there is much of Hegel behind Foucault and Deleuze. But Hegel is not the only possible source for their turn to immanence. The idea of an immanent critique, which would ask the question of conditions of possibility from a perspective wholly immanent to that which is conditioned, was perhaps Hume's before it was either Hegel's or Kant's. Kant's pride of place in the history of modern philosophy depends, of course, on Kant's own reading of Hume as a skeptic who woke him from the slumbers of dogmatism. But what if Hume was not a skeptic? What if Hume was rather something like what we today would call a naturalist or even a pragmatist? Hume's famous claims to the effect that the conditions of knowledge are located in habit and custom were, to be sure, skeptical with respect to the metaphysicians, but they were also more positively a suggestion about how we might take up immanent inquiries into the conditions of contemporary cultural forms. Hume himself undertook such immanent inquiries, perhaps most provocatively in his massive six-volume *History of England*, a book that few philosophers read today, and which quite a few Hegelians even manage to forget as an alternative to *geistesgeschichte* historiography in the grand style.¹²

This is not the place to offer a counter-narrative of the history of modern philosophy, though I will remark tangentially that it is quite plain that such a counter-narrative is now badly in need of telling. The point of pointing out, however hesitatingly, Hume's precedent for the project of immanent critique is to motivate two related thoughts, both of which are crucial for understanding at least part of what is at work in Foucault and Deleuze.¹³ The first thought is that, though Foucault and Deleuze took up critique in the manner of the project of immanent critique and Hegel is our most famous exemplar of immanent critique, perhaps nonetheless Hegel may not be the best guide to the work that immanent critique does in Foucault and Deleuze. As I discuss below, their well-known departures from Hegel are nothing less than startling, once one grasps their full force. These departures may be part of a longer counter-tradition in philosophy that reaches back behind Hegel, and even behind Kant himself. This brings me to the second thought, which concerns that to which Foucault and Deleuze are reaching back. If we needed to give more flesh to the idea of immanent critique, we might refer to it under the headings of cultural critique, or even empirical critique. It is a practice of critique that takes as its concern those ever-moving shapes of cultural norms and forms in which we find ourselves enmeshed in ever-evolving ways. Cultural critique is immanent critique because it is an inquiry into conditions of culture from a point of view that is also located within the culture whose conditions are being investigated. Thinking through Hume here helps us see how Foucault and Deleuze are offering immanent cultural critique in a mode that is also empirical. In invoking the empirical here my primary connotation is not that of empiricist epistemology. Rather, the empiricism I invoke is the empiricism of inquiry and of investigation. It is the empiricism of severe patience – the mode of the obsessive

whose only obsession is that they need to see for themselves. It is no surprise that empiricism and skepticism are often linked in the history of modern philosophy, for the empiricist is just the philosopher who is obsessive about finding out and thus skeptical of the brazen confidence of the rationalist who is content to go on reasoning alone. Putting the point this way helps make plain how Deleuze and Foucault were reacting against a Kantian inflation of reason not so much by turning to a Hegelian absolute immanence as by returning to a Humean empirical immanence. What are the empirical conditions, scrutable for those who care to look, of the evolving forms and norms of our cultural milieu? Answering this question does not require assuming a philosophical point of view that is outside of, or transcendental with respect to, that which we are asking after.

Experimentation as a mode of immanent critique

This brings me to the third cut, which I shall argue is *the most decisive moment* in the metaphilosophical shift enacted by, and between, Foucault and Deleuze. On my reading, Foucault and Deleuze are for us today crucial figures in a tidal shift in twentieth-century philosophy found across a diversity of traditions. This is a shift in the basic categories of thought with which philosophy does its work. Those who forwarded it achieved a drastic departure from the philosophical inheritances that have long dominated much of modern philosophy, including contemporary philosophy from the early decades of the twentieth century in both Anglo-American and Continental variants. I shall here reference that shift by way of a contrast situated in what we might call the methodetic (though perhaps logic is an equally fecund term here) operative in the work of critique. On a standard account, the work of critique proceeds by way of a dialectical methodetic of contradiction. The sea-change that was Deleuze and Foucault was at its most radical in its departure from the dialectics of contradiction in its effort to attain what I will call a methodetic of experimentation.

Experimentation is my term, not Foucault's or Deleuze's, though it is in ample usage throughout their works.¹⁴ One might think that a term more in keeping with Deleuze's vocabulary might be "difference" and a term closer to Foucault's might be "transgression." And yet I find these terms misleading in some fundamental way, at least without sufficient prefatory explanation. A better term, drawing on what I regard as the central aspect of Foucault and Deleuze, would be a "problematization."¹⁵ But I refrain from that more precise term at this juncture because I regard problematization as one possible aspect of what I am calling experimentation. One can take up the project of critique through experimentation and work in a mode that is not at its core problematizatiional. For instance, one might work not so much to problematize as to reconstruct, in the sense of problem-solving. Both Foucault and Deleuze took up an experimental approach to immanent critique *primarily* in

a problematizational mode. Before explicating the term of problematization, however, it is crucial to understand the broader shift in methodetic that is at play here, because that broader shift helps us gain a grip on how experimentation represents that sea-change of a departure from the inheritance, still with us today, of a dialectics of contradiction.

It is here where Hegel, or to be perfectly precise, a certain reading of Hegel, is perhaps most important for understanding Foucault and Deleuze. For the shift toward experimentation is brought into clear relief against the background of a Hegelian negative dialectics of contradiction. It is, however, important to be explicit at the outset that my differentiation of Foucault's and Deleuze's innovation is paired not so much with the work of Hegel himself as with the inheritances of Hegelian philosophy against which Foucault and Deleuze (and others) were writing in their mid-century French context. My effort here is not so much to make sense of Hegel himself as it is to make sense of what Foucault and Deleuze (but especially Deleuze given how little Foucault wrote directly about Hegel himself) must have thought about Hegel such that they would mount the challenges they offered to a certain Hegelianism. I take it that much recent revisionist work in Hegel scholarship has done a good deal to revise the received interpretations of Hegelian philosophy against which Foucault was working.¹⁶ That noted, this revisionist scholarship does nothing to impinge the importance of the Deleuzian and Foucaultian departure from prominent brands of Hegelian philosophy, nor do Deleuze's and Foucault's philosophical revision do anything to impinge contemporary revisionist scholarship that stands in a good position to benefit from their criticisms of certain metaphilosophical modalities.

Why, then, the importance of a certain Hegelianism? The philosophical context in which Foucault and Deleuze were educated (mid-twentieth century French philosophy) was one that was widely, if not almost everywhere, characterized by a sturdy brand of Hegelian dialectics often passed down to us today in textbook glosses about theses, antitheses and syntheses. This, at least, was what Foucault and Deleuze themselves suggested, or rather how they experienced the conditions of their own philosophical maturation.¹⁷ For both, the dominant French Hegelian system was best exemplified in Jean Hyppolite's and Alexander Kojève's widely-celebrated readings of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* – and neither of these readings were terribly far from the popular model of Sartrean philosophy, whose politics of engagement I briefly noted at the outset.¹⁸ These and other readings made use above all of Hegel's negative dialectics to make sense of the meaning of the historical tragedies of the early twentieth century, recouping them under the banner of a theory of dialectical progress – these were the core themes that were taken up in influential ways by existentialist, Marxist and Freudian inflections of Hegelianism.¹⁹

What all of this suggests is that Foucault and Deleuze were centrally concerned to reject the dominant program(s) of negative dialectics characteristic of their

philosophical milieu and that operated this rejection so by restructuring many of the basic categories structuring philosophical thought itself. What Foucault and Deleuze found most objectionable in French Hegelianism was its reliance on Hegel's image of thought cast in terms of the work of contradiction and its operationalization through determinate negation.²⁰ These ideas had offered the French Hegelians a way of accounting for the meaningfulness of determinate historical transformation. Such an account was very badly needed as the Second Great War drew to a close and the French Hegelians saw the logic of contradiction as the most promising strategy. But for Foucault and Deleuze such an approach needed to answer the prior question of whether or not there are other routes to a critique of our present than by way of contradiction and negativity. It would be their gain to suggest that there are. What had been operative in French Hegelianism such that contradiction appeared to be the only route to immanence?

An answer to this difficult question can be approached by a consideration of Hegel's lack of place for indeterminacy, or to state that differently, Hegel's figuring indeterminacy as itself a lack. In a crucial moment at the outset of *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes plain his refusal to think indeterminacy as a positive category. Considering the possibility that the will might be through and through free, or entirely undetermined, Hegel claims, all too effortlessly, that, "The essential insight to be gained here is that this initial indeterminacy is itself a determinacy."²¹ The broader point here is that every indeterminacy is always already a kind of determination – the indeterminate just is that which is *taken as* indeterminate, which is to say it is just that which is *determined* as indeterminate. For Hegel there is, as such, no positivity role for indeterminacy to play in the motion of thought. Behind every indeterminacy there is a determination, indeed a whole host of historical determinations, lurking. To put this differently, for Hegel everything that is, is determinate. It is in virtue of this that Hegel is reliant on the category of contradiction and the operator of negation to put thought into motion. If everything that is already is determinate, then the flow of determination can take place only by way of the negation of contradictory determinations – philosophy always starts with what is determinate and identical with itself, and from there derives difference by way of the negativity of contradiction. The only place for movement in such a view is the movement of negation because everything is determinate and so anything can be overcome only by way of its negation – the pain or suffering of motion is always the painfulness or sufferance of negativity. By contrast, if philosophy were to give a positive status or role to the indeterminate as such in its operations, then it would be possible for thought and reality to gain their motion by way of relations not all reducible to the labor of the negative.

To the French Hegelian image of philosophy as dialectically pursuing the negative work of the mechanism of *contradiction*, Foucault and Deleuze replied with a practice of philosophy as the pursuit of emerging cultural-empirical forms by way

of *experimentation*, one aspect of which would involve the severe work of problematization. The methodetic of experimentation does not negate the dialectics of contradiction, but it differs from it. The point is of course not that there are no contradictions, but only that the relation of contradiction cannot explain everything when it comes to transformations of thought and practice. The grand bloated assumption of Hegelian dialectics is simply that determinate conflicts are bound to resolve themselves, that is, that they will eventually grow into contradictions and as if by their own internal force lead to the work of determinate negation. Two differences, companion to one another in the same sense that they are companion in French Hegelianism, are crucial for Foucault and Deleuze: first, the introduction of a positive idea of indeterminacy, and second, an expansion of the range of relations whereby transformation takes place.

The first crucial difference is this: whereas contradiction works only with determinacy, experimentation also works with a second level of indeterminacy. The category of the indeterminate, which figures most prominently in Foucault and Deleuze in their idea of problematizations, is outside of the sway of the operations of determinacy. There are many ways of figuring the indeterminate. Psychologically, we might think of it in terms of the state of doubt, which is neither belief that x nor belief that *not* x . Semantically, we might think of it in terms of vagueness, which is neither the meaning of x nor the meaning of *not* x . Politically, we might think of it in terms of that which is fraught, which is a zone of neither *justice* nor *injustice*. However we figure it, the first crucial difference, to repeat, is the status of the indeterminate as a positive category in its own right. On the view I am attributing to Foucault and Deleuze, the indeterminate serves as a background against which determinations are made, or within which determinations are generated. It is this background that gives relief and contour to foreground determinations.

To put the point in a somewhat different idiom for a moment, indeterminacy refers to a general rulelessness out of which emerge determinate rules, such that these determinate rules possess whatever specific ruleishness they have only against the backdrop of the indeterminacy out of which they emerged. Without an indeterminate backdrop against which rules gain the specific determinacy that they have, rules cannot gain determinacy. The only other option would be to insist that rules have their determinacy in themselves, such that they are self-sufficient – but this of course requires the strong foundationalist claim that rules are sufficient for their own application, which is to say that rules carry within themselves rules for their own application. There is, of course, yet a third option, namely that rules have their determinacy purely by way of their relation to other determinate rules such that a general economy of rules is sufficient for ruleishness – but this strong coherentist claim, which seems to be the upshot of Hegel's own dialectics, must fail to confront the problem of ruleishness as such and why we do not just as well regard purported determinations as the scandalous pose of the absolutely indeterminate.²²

Experimentation thus adds a whole new level of analytics not possible within the dialectics of contradiction. There is, as there always was, the level of determination which is conceived as a kind of plane on which there are a variety of positions standing in all kinds of differential relations to one another, including presumably relations of opposition or contradiction, though there is no reason at all to privilege specifically those relations as if they are the only ones that matter. Beneath this level of determinations and their relations there is a whole other level of the indeterminate problematization that makes possible the elaboration of the plane on which these positions and oppositions can stand in any sort of relation whatsoever.

This brings us to the second crucial difference. In experimentation there is an idea of an indeterminate problematization which is itself a set of positive conditions of possibility for the elaboration of differing determinations, such that within the conditions of an indeterminate problematization we can specify a multiplicity of relations between determinations, all of these relations and determinations assuming their form against the broader backdrop of motivating indeterminacy that is productive of them. So, whereas contradiction can only work by way of a logic of deduction (which invokes necessity and is subtractive), experimentation introduces a more primary logic of abduction (which invokes contingency and is tentatively additive). In an experimental methodetic, problems do not already contain within them (as if deductively) the responses that would constitute a determination, but rather these responses must be contingently elaborated (as if abductively) on the basis of the problematic conditions. Experimentation thus does not contradict the category of deductive contradiction within a plane of determination, but rather works to obviate the rather simplistic idea that contradiction can account for, as if with the deductive rigor of complete closure, all logical relations and all practical transformations.

In other words, experimentation rather than contradiction is able to more squarely confront the vicissitudes of practical transformation. That, of course, would be the decisive gain here. This will come as no surprise for anyone who accepts the truism that practices can perfectly well sustain conflicts that theory deems to be contradictions. Within the space of a problematization a given determination may of course conflict with another determination, and yet these frictions, and indeed the underlying problem itself, can thereby persist. All this seems flatly impossible within a dialectics of contradiction, because a contradiction simply must give rise to a determinate negation, and hence a reconfiguration of the practical situation. On the logic of experimentation, it is possible to affirm that there are of course *dramatic reconfigurations* of practical reality, and yet at the same time observe that there is just as well *the dramatic and stubborn persistence* of entrenched patterns of practical friction. Experimentation help us understand why, for example, there can be for we moderns no such thing as a solution or resolution to such intractable problems as punishment, sexuality or madness. Is this observation

premised on the pessimistic assumption that these are permanent problems of humanity? Of course not. There will one day emerge other problematizations, just as these problematizations emerged for us so that we now emerge within them. But it is a pretense of the philosopher to think that we can predict these emergent problematizations as if they would be the deductive result of the determinate negation of present contradictions. The emergence of a problematization, the coming into being of a complex indeterminate assemblage, is an entirely contingent affair. We can, after the fact, write the history of such an emergence, but it will not be a history that proceeds by way of determinate negation. It is not, for example, as if the modern punitive regime of imprisonment is somehow a determinate negation of the preceding regime of torture. The problematization, in each case, is quite different. The work of imprisonment and torture is determined on the basis of entirely different zones of indetermination. Imprisonment and torture are therefore not opposed or contradictory regimes of punishment, but are rather regimes of punishments who have their origins in quite different, perhaps even incommensurable, underlying problematizations.

Problematization as a mode of experimental immanent critique

We can now finally turn to the last of the four cuts I am attributing to Foucault and Deleuze, namely the cut within an experimental methodetic between a mode of problematization and a mode of construction. As I have been describing it, an experimental philosophy operates with at least two terms: problems and responses, or questions and answers, or doubts and beliefs, or (the terms I have been employing thus far) determinacy and indeterminacy, or (my preferred terms) *inquisitive problematizations* and *responsive reconstructions*.²³ Though experimentation has two aspects, critical analysis for Foucault and Deleuze was in the main diagnostic and problematizing rather than prognostic and responsive – or at least this is true of what is best (in the sense of most fecund) in both Foucault and Deleuze.²⁴ Experimental immanent critique in their work involves diagnosing the problems and pathologies, the fractious frictions, and cracked conflicts of the present.

Problematization is at the center of the Foucaultian and Deleuzian alternative to contradiction. Stating the point with more strength, I would assert that the basic watershed between the negativity of contradiction and the problematicity at the heart of experimentation is the precise location of the *central philosophic achievement* of both Foucault and Deleuze. It will thus be worth our while to tarry for awhile with these shared conceptions of problematization – I will then turn in the final section to a brief consideration of the responsive aspects of Foucault's and Deleuze's ethical-political works. But before turning to Foucault and Deleuze themselves, it will be useful to briefly situate the crucial achievement I am ascribing to both.

According to the standard narrative, the break from negative dialectics for which Foucault and Deleuze are representative has everything to do with the importance of Nietzsche over and against Hegel.²⁵ I want to suggest, however, that the story of a Nietzsche-versus-Hegel contest is perhaps overplayed, even if it is quite true. Insofar as the proper Foucaultian and Deleuzian alternative to negative dialectics is their shared emphasis on problematization, then it simply cannot be located through Nietzsche alone.²⁶ Hegelian negativity is indeed opposed by Nietzschean affirmativism – and yet Deleuze's affirmativism was not really central for Foucault. Hegelian historical totality is also opposed by Nietzschean particularism – however, Foucault's fine genealogies do not really appear in Deleuze. Now all that said, the standard focus on Nietzsche is of course understandable insofar as Deleuze and Foucault themselves were wont to emphasize the importance of Nietzsche for their thinking. My claim is just that Nietzsche is overrated when positioned as the sole influence on their shared philosophical gain, at least if we locate that gain in terms of the substitution of productive problematization for negative contradiction. In Deleuze's case the more important influence for this idea is to be found in Bergson (and in other unexpected figures including Leopold von Sacher-Masoch), while in Foucault's case an influence can be sought in Canguilhem (and of course in Deleuze himself).²⁷ Nietzsche is not as nothing for these ideas, but he may be much less than the standard narratives have supposed.

PROBLEMATIZATION IN DELEUZE AND FOUCAULT

I shall begin with Deleuze and from there move to Foucault by way of a famous comment the latter offered about the specific importance of the work of the former.²⁸ Useful beginning points can be found in both philosophers by way of overarching claims for the importance of problematization for the work of philosophy itself. In Deleuze's case, the overarching claim is offered in his co-authored *What Is Philosophy?* where he and Guattari famously identify philosophy with "the discipline that involves *creating* concepts."²⁹ Less famous, though no less important, is their further claim that "All concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning."³⁰ The obvious inference that we can draw is that for Deleuze problematization is a condition of the very work of philosophy itself. This, to be sure, is a strong claim, and one that is surely underemphasized, even if dutifully acknowledged often enough, in commentaries.³¹ A thorough examination of Deleuze's own contributions to philosophy, however, will bear out this claim – wherever Deleuze does philosophy, there is always a sense of the problematization that is at work.

To explore the reach of problematization across Deleuze's thought, we can begin with the history of philosophy writings in the early 1960s as a prelude to their finer crystallization in his master works from the final years of that decade. The most

obvious starting point, at least according to the standard narrative, is Deleuze's 1962 book on Nietzsche, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. This is often taken to be a key source in these matters as I have been discussing them insofar as Deleuze's main target in this book is without a doubt the Hegelian dialectics of contradiction. Deleuze is decisive on this score in the book's conclusion: "There is no possible compromise between Hegel and Nietzsche . . . Three ideas define the dialectic: the idea of a power of the negative as a theoretical principle manifested in opposition and contradiction; the idea that suffering and sadness have value, the valorization of the 'sad passions', as a practical principle manifested in splitting and tearing apart; the idea of positivity as a theoretical and practical product of negation itself."³² Throughout the book, Deleuze returns time and again to this theme of Nietzsche's gains over the dialectics of contradiction. And yet while Deleuze is clearly critical of Hegel, it is not always as clear what form his own positive alternative, rooted in a reading of Nietzsche, would take. The clearest suggestion that Deleuze offers suggests the importance of a category of difference: "If the speculative element of the dialectic is found in opposition and contradiction this is primarily because it reflects a false image of difference . . . For the affirmation of difference as such it substitutes the negation of that which differs."³³ Deleuze's affirmativism in his book on Nietzsche is an impressive provocation. But in the final analysis it is not clear why an affirmation of difference is advantaged over a dialectics of contradiction, nor is it clear how affirmation does not just in the end collapse back into negation insofar as affirmation and negation are but two opposed modes of determination. What Deleuze lacks in this book, perhaps because it was Nietzsche's lack before him, was an account of the problematic and the indeterminate as that which is generative of difference such that we can recognize the dialectics of contradiction as genuinely reductive of differences that matter.

It would not be until his book on Bergson in 1966 that Deleuze would develop an account of problematic indeterminacy in sufficient detail and thereby definitively institute his break from a certain Hegelianism. As a first piece of evidence for my argument about Bergson's importance concerning these matters consider a pair of short precursor essays published by Deleuze as early as 1956. Bergson is the topic, and the titular figure, of both. Through these essays we realize that Deleuze had already stated the core themes for which his Nietzsche book would become famous many years later: "Internal difference will have to distinguish itself from *contradiction*, *alterity*, and *negation*. This is precisely where Bergson's method and theory of difference are opposed to the other theory, the other method of difference called dialectic."³⁴ As for what exactly is wrong with Hegel: "difference has been replaced by the play of determination" such that for Hegel everything that is, as we saw above, is determinate.³⁵ And what exactly is productive with Bergson: "Everything comes back to Bergson's critique of the negative: his whole effort is aimed at a conception of difference without negation."³⁶ Indeed Deleuze would

here already locate in Bergson a key idea of indeterminacy: "Not only is vital difference not a determination, but it is very much the opposite: it is indeterminacy itself."³⁷ The crucial theme of indeterminacy is even more prominent in the second of these two essays, which is perhaps more properly described as more of an encyclopedia entry on Bergson. Deleuze there writes, in the final paragraph, that, "When Bergson . . . speaks to us of indeterminacy, he does not invite us to abandon reason but to reconnect with the true reason of the thing in the process of being made, the philosophical reason that is not determination but difference . . . The method was profoundly new."³⁸

What in 1956 Deleuze figures in terms of indeterminacy, would assume more specificity in his 1966 book on Bergson, where the idea of the problematic would first come into the fore in his thought. It is clear in the final chapter of this book that Deleuze is posing Bergsonian evolution as an alternative to Hegel eschatology.³⁹ Three ideas in Bergson's account of development are key for Deleuze in his counter to Hegel: problematicity, difference and temporality.⁴⁰ The first and root of these ideas is that of the problem as a category with positive status, the idea of problems as productive. The productiveness of problems, of course, has everything to do with their indeterminacy, that is with their being problems to which we do not yet have solutions, even if problems are the conditions of possibility of determinate solutions. For Deleuze, the first and essential gain of Bergson is thus the act of "the stating and creating of problems."⁴¹ This category of the problematic has everything to do with the very possibility of a definitive break from a dialectics of negative contradiction – the category of the problem, unlike the category of the affirmation, cannot be reprogrammed into the category of negation because the problematic, as indeterminate, is precisely what would be incapable of a negation insofar as any and every negation, just like any and every affirmation, must be determinate. Hence Hegel's insistence, cited above, on the determinacy even of that which appears indeterminate – the Hegelian system can achieve totality only insofar as everything in the totality is determinate. The very idea of a category of suspense holds the Hegelian dialectics of contradiction in abeyance. Bergson's problems suspend determinacy. In so doing, Deleuze's Bergson manages to put a hold on Hegel, and without trying to engage in the impossible task of refuting Hegel that Deleuze's Nietzsche too often undertakes and of course inevitably fails at.

An even more under-discussed source of Deleuze's conception of problematization can be located in the work of Sacher-Masoch, who is the central focus of a number of early essays by Deleuze, including a very long introduction to Masoch's *Venus in Furs* published under the title *Coldness and Cruelty*. In his writings on Masoch, Deleuze develops an alternative conceptualization of indeterminacy by way of a reading of masochistic suspense. To understand this point, it is crucial to first note that Deleuze's central argument in the book is that masochism is a

specific literary and clinical mode, such that it is a mistake to unify it with sadism as its paired opposite through that ill-conceived concept of sadomasochism championed by Krafft-Ebbing, Freud, and others.⁴² Whereas the sadistic technique operates by way of “negation”, the masochistic employs the altogether different logic of “disavowal” or “suspense”: “The fundamental distinction between sadism and masochism can be summarized *in the contrasting processes of the negative and negation on the one hand, of disavowal and suspense on the other.*”⁴³ Deleuze is unambiguous about the refusal to collapse suspense into negation: it is “an entirely different operation,” one in which the motion of thought “consists neither in negating nor even destroying, but rather in radically contesting the validity of that which is: it suspends belief in and neutralizes the given in such a way that a new horizon opens up beyond the given and in place of it.”⁴⁴ Masochistic suspense, in short, sets in motion a critical operation that is indeterminate through and through, it does not negate nor affirm, but presses beyond judgment in order to hold judgment in abeyance, so as to open up indeterminacies, and through that the possibility of new horizons of determination. If the “problem” is for Deleuze the Bergsonian name for indeterminacy, then “disavowal” and “suspense” are its Masochistic names. Perhaps Masoch was more central for Deleuze’s development of problematization, which is to say for Deleuze’s break from the Hegelian dialectics of contradiction, than is typically credited. Even at the methodological level Deleuze carefully notes Masoch’s own employment of the category of the problematic.⁴⁵ Deleuze’s book on Masoch, it ought to be remembered, was published only one year before *Difference and Repetition* while Deleuze’s first essay on Masoch was published the year before *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Perhaps, after all, Masoch and Bergson matter more to Deleuze than we have been inclined to think, overshadowed as they are in our imagination by figures who tend to strike for us sexier poses, namely Nietzsche.

Deleuze’s critique of the negative dialectics of contradiction may have begun in creative rereading of Bergson and Masoch, but it would not fully crystallize into the alternative of experimental problematization until those two monuments of late sixties French philosophy, Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* of 1968 and *The Logic of Sense* of 1969.⁴⁶ Dan Smith argues that Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*, “attempts to develop a new concept of dialectics, which is more or less synonymous with the concept of ‘problematics.’”⁴⁷ Smith here affirms a point about which I aim only to be more emphatic, namely the *centrality* of the notion of problematization for Deleuze’s philosophical *achievements*. I would argue that the notion of problematization is the *greatest gain* in Deleuze’s philosophical works of the 1960s. That notion also constitutes his point of steadiest contact with Foucault’s philosophical interventions in the 1960s and 1970s. Their import is in part a function of the depth of the departure they mark from the inherited dialectics of contradiction which remain with us today.

This is not the occasion on which to follow the intricate contours of Deleuze's arguments in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*. The centrality of the notion of problematization in those books is rather my concern. And for these purposes I shall remain merely summary. In so doing, there will be, I confess, an immense reservoir of things to say about the role of problematization in these two books which I will not here touch on. A fuller exploration would, no doubt, complicate aspects of my argument. Such complications would be welcome, in part because they would help us specify the differences between Foucault and Deleuze. For now, however, my emphasis is on the resonances, or repetitions and relays, between Foucault and Deleuze.

Difference and Repetition begins with a critique of Hegel or what Deleuze calls "a generalized anti-Hegelianism" in which "difference and repetition have taken the place of the identical and the negative, of identity and contradiction."⁴⁸ There is a long and difficult path from these opening remarks on the book's first page to Deleuze's mysterious remark in the book's conclusion concerning "ideal problem-constellations in the sky."⁴⁹ Along that path we find ample evidence of the centrality of problematization for the skyward push beyond Hegel. One key moment involves Deleuze's takeover of the concept of dialectics itself: "*Problems are always dialectical*: the dialectic has no other sense, nor do problems have any other sense."⁵⁰ Whereas in previous work he had explicitly countered his use of Nietzsche against Hegel's "dialectics",⁵¹ he now uses the Bergsonian notion of problems to reinvest dialectics from the inside as an effort in experimentation rather than contradiction. Another key moment concerns the problem of movement, always central to Deleuze, Bergson, Hegel, and indeed every prominent corner of modern philosophy: "Practical struggle never proceeds by way of the negative but by way of difference and its power of affirmation, and the war of the righteous is for the conquest of the highest power, that of deciding problems by restoring them to their truth, by evaluating that truth beyond the representations of consciousness and the forms of the negative, and by acceding at last to the imperatives on which they depend."⁵² The negative, Deleuze tells us here, is but a shadow of the problematic.⁵³ The negative, in other words, is but a "false problem",⁵⁴ an idea that Deleuze had already developed in detail in the book on Bergson.⁵⁵

The Logic of Sense follows a rather different, albeit related, trajectory from that laid out by Deleuze in his book from just one year prior. Whereas *Difference and Repetition* begins with an assault directly on Hegel, *The Logic of Sense* seems more innocent, though perhaps that just means it is more cunning. Deleuze here opens with a discussion not of philosophical giants, but of confounding miniatures, specifically the children's stories of Lewis Carroll. The philosophical concern of the book, as stated by Deleuze on the first page, is that of "events, pure events" and a related notion of "becoming."⁵⁶ This book ends, once again, with the sky, now in the form of "the thunderbolt of the univocal" and the fleetingness of the shock of the event that "is, of course, quickly covered over by everyday banality."⁵⁷ Between

these two citations Deleuze does much to let the reader feel the thunder of the event. The argument is even more complex and circuitous than in his prior work, though perhaps this is appropriate for his subject matter. Allow me to once again just draw attention to two key moments along the pathway of the book. First, Deleuze's striking assertion that "The mode of the event is problematic."⁵⁸ The thunder that shakes meaning and disrupts our banal everydayness has something to do with the problematic, which thus functions as a kind of condition of transformative reorganization, or a condition of becoming. Later, we find another moment in which Deleuze is precise about the positive status of the problematic, which is seemingly an incoherent idea even on his own account. In the section of the book on logical genesis, Deleuze writes that, "The problem in itself is the reality of the genetic element, the complex *theme* which does not allow itself to be reduced to any propositional *thesis*."⁵⁹ As I read Deleuze here, the point is that problems are not determinate theses, but rather indeterminate themes, and as such are generative. On the next page, in a passage worth quoting at length, Deleuze writes:

That the problem does not exist outside of the propositions which, in their senses, express it means, properly speaking, that the problem *is not*: it inheres, subsists, or persists in propositions . . . This nonbeing, however, is not the being of the negative; it is rather the being of the problematic, that we should perhaps write as (non)-being or ?-being. The problem is independent of both the negative and the affirmative; it nevertheless does have a positivity which corresponds to its position as a problem.⁶⁰

It would be difficult to find as clear and precise a statement against the Hegelian logic of contradiction as that.

Foucault thought so too. In a famous review of Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* published in 1970 he wrote: "The freeing of difference requires thought without contradiction, without dialectics, without negation; thought that accepts divergence; affirmative thought whose instrument is disjunction; thought of the multiple . . . We must think problematically rather than question and answer dialectically . . . And now, it is necessary to free ourselves from Hegel – from the opposition of predicates, from contradiction and negation, from all of dialectics."⁶¹ Deleuze repaid the positive half of the compliment (the half emphasizing the productivity of problems) years later when he wrote that for Foucault, "To think means to experiment and to problematize."⁶² And more proximately, Deleuze voiced the negative half of the compliment (the half expressing skepticism about contradiction) in a now-published letter to Foucault written in response to *The Will to Know*: "Indeed it seems to me that another of Michel's great innovations in the theory of power is that a society does not contradict itself, or hardly does so. Yet his answer is: it strategizes itself, it makes up strategies."⁶³

It would be a terrible mistake to think that Deleuze was here co-opting Foucault. The centrality of problematization for the work of philosophy was, to be sure, as much Foucault's gain as it was Deleuze's. In one interview we find Foucault claiming that, "Neither the dialectic, as the logic of contradictions, nor semiotics, as the structure of communication, can account for the intrinsic intelligibility of conflicts . . . 'Dialectic' is a way of evading the always open and hazardous reality of conflict by reducing it to a Hegelian skeleton."⁶⁴ For Foucault, as for Deleuze, the diacritic of philosophy does not consist in ferreting out the contradictions, furtive but structural (even at times orphic) within complex social assemblies, but rather in casting a light, at once clarifying and intensifying (even at times dazzlingly bright), on the persisting problematizations at the heart of who we are. In Foucault's work, this point came to be about what we, in the history of our present, take to be irremediably problematic. What are the problems we cannot but feel the force of? Over what, and why, are we constantly anxious and inevitably distraught? What are the problems with which we wrap and warp our lives in burning intensities? These questions, and this focusing of questions around problematizations, were Foucault's central devices for freeing himself from a certain French Hegelianism all wrapped up in negative dialectics. But what, we ought to ask, is problematization positively for Foucault?

A useful departure point for considering the centrality of problematization in Foucault is the following overarching remark, striking in its sweep, from a late interview in 1984: "The notion common to all the work that I have done since *History of Madness* is that of problematization, though it must be said that I never isolated this notion sufficiently. But one always finds what is essential after the event; the most general things are those that appear last. It is the ransom and reward for all work in which theoretical questions are elaborated on the basis of a particular empirical field."⁶⁵ This is a decidedly strong claim. And Foucault realizes it. And yet he persists. I propose to take Foucault at his word here. Problematization indeed was one of his most constant and lasting preoccupations. On this reading, that is, on Foucault's own reading of himself, *History of Madness* is an investigation of the problematization of madness in a particular historical field, *Discipline and Punish* an investigation of the problematization of crime and punishment in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and *The Will to Know* a problematization of the emergence of the fraughtness we all feel today about sex and sexuality.⁶⁶ We can find problematization in all of Foucault's major works even if would it not crystallize into the explicit concept that it became before a number of interviews and lectures from the early 1980s. And where we find problematization at work we are not so likely to find Nietzsche so much as other figures, including Canguilhem but of course also Deleuze himself. I have traced all of this elsewhere before, offering the requisite citations of all those pages in books ranging from *History of Madness* and *The Birth of the Clinic* to *Discipline and Punish*

and *The Will to Know* as well as in the late lecture courses where Foucault regularly employs the idea of the problematic as an analytical category – having said well more than enough about problematization elsewhere, then, allow me here to just remain summary.⁶⁷

Foucault's clearest statements of problematizations can be found in the late interviews. In a discussion with Paul Rabinow published under the title "Polemics, Politics, and Problematizations" Foucault was prompted by the following useful question: "What is a history of problematics?" In the course of his reply, Foucault offers this instructive remark: "For a domain of action, a behavior, to enter the field of thought, it is necessary for a certain number of factors to have made it uncertain, to have made it lose its familiarity, or to have provoked a certain number of difficulties around it."⁶⁸ Foucault is here naming the provocation of the indeterminate. His claim is that the emergence of new thought, the motion of practice, is contingent upon the problematic that precedes it. His next claim is even more striking: "To one single set of difficulties, several responses can be made. And most of the time different responses actually are proposed. But what must be understood is what makes them simultaneously possible: it is the point in which their simultaneity is rooted; it is the soil that can nourish them all in their diversity and sometimes in spite of their contradictions."⁶⁹ A problematization, Foucault is here unambiguous, is capable of supporting contradictory responses. These contradictions, of course, may be felt as conflict and tension but they do not automatically give rise to the negation of one another, nor to the negation of the underlying problematic. Understanding that every determination is elaborated in response to a specific indeterminate problematization helps us account for the stubborn persistence of conflict. Thus Foucault says of his genealogies, "The work of a history of thought would be to rediscover at the root of these diverse solutions the general form of problematization that has made them possible – even in their very opposition."⁷⁰ Foucault did not here name the Hegelianism against which he and Deleuze were writing. But he did not need to. It would have been obvious to anyone of his milieu.

The genealogical inflection of experimental problematization in Foucault helps elucidate a crucial aspect of the work of problematization which is perhaps not quite as visible in Deleuze as in Foucault, though to be sure it can be read through the latter back into the former. In Foucault's work it is clear that problematization is both an act of inquiry and an object of inquiry – problematization is at once something that the critical philosopher undertakes and something that the critical philosopher takes as the object of their critique. This dual role of problematization is a source of its fecundity. The best way of making sense of it in Foucault's case is to regard him as simultaneously describing and intensifying the problematizations that are his concern. We do not need Foucault to know that we are all anxious about sexuality. And yet Foucault's genealogies of sexuality serve to provoke, stir, and shake up that anxiety, thus intensifying what we all already knew to be there.

It is with respect to this double status of problematization that it offers a mode of critique that at once avoids judgment and yet at the same time exerts a pull on us. A problematization does not tell us, Foucault is clear enough, that sexuality, or biopower, or discipline are bad (nor, of course, good). And yet a problematization exposes us to the fractures and fraughtnesses that are always already underway for us in these domains. It is in this sense that problematization is a critical operation that does its work without always falling under the sway of determinate judgment. The point, again, is not that determination is bad (for that would itself be just another determination). The point, rather, is that the work of immanent critique needs a richer conception of how it functions, such that sometimes it might work to make normative determinations and yet at other times work to intensify the indeterminate background out of which all normative determinations are made. This is why Foucault could confidently say:

A critique does not consist in saying that things aren't good the way they are. It consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based . . . To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy. Understood in these terms, criticism (and radical criticism) is utterly indispensable for any transformation.⁷¹

It was precisely here, with respect to the work of transformation and the energy of transition, where Deleuze and Foucault needed to break from the classical dialectics that would reduce all becoming to the negative work of contradiction.

For both Deleuze and Foucault, then, the work of experimental problematization offered a path beyond the stalemates of mid-century French philosophy, above all the stalemate of a dialectics of contradiction that would find its way only through belaboring the pain of the negative. Deleuze and Foucault challenge us to consider a wider array of operations playing out on the planes of determinacy in which we find ourselves situated. An experimental dialectics that makes room for the productivity of the indeterminate was the crucial gain of both. In Deleuze's work with Guattari, subsequent to the texts I have treated here, this would come to figure most prominently in his productive theory of desire and above all the notion of the unconscious as a productive even if indeterminate factory. In Foucault's work, the space of indeterminacy would perhaps figure most prominently in his remarkable ability to hold together that which other theorists insisted was contradictory, thus enabling us to glimpse through him the possibility that repression and liberation, or power and freedom, function all so often as conflicted pairings that cannot be reduced to contradictions. For both, it is crucial that a certain vagueness is a condition of possibility of who we are, because it shows that indeterminacy is already an aspect of who we might yet become.

CRITIQUE WITHOUT JUDGMENT

The central achievement of thought that emerges between Foucault and Deleuze is their enactment of problematization as a mode of critique without judgment. Thus they maintain with severity the crucial promise of the critical philosophy – the promise that was not delivered on by Kant, by Hegel, by Marx, by Freud, and so many others too, of course. The work of Deleuze and Foucault is a work that would maintain the critique of judgment by decisively departing from the prevailing winds of the dialectic. Where too often the work of critical philosophy has assumed forms that would speak directly to reality in the form of a determinate judgment, Foucault and Deleuze keep critique separate so that philosophy can make room for itself without descending to the role of arguing for or against determinate positions within the realities it takes as its task.

I take the work of problematization to be the most important point of resonance between Foucault and Deleuze. Their deep sympathies in this respect take us further in the pursuit of their broader philosophical projects than do other familiar terms all too commonly used to lump them together. We hear much about “Continental Philosophy” (which is hopelessly vague albeit a factual sociological descriptor, though ironically not on the Continent so much as in America) and “French Philosophy” (which confusedly even if only unwittingly proposes to identify philosophical positions with national membership). But these are clearly too rudimentary to be useful as explanatory concepts, let alone as sorting tools. More promisingly, we hear appellations or accusations of “Postmodernism” (which is thankfully now out of fashion) or “Poststructuralism” (which is still very much the going favorite). But my claim is that the gains of Foucault and Deleuze need not be sought, indeed should not be sought, in some -ism that would name some new region of philosophy into which we all must march. I would situate both Foucault and Deleuze more humbly, as proposing and enacting philosophical methodologies, for instance genealogy and archaeology or symptomatology and schizoanalysis. These methods of critical problematization do not need a misplaced -ism to back them up and ground them. What they need, rather, are contemporary philosophers today, you and me, picking up these methods and putting them to work in the context of *newer* inquiries into *emergent* norms and forms. The only way to make use of Foucault and Deleuze is to use them to go beyond where they themselves could have gone. They could not go where we can go today – because our world is decisively different from theirs. Locating that difference means working at that temporal stitch that holds together but keeps separate where we are today and where they were yesterday.

The crucial gain for making that stitch has to do with a mode of critique that does not judge. The press of thought beyond judgment was central for both Foucault and Deleuze, and could be central again today for us.

In Foucault's case, we should not neglect his repeated claims to the effect that problematizations are not an attempt at determinate affirmation or negation, but rather an attempt to make visible an indeterminate background field in virtue of which specific determinations can come to be elaborated. In an interview with Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus, Foucault says, "You see, what I want to do is not the history of solutions . . . I would like to do the genealogy of problems, or *problématiques*. My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same thing as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism."⁷² For Foucault, the work of problematization is a way of outflanking the invitation to judgment. Interviewers were always asking Foucault for his opinions on what to do. They were asking, in other words, for Foucault to offer determinate solutions to the problems he was posing. But if the difficult labor of posing problems was their primary work, then these questions are confused. Consider another interview with interlocutors at Berkeley, in which Foucault found himself responding to questions along these lines: "Listen, listen . . . How difficult it is! I'm not a prophet; I'm not an organizer; I don't want to tell people what they should do. I'm not going to tell them, 'This is good for you, this is bad for you!' I try to analyze a real situation in its various complexities, with the goal of allowing refusal, and curiosity, and innovation."⁷³ There are countless such remarks by Foucault scattered throughout his interviews, lecture courses, and other occasional writings: "It's amazing how people like judging. Judgment is being passed everywhere, all the time."⁷⁴

Deleuze too was often asked to stake himself to a position, a view, or an opinion. It is ironic that so many intellectuals are invited to solve problems in virtue, presumably, of simply being well-known intellectuals, as if being well-disciplined in a specific field automatically translates to a kind of universality of intellect.⁷⁵ Like Foucault, Deleuze had the better wisdom to resist these constant invitations. In one interview he quipped, "Intellectuals are wonderfully cultivated, they have views on everything. I'm not an intellectual, because I can't supply views like that, I've got no stock of views to draw on . . . It's really good not having any view or idea about this or that point. We don't suffer these days from any lack of communication, but rather from all the forces making us say things when we've nothing much to say."⁷⁶ A striking line near the end of *Anti-Oedipus* confirms this stance, in this case an orientation toward political critique without taking a political position: "Schizoanalysis *as such* has strictly no political program to propose . . . Schizoanalysis is something that does not claim to be speaking for anything or anyone."⁷⁷

There is, of course, much in the work of both Foucault and Deleuze that cannot be accounted for in terms of this exposition of the work of critique beyond judgment. Suffice it to say that Foucault and Deleuze, though they agreed on

much, did not of course agree on everything. What resonates most between the work of both, I have argued, is also that which constitutes their greatest philosophical achievement for our present philosophical moment: the potentiality of a work of critical philosophy that finally frees itself from the tempting sway of the judgmental orientation of contradiction in order that thought might find its way to the experimental orientation of problematization and reconstruction. It is this idea above all that we should hold on to, work through, and work over. To learn to philosophize in this mode would be invigorating for the contemporary work of critique. It would give us a fresh set of challenges. For pronouncements we could substitute problems. For answers we could substitute questions. For rigidified pride we could substitute unrelenting curiosity. For philosophy as an announcement of what is obligatory, we could at long last substitute philosophy as an instrumentality for transformative engagement. All of this might, though surely only in fits and starts, contribute toward conditions for the re-engagement of philosophy with practice, thus recomposing the tenuous relationship between we “intellectuals” and the “powers” toward which we supposedly speak. And though we may fail in all of this, should we not at least allow ourselves to try? The experiment itself would be worth the effort.⁷⁸

NOTES

1. Foucault in Deleuze and Foucault (1972, 207–8).
2. Deleuze in Deleuze and Foucault (1972, 208). Though this famous remark is Deleuze’s (it is often incorrectly attributed to Foucault), it is worth noting that in a later 1977 interview (and not only there) Foucault indicates his broad agreement with this claim by explicitly appropriating the metaphor of philosophy as providing tools: “What we have to present are instruments and tools that people might find useful. By forming groups specifically to make these analyses, to wage these struggles, by using these instruments or others: this is how, in the end, possibilities open up” (Foucault 1977a, 197).
3. Deleuze in Deleuze and Foucault (1972, 208).
4. As Kant specifies the project of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, “Such a critique is therefore a preparation, so far as may be possible, for an organon, and so presumably not an organon itself” (1787, A12/B26).
5. Kant writes, “I entitle *transcendental* all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects insofar as this mode of knowledge is to be possible a priori. A system of such concepts might be entitled transcendental philosophy” (1787, A11/B25).
6. See Kant (1787, A296/B352–3).
7. See for instance Kant (1787, B424).
8. See, for instance, Meillasoux (2006), which is without doubt the gold standard for the recent revivals of speculative and ontological philosophy.
9. Foucault (1984a, 315); translation lightly modified from *EWI*.

10. Deleuze (1993a, 126).
11. Hegel (1821, §2, 12).
12. I borrow the term *geistesgeschichte* from Rorty (1984).
13. On Hume as a precedent for Deleuze see, of course, Deleuze's 1953 book on Hume (*Empiricism and Subjectivity*) as well as discussion by Smith (2001, 62ff.). I am still awaiting a good discussion of Hume's precedent for Foucault.
14. "I am an experimenter and not a theorist," Foucault once quipped (1978, 240). "[E]xperimentation on oneself, is our only identity, our single chance for all the combinations that inhabit us," Deleuze once cryptically proclaimed (1977, 11).
15. See Smith (2006, 107).
16. See for instance Zambrana (2012).
17. Deleuze provocatively wrote of Hyppolite in one of his first publications: "In the wake of this fruitful book by Jean Hyppolite [*Logic and Existence*], one might ask whether an ontology of difference couldn't be created that would not go all the way to contradiction, since contradiction would be less and not more than difference" (1954, 18). Foucault similarly spoke to an interviewer much later of having "to free myself from the dominant influences in my university training in the early fifties – Hegel and phenomenology . . . The work of Jean Wahl and the teaching of Jean Hyppolite. It was a Hegelianism permeated with phenomenology and existentialism, centered on the theme of the unhappy consciousness" (1978, 246).
18. The most influential texts were Kojève (1947) and Hyppolite (1946). A useful intellectual history of mid-century French Hegelianism, focusing in the final chapter on its meanings for both Foucault and Deleuze, is Roth (1988). See on Sartre's connections here work by Flynn (1997).
19. Though my overt focus here is on French Hegelianism (and its composites of dialectical history and existential phenomenology), it would not be inaccurate to suggest that it was really Freudo-Hegelianism, Marxo-Hegelianism, and of course Freudo-Marxism that were Deleuze and Foucault's biggest targets. In his reviews of *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*, Foucault applauded as follows: "We should thank Deleuze for his efforts. He did not revive the tiresome slogans: Freud with Marx, Marx with Freud, and both, if you please, with us" (1970, 355). Later, in his preface to the English translation of *Anti-Oedipus* where he describes Deleuze and Guattari as setting fire to their shared philosophical inheritance, suggesting that their book enacts an incineration of "Marx and Freud in the same incandescent light." Further down the page he wryly notes, "*Anti-Oedipus* is not a flashy Hegel" (Foucault 1977a, xii). Deleuze in his book, *Foucault*, would repay the compliment (or at least part of it) years later: "It is as if, finally, something new were emerging in the wake of Marx" (Deleuze 1986, 30). There are, of course, countless other instances in Foucault and Deleuze where Freud and Marx, and through them a certain Hegel, are displaced.
20. It may be useful to consider the core elements of negative dialectics. Two elements are central: the relation of *contradiction* and its corollary motion of *negation*. Tom Rockmore concisely summarizes the place of these two elements in Hegel's dialectic, which he argues "consists in relativizing opposites and in thinking the unity of contraries . . . what causes the concept to change and propels it from phase to phase is the negative or

negation that it contains and that develops from within it" (Rockmore 1992, 112–13). On this very standard reading, the dialectic works to relate concepts by way of its central category of contradiction or opposition. A relation of contradiction is one that cannot be withstood and maintained. It is therefore a specification of conditions under which the terms of the contradiction must suffer determinate negation. This should not be construed as one term negating the other. Rather it is their contradictory relation which is negated, involving not so much the negation of one term and the affirmation of another as the negation of the contradictory opposition itself, and with it the entirety of involved terms. Thus, for example, the class interests of the capitalist accumulators and the persisting laboring are in contradiction with one another. It is this contradiction, and not the capitalists or the laborers taken by themselves as they are for themselves, that generates the negative outflow. What emerges after this negation is determinately engendered in the negation itself, which is to say that what emerges after negation is on the basis of negation itself. What will emerge is itself based on the determinate negation of that which constituted the contradiction. We should not expect some radically new third term to suddenly appear. Thus, the communes of the proletariat can be seen as the form that labor will assume on the basis of the determinate negation of capitalist accumulation in the context of the contradiction between capital and labor. The contradiction between capital and labor just would not, on a Hegelian logic, give rise to some radically new third term, such as a reinvigoration of religiosity. Nor would the emergent third term be identical with one of the two terms at work in the contradiction. The proletarian communes are not to be identified with those who labor in the context of capitalism. The negative work of contradiction thus preserves both continuity (against radicality) and progress (against stasis). It shows how history *moves* (rather than jumps) *forward* (rather than sideways). This progressive and continuous nature of the dialectic of the concept is, as is well known, absolutely crucial to Hegel's presentation of his account of the absolute.

21. Hegel (1821, §34, 40); see this point of Hegel's in another of his idioms in Hegel (1807, §92, 59).
22. The path between foundationalism and coherentism that Deleuze and Foucault are together navigating would profit much from comparison to the kind of Wittgensteinian remarks I am offering here.
23. One reason why it is worth being precise about the duality of experimentation is because this point helps us see that a philosophical tradition that emphasized experimental reconstruction rather than experimental problematization would find itself perfectly at home with Foucault and Deleuze, in part because any such tradition would share their side of the basic watershed. One such tradition worth mentioning insofar as it nicely, though for some quite unexpectedly, pairs with Foucault and Deleuze in this way is that of philosophical pragmatism, for which the core categories of the motion of thought are also problematizations and reconstructions. For a discussion of the relationship between Foucault's genealogy and pragmatism generally see Koopman (2011), or at greater length the final chapters of both Koopman (2009) and Koopman (2013). For one instance of Deleuze's own positive remarks about pragmatism see Deleuze (1993b, 86).

24. My reading strategy here is forthrightly normative and selective rather than descriptive and exhaustive – above all my effort is to read what is *best* in Foucault and Deleuze. I accept that there are other aspects of Foucault, and especially Deleuze, that are not problematizational in this sense – my argument is simply that these are not the best aspects of their work and do not represent what we today should take from them. I make this argument in the final section below, but for a criticism of this aspect of Foucault's work see Koopman (2013, Chapter 6), and on Deleuze albeit briefly see Koopman (2013, Chapter 2).
25. There are numerous works employing this standard story: one worth mentioning in the present context, because it elaborates the usual narrative in connection with a discussion of French Hegelianism, is Roth (1988).
26. Roth, to stick with just the one example, makes the argument that, for Foucault and Deleuze, "Nietzsche . . . replaces Hegel as the locus of philosophical authority" (1988, 190), an argument which leads him to the conclusion that Deleuze and Foucault be read primarily as implementing a philosophical "delegitimation" (1988, 189–224). But delegitimation would of course simply be an instance of negative determination, thus essentially repeating Hegel, whereas my claim is that Deleuze and Foucault institute their break by moving beyond determination into the sphere of the indeterminate. On my reading, problematization is a proper alternative to both legitimation and delegitimation. Roth is, I think, led down the path of this misreading by adhering too closely to the standard narrative of placing all the emphasis on Nietzsche – his account is only typical insofar as it completely ignores Bergson and Canguilhem in this respect (neither name features in the index, which is perhaps surprising for a well-researched and professional intellectual history of the dominant Hegelian episode in mid-century French philosophy).
27. Much has been made of these influences for both thinkers, but my point is just that the literature overwhelmingly emphasizes Nietzsche. I do not here develop this suggestion regarding Canguilhem as a precursor for Foucaultian problematization, but any such development surely would involve a careful look at the closing paragraphs of Foucault's homage to Canguilhem in Foucault (1985) as well as Foucault's undeveloped but interesting claim about Canguilhem that, "Many of his students were neither Marxists nor Freudians nor structuralists, and I am speaking of myself" (1983a, 437).
28. Why begin with Deleuze? Mainly for convenience. In approaching these texts, we might adopt a typical procedure of according priority by way of chronology. This, at least, has the advantage of making the exposition manageable, though perhaps at the cost of being somewhat misleading if it implicates an invocation of that confounding category of intellectual history known as "influence." While it is undeniable that Deleuze arrived at a self-conscious statement of the work of experimentation before Foucault, there is in fact no real need to attribute priority to either Deleuze or Foucault on this matter, and indeed no real gain in doing so. Deleuze was the first to get here only in the sense that he was the first to state these matters with meta-philosophical clarity in his works of the 1960s, in such books as his 1962 *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and his 1966 *Bergsonism*. As for Foucault, the operations of experimental thought is already clearly on display in his

History of Madness project published in 1961, though that book of course sorely lacks the kind of self-reflective apparatus that Deleuze already had up and running in his book of the next year.

29. Deleuze and Guattari (1991, 5).
30. Deleuze and Guattari (1991, 16).
31. Patton (2000, 21) is one exception in making a strong claim on behalf of the centrality of problems for Deleuze.
32. Deleuze (1962, 195).
33. Deleuze (1962, 196).
34. Deleuze (1956a, 38).
35. Deleuze (1956a, 42).
36. Deleuze (1956a, 42).
37. Deleuze (1956a, 40).
38. Deleuze (1956b, 31).
39. Deleuze (1966, 106–13).
40. Deleuze (1966, 14).
41. Deleuze (1966, 14).
42. Deleuze writes, “It is too readily assumed that the symptoms only have to be transposed and the instincts reversed for Masoch to be turned into Sade, according to the principle of the unity of opposites” (1967, 13).
43. Deleuze (1967, 35).
44. Deleuze (1967, 31).
45. See Deleuze (1967, 53) discussing Masoch’s own self-reflections published as Appendix I to the cited edition.
46. On the relation of these two monuments to the historical works preceding them, Dan Smith and John Protevi note: “Deleuze’s historical monographs were, in a sense, preliminary sketches for the great canvas of *Difference and Repetition* (1968), which marshaled these resources from the history of philosophy in an ambitious project to construct a ‘philosophy of difference.’” (Smith and Protevi 2012, online).
47. Smith (2001, 69); cf. (2006, 107). Note however a crucial difference in exposition here: I depart from Smith in his retention of the idea of a “new dialectics” as a label for what Deleuze and Foucault are doing, preferring instead to specify the difference in terms of an alternative to dialectics altogether. Smith’s approach has the merits of remaining perhaps closer to Deleuze’s own terminology, as suggested in my discussion of *Difference and Repetition* on the next page. However, I find Deleuze’s terminology needlessly confused, and do not see how the two-sided dialectic could be reinvested in a manner that would break its attachment to contradiction and opposition. Foucault, for his part, as shown in the ensuing discussion, never sought to recuperate the notion of the dialectic. Perhaps I am here only playing Foucault to Smith’s Deleuze. I thank Adina Arvatu for helpful conversation on this point.
48. Deleuze (1968, xix).
49. Deleuze (1968, 284).
50. Deleuze (1968, 179).
51. Cf. Deleuze (1962).

52. Deleuze (1968, 208).
53. Cf. Deleuze (1968, 202, 208).
54. Deleuze (1968, 207).
55. Deleuze (1966, 15–21).
56. Deleuze (1969, 1).
57. Deleuze (1969, 249).
58. Deleuze (1969, 54).
59. Deleuze (1969, 122).
60. Deleuze (1969, 123).
61. Foucault (1970, 358–9).
62. Deleuze (1986, 116).
63. Deleuze (1977, 127).
64. Foucault (1976, 116).
65. Foucault (1984b, 257); for another remark to almost exactly the same effect, see Foucault (1983c, 171).
66. See Foucault (1984b, 257).
67. See Koopman (2013, 46, 132).
68. Foucault (1984c, 117).
69. Foucault (1984c, 118).
70. Foucault (1984c, 118).
71. Foucault (1981, 456).
72. Foucault (1983b, 256).
73. Foucault (1980b, 13).
74. Foucault (1980a, 323).
75. I am of course here riffing on Foucault’s distinction between the “specific intellectual” and the “universal intellectual” in Foucault (1977c, 127).
76. Deleuze (1988, 137).
77. Deleuze and Guattari (1972, 380).
78. For discussion of ideas integral to the arguments herein, or for comments on earlier drafts of this essay, I thank Adina Arvatu, Thomas Nail, Dan Smith, and (with an additional note of thanks for his so many other modes of intellectual and scholarly stimulation) Nicolae Morar.

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