

GENEALOGY THROUGH THE DECOLONIAL TURN:  
CULTIVATING CRITICAL ATTITUDES

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis offers a reconsideration of the contentious relationship between Michel Foucault and postcolonial thought through the decolonial turn, by interpreting critique as attitude. The discussion of continuity in Foucault's work on subjectivity, between his genealogical and ethical periods, leads to an understanding of critical attitude as a mode of critique and self-critique that depends on genealogy as a method of historical inquiry.

Meanwhile, the shift away from European modes of rationality described by the decolonial turn in philosophy, proposes an approach to social transformation and the dismantling of Eurocentrism through understanding critique as operative in terms of the decolonial attitude. A comparison of these two attitudes as modes of critique provides common ground for the recognition of their mutual compatibility as techniques for reinterpreting history that also work in the service of contending with coloniality.

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

*Mais qu'est-ce donc que la philosophie aujourd'hui—je veux dire l'activité philosophique—si elle n'est pas le travail critique de la pensée sur elle-même? Et si elle ne consiste pas, au lieu de légitimer ce qu'on sait déjà, à entreprendre de savoir comment et jusqu'où il serait possible de penser autrement?*  
-M. Foucault<sup>1</sup>

*Se abren tiempos de rebelión y de cambio. Hay quienes creen que el destino descansa en las rodillas de los dioses, pero la verdad es que trabaja, como un desafío candente, sobre las conciencias de los hombres.*  
-E. Galeano<sup>2</sup>

### **The Situation**

“What are we to think?” (Kusch, 10) asks Rodolfo Kusch in *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, when considering the place of understanding and translation in cross-cultural communication. In this text, Kusch refers to a scene that he witnesses in the Andean highlands, which pushes him to think about the profound dissonance between Western and Indigenous epistemologies. He describes the interactions (or lack thereof) between a group of anthropologists and an indigenous grandfather accompanied by his grandson who knows enough Spanish to act as a translator. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the possibility of installing a hydraulic water pump that would solve extreme drought problems faced in the region. At the beginning of the interview, the grandfather smiles from time to time and provides brief answers to questions while explaining the importance of “the system of reciprocity (*ayni*), the *ayllu*, or community, and a thousand other things” (Kusch, 9). However, as the interview proceeds, the grandfather becomes more and more distant, providing fewer and less concrete answers to the interview questions. Finally, “the grandfather would chew some coca, would offer some of his alcohol to the earth, and would not answer” (Kusch, 9), thus concluding the interview session. Kusch returns to this example at several junctures throughout the book as a way of illustrating the abyssal disconnect between

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<sup>1</sup> This fragment is from the introduction to Michel Foucault's Volume II of the History of Sexuality: *L'Usage des plaisirs* (p. 15-16)

<sup>2</sup> These are the concluding lines of Eduardo Galeano's *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* (p. 337)

what he frames as a radical difference between Western and Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. As a way of analyzing the encounter, Kusch explains how the “grandfather belongs to a world in which the hydraulic pump lacks meaning, given that the grandfather relied on his own resources, such as ritual. [...] Evidently, [he concludes] our tools do not cross easily to the other side” (Kusch, 10). Through this exchange, Kusch illustrates one of the major tensions at play in thinking about coloniality and the role of communication, understanding, and translation. These tensions are manifest in the indigenous man’s attitude, at first welcoming the opportunity for exchange, but eventually realizing the one-sidedness of the conversation, he becomes increasingly silent and distant. The habitual one-sidedness of this conversation exemplifies why translation is often considered as operative under a logic of colonialism by much decolonial thought. Faced with this colonial move, certain things are perhaps best left untranslated.

Jumping across the Atlantic, Jacques Derrida poses poignant questions that speak to this same issue of translation. In his text, *Monolingualism of the Other*, Derrida remarks on the growing tendency whereby “certain people must yield to the homogeneity of dominant languages. They must learn the language of the masters, of capital and machines; they must lose their idiom in order to survive or live better” (Derrida, 30). This perhaps articulates Kusch’s same concern in different words. Ultimately, Derrida asks: “what if some humans were more worth saving than their language, under circumstances where, alas, one needed to choose between them?” (Derrida, 30). This tension that he so eloquently and succinctly poses as a question speaks to the heart of what’s at stake in these historically one-sided conversations, linguistically but also culturally, politically, and practically. Are we to “rationalize” (colonize or translate) words, ideas, people for the sake of communication, ultimately risking the loss of a world or a people for the sake of gaining a (potentially one-sided) relationship? Or, following Rigoberta Menchú, are some secrets just necessary to maintain (Menchú, 1983)? This tension has been articulated in different ways by different traditions. In one of its formulations it boils down to an ethical question about the place of coloniality and how to best address it.

I situate this project within this general vicinity, asking about the consequences of colonialism for subjectivity and knowledge. However, due to the multifaceted and

gargantuan nature that these questions imply along with their numerous theoretical approaches, I will weigh in on much more modest terms. Rather than posing answers, or enumerating the ways in which coloniality imprints subjectivity and epistemology, I will approach this question from the standpoint of critique, specifically addressing the cultivation of a *critical attitude* that might develop an orientation toward critique that could address this worry. I am attracted to the notion of attitude because of the way it engages critique differently. It poses a threat, but not a violent one. It is rather a feisty sort of threat because it threatens expected forms of behavior by negating, denying, and acting against an established set of norms. It arises principally out of disagreement or discontent with present circumstances. But can an attitude be cultivated from just anywhere? If so, how does one go about doing that? Or does one simply stumble upon an attitude and *react*? Or perhaps one must be situated within an environment so stifling that an attitude is eventually born, out of a kind of necessity. And once this attitude has been cultivated (or maybe even beforehand), the question of *who* always comes to mind. *Who* has an attitude? Who can adopt certain *kinds* of attitudes? Is it a choice? Can one choose *not* to engage with a certain attitude? And when it comes down to making those distinctions, who are the subjects of critique and what are the circumstances (or perhaps conditions of possibility) within which an attitude develops? These are just some of the questions that are central for the concept of attitude and its relationship to critique. That being said, perhaps the way attitude relates to the critical task in philosophy is deployed, developed, and engaged differently in relation to different circumstances and at different times.

Surely, the critical task of philosophy manifests differently for Foucault and in decolonial thought, despite the fact that both evoke attitude in a particular way that engenders or provides the conditions for the production of a particular kind of critical subject. So, what does having a “*critical attitude*” (Foucault) or a “*decolonial attitude*” (Maldonado-Torres) lend to the practice of critique? While this doesn’t directly alleviate the tension, or answer the question of the consequences of colonialism for subjectivity, I propose that through the continued activity of critique, working with notion of attitude might prepare the ground for a more responsible (and by that I mean responsive) attunement to coloniality as a structuring principle of contemporary life. In what follows,

I begin to think through why and how this particular critical disposition might be cultivated in different ways in order to face up to the legacy of colonialism.

### **Approaching Critique as an Attitude**

Through their mutual emphasis on visibility, genealogy and postcolonial studies share a potentially mutually-constructive concern for the subject, in spite of the differences in thinking just *who* that subject might be. Both move away from the ideal of universality, seeking to dislocate the Subject from transcendental tendencies in favor of a more particular, geopolitically, and historically located conception of subjectivity. For Michel Foucault, subjectivity is constituted within a particular set of historically-specific discursive practices, while for postcolonial literature, it is the subject that makes visible the historical legacy of colonialism. The link between these seemingly dissonant perspectives arguably begins with Edward Said's *Orientalism*.<sup>3</sup> It is in this text that Eurocentrism becomes glaringly dangerous, repeating the colonial move that occludes difference by depicting it through insular discursive practices. Today, almost four decades after Said's influential book was published, the conversation between Foucauldian and post/de-colonial scholars has produced prolific scholarship which attests to the contested yet productive articulations between subjectivity and history produced therein.<sup>4</sup>

However, after this initially felicitous boom, the past several years have witnessed a diminished interest in pursuing the conversation between Foucault and decolonial critique.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, my paper ventures back into the stacks to dust off some of the forgotten arguments that might help elucidate productive resonances between genealogy and decoloniality. Through the under-explored, shared vocabulary of critique

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Young makes this claim in *Postcolonialism: An Introduction* (381; 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Alongside Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Aijaz Ahmad, and Robert Young are most canonical in postcolonial engagement with Foucault's thought, mainly concerning questions of discourse, epistemology, and representation.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Nichols alludes to this in "Postcolonial Studies and the Discourse of Foucault: Survey of a Field of Problematization" (2010; 140). After critiques of Said's *Orientalism* in the 80's and 90's flourished, and Stoler's resituates of Foucault in the postcolonial debates with *Race and the Education of Desire* (1995), Stoler's text is still (more than a decade later) one of the only major references for systematically calling Foucault's Eurocentrism into question.

(specifically articulated in terms of *critical* and *decolonial attitude*), I see productive potential in revisiting this dialog. Between shared conceptual vocabulary and a commitment to working toward emancipation and social change, both confront the philosophical canon in strikingly similar ways. Even in the places where they tend to gain distance from one another, dialog might help raise tension in the right places to work toward their common goals. While on the one hand, Foucault and Foucauldian scholarship has largely ignored the overarching historical context of colonialism, on the other, decolonial scholarship has lately either rejected Foucault as apolitical or as hopelessly Eurocentric and therefore inapplicable to a decolonial context. Notwithstanding, I will argue that Foucault and decolonial thought should maintain communication in order to push each other to continue to work through each other's blind spots, toward the production of careful and attentive ways of thinking through questions of difference, social change, representation, and freedom, while contending with the weight of colonality.

Respectfully following the theoretical delimitations set up by decolonial thinkers themselves, I will not attempt to force decoloniality into a verb, thus extracting from it a method of "decolonization".<sup>6</sup> That would be to repeat precisely the kind of colonial violence that decolonial thinkers seek to critique. Therefore, this is not a decolonial project. It is rather a project that engages decolonial thought. It is *about* decolonial thought. It situates several decolonial thinkers in conversation *with* Foucault and *amongst* Foucault scholarship with the aim of elucidating some common threads between the two fields, while also enriching, diversifying, and rendering Foucault's genealogy more rigorous as a method of critique. Given the politically charged nature of the debates at hand, and my own particular positionality as a North American from the United States, my own contributions to the decolonial dialogue remain somewhat on the periphery. While I seek critical intervention into both fields, I do not pretend to decolonize Foucault, and much less to provide a meticulous excavation of the minutia of all of the ways in which Foucault himself (or the multitudinous tomes of secondary literature that his work

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<sup>6</sup> Many decolonial thinkers are adamantly against the idea of method, locating it as a Eurocentric approach to knowledge. Some of the authors I have in mind here are: Silvia Rivera Cusiquanqui, María Lugones, Catherine Walsh, Frantz Fanon.

has inspired) makes Eurocentric claims. The way Catherine Walsh describes her project resonates with me and my aims in this project (Walsh, 2012). She carefully situates herself and identifies her own place of enunciation as a means of thinking and acting *with* as opposed to the alternative, which would be to think and act *for*. The preposition has never been so important.

My project is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter focuses on Foucault and subjectivity as it pertains to his genealogical method. I provide a brief overview of the relevant debates in the secondary literature that attest to the political viability of Foucault's genealogy and then connect that to his later work in techniques of the self. The second chapter provides a postcolonial critique of Foucault following Ann Stoler's insights and then proceeds with a brief overview of the different threads that debate has inspired in terms of the decolonial rejection of Foucault. Finally, the third chapter problematizes the wedge that has been driven between Foucauldian and decolonial scholarship, in an attempt to pull them back into conversation with one another. I suggest that Foucault's genealogical subject is actually capable of attunement to the decolonial shift that has been forming for some years now in philosophy by looking at how attitude operates in each field. Through dialog, a modified genealogy might actually lend purchase to decolonial work, cultivating critical attitudes that slightly modify the social terrain so deeply imbued with coloniality.

## CHAPTER II

### FOUCAULT ON CRITIQUE: GENEALOGY AND CRITICAL SUBJECTIVATION

In Foucault's work, genealogy is a method of philosophical and historical inquiry that seeks to render visible the production of a certain kind of critical subject.<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that his conception of subjectivity has given rise to numerous criticisms, I will argue that there is room for reinterpretation of the consequences of those criticisms. In this chapter, I shall address why Foucault's method of genealogy, emphasizing as it does the role of power, does not preclude or diminish the possibility of agency, but actually provides a robust account of social transformation while remaining grounded in history. Through an exploration of Foucauldian genealogy, I will show how subjectivity is given the chance to be altered, lending transformative potential to Foucault's subject, which in the course of critique is already in some way altered. This shift is further refined through the cultivation of a *critical attitude*, introduced in Foucault's later ethical writings. Keeping this attention on critique, I begin with a discussion of subjectivity as a function of power-knowledge.

For Foucault, we are indeed confined to reflect about ourselves in particular, historically determined ways. It is precisely within those spaces—where the configurations of knowledge intersect with power—that genealogy becomes useful as a tool for critique and allows us to see discontinuities or breaks in seemingly fluid and continuous histories. By rendering visible those breaks in the past genealogy provides a way to glean different perspectives on dominant configurations of knowledge and power,

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<sup>7</sup> The reading of Foucault that focuses on visibility is in direct reference to Gilles Deleuze. In his book *Foucault* (1986), Deleuze dedicates the chapter entitled: "Strata or Historical Formations: the Visible and the Articulate (Knowledge)" to developing his understanding of the way visibility operates in Foucault's work in a way that is irreducible to the articulable, and yet overlaps with it in such a way as to render intelligibility possible. The importance of this theme for Deleuze's understanding of Foucault is fundamental. He says "[i]f we forget the theory of visibility as we distort Foucault's conception of history, but equally we distort his thought and his conception of thought in general" (Deleuze, 50). This gives a sense to the importance for understanding how Foucault employs the visibility and the sayable, according to Deleuze.



thus providing insight into a past that is radically different from the present.<sup>8</sup> As such, we need not feel determined or even overdetermined by one particular past, to pave the way for a different kind of future. Genealogy can be seen as a tool for critique broadly speaking, an intervention into the archive that reconstitutes the material of historical narrative. Insofar as it opens the possibility to see history differently, genealogy does the work of mobilizing the possibility for desubjectivation, which at once becomes a kind of subjectivation. Genealogy is therefore a critical methodology capable of uprooting history from its transcendental tendencies, and it works on the subject as well. Producing a mode of subjectivation that is capable of critique while cultivating an attitude that will continually motivate self-critique. This work on the self can only really begin to be addressed once the notion of discourse is clarified in the way Foucault employs it in his genealogical method. But the way discourse relates to language, knowledge, power, and the subject evolves in Foucault's writings, beginning with *The Order of Things* through *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, finally arriving to its use in genealogical terms in *Discipline and Punish*. Discourse, for Foucault, is translated to discursive formations or *practices* which bestow a sense of order and unity to seemingly heterogeneous uses of language, and moreover, are fundamental to the way Foucault deploys genealogy as a method of historical inquiry.

### **Discursive Formations**

In his 1966 *The Order of Things*, Foucault performs an archaeology of the human sciences. Yet, what he is really interested in is how knowledge came to be able to represent the *subject* through language. That is, discourse has come to constitute subjectivity such that everything that can be spoken—or even thought of—is necessarily invested with a form of intelligibility granted by an historically situated system of signs and representations. In this view, man is just one of many *things* that can be represented.<sup>9</sup> But that cannot be *all* that man is, for he becomes a subject of representation precisely

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<sup>8</sup> This is not to say that there is something like a homogeneous “present” or “past” that one intervenes and interrupts, but rather that by attending to dominant narratives that structure and organize social life and in attending to the different ways it interpolates the individual within that social complex, through genealogy those totalizing, dominating narratives begin to look different.

<sup>9</sup> Here I maintain the use of “man” in following Foucault’s original language. This is meant to highlight one of the many ways his work leaves room for critique, in this case feminist critique.

through language. Foucault thus concludes that, “[m]an’s mode of being as constituted in modern thought enables him to play two roles: he is at the same time at the foundation of all positivities and present [...] in the element of empirical things” (Foucault, *OT*, 344). In other words, man is simultaneously subject and object to categories of knowledge. Foucault shows how the foundation for those categories of knowledge exists without any kind of fundamental ontology or transcendental necessity. That is, once knowledge is seen as contingent upon us as subjects of its production and maintenance, then the solidity of its objective foundation begins to crumble.<sup>10</sup> Foucault’s subject is on the brink of transformation. For if his thesis is correct, and “man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end” (Foucault, *OT*, 387), then he is faced with two possibilities: utter disillusionment at the loss of the subject, or the beginning of a new era, one which implies a radical transformation of the subject conceived in modernity. In either case, the subject for Foucault, is subjected to language. Constituted by his words, his representations, and his discourse, the subject is held in accountable through language, which incidentally grants the possibility for action in the first place.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault further articulates *discourse* as a function of scientific disciplines, showing how objects of knowledge are identified and the ways in which they become normatively classified (in terms of deviance, sexuality etc.) through a particular use of language. He demonstrates how the realm of language is related to the realm of practice in a way that exceeds the simplicity of the relationship of a system of signs and the *things* it designates.<sup>11</sup> In his archaeology, Foucault is concerned

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<sup>10</sup> Mark Kelly addresses a subtlety about the distinction between “man” and “the subject” that Chauncey Colwell and Roland Barthes engage, noting that Foucault does not announce the death of the subject nor of man, “but rather “vaguely threatened him with extinction at the end of *The Order of Things*” (see Kelly 2009; 83). That being said, this debate, however nuanced it is, does not change the overall significance of what Foucault does in *OT* with regards to discursive practices and their relation to genealogy.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault clarifies his thoughts on the difference between symbolic language and discourse as practice, saying: “I would like to show that ‘discourses’, in the form in which they can be heard or read, are not, as one might expect, a mere intersection of things and words: an obscure web of things, and a manifest, visible, coloured chain of words” (AK, 48). It becomes rather, “[a] task that consists of not —of no longer—treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (AK, 49). This citation marks the transition between what Foucault accomplishes in *The Order of Things* and what he wants to do in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, the former being an investigation of the relationship between language and “reality” while the latter delves into the way that relationship structures social organization through specific kinds of practices that then go on to attain the status of knowledge precisely through their status as a regulated practice.

with analyzing precisely that excess, whereby discursive practices interpret how language acts in the world through systems of practices that come to be considered knowledge, insofar as they are validated by a conception of truth. Not only is discourse “a violence that we do to things” (Foucault, *AK*, 229) to order the world in a particular way according to truth (or a will to truth), but through *regularity* and institutional support, discourse is linked to practice.<sup>12</sup> Taking his own work, *History of Madness* as an example, he examines how discursive practices operate to provide the conditions of possibility for the emergence of psychiatry at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He proceeds to list, “a whole set of relations between hospitalization, internment, the conditions and procedures of social exclusion, the rules of jurisprudence, the norms of industrial labour and bourgeois morality” (Foucault, *AK*, 179) as forming a set of practices that facilitate the emergence of psychiatry as a field of possible knowledge. The list is comprised of a wide variety of seemingly heterogeneous social practices that converge to produce a new field of knowledge, which lead to structuring and organizing principles of people and societies.

While discourse (that which connects practice to knowledge) is present in Foucault from the beginning of his career, it is only later in *Discipline and Punish*, with the introduction of power that Foucault really hones in on how discourse affects the body to produce a particular *mode of subjection*. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault surveys the prison to exemplify the confluences of punitive bodies with juridical language to highlight the role of power in the production of subjectivity. Discourse no longer operates simply to organize social practices as they pertain to the realm of knowledge, but takes on an additional role in the production of subjectivity. It is through his recourse to power that Foucault establishes discourse as a practice that actually conditions the ways bodies are constituted *as* subjects, always with attention to their specific historic and geographic place. Concretely, “[a] corpus of knowledge, techniques, ‘scientific’ discourses is formed and becomes entangled with the practice of the power to punish” (Foucault, *DP*, 23). This

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<sup>12</sup> In a short lecture *The Discourse on Language (L'ordre du discours)* delivered in on December 2, 1970 Foucault motivates his discussion of discourse as it pertains to practices by referring to “the will to truth”. In that text he also enumerates four principles (reversal, discontinuity, specificity, exteriority) that govern the way discourse ought to be understood archaeologically.

practice of power is what differentiates discourse in archaeology from discourse in genealogy. Power stimulates the production of subjectivity in a way that archaeology is incapable of articulating.

Through the use of genealogy, a particular, historically contextualized notion of subjectivity is rendered visible as a function of knowledge-power. But contrary to some scholarship, Foucault does not replace his method of archaeology with genealogy.<sup>13</sup> Genealogy continues to rely on a particular (archaeological) understanding of discursive practice. Once invested with power, the role of discursive practices in genealogy *expands* in its explanatory capacity to describe shifts or changes in social organization.<sup>14</sup> If one were to compare the two, we could say that while archaeology excavates the relationship between knowledge and power at a given historical juncture, genealogy explains the difference between one archaeological moment and another. Through genealogical inquiry, historical change (and in particular the process of subjectivation) becomes possible to articulate through shifts in configurations of power-knowledge.

### **Subjection and Subjectivation**

The argument that subjectivation is rendered visible through knowledge-power in genealogy relies on a particular understanding of *subjectivation* that is differentiated, but not wholly separate, from *subjection*. Foucault uses both “subjection” and “subjugation” (*sujétion* and *assujettissement* respectively in French) in addition to his own word, “subjectivation” (spelled the same in French *subjectivation*) to talk about how different configurations of knowledge and power work on the subject. The relationship between these two sets of terms relays critical insight into debates in Foucault scholarship that argues *for* or *against* the political viability of his project. Foucault employs “subjection”

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<sup>13</sup> For examples of scholars who see a break in Foucault’s methodological and philosophical commitments between archaeology and genealogy see: James Bernauer’s *Michel Foucault’s Force of Flight* (1990), Gary Gutting’s *Michel Foucault’s Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (1989), Thomas Flynn’s *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason, Volume Two: A Poststructuralist Mapping of History* (2005), Barry Smart’s *Michel Foucault* (1985), and finally Eric Paras’s *Foucault 2.0: Beyond Power and Knowledge* (2006).

<sup>14</sup> The argument for continuity between archaeology and genealogy is one that Foucault himself argues in the first lecture in the series “Society Must Be Defended” (1976; 10-11). Secondary literature contributes to this read of Foucault as well, for canonical articulations of this argument see: Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (1983), Arnold Davidson “Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics” (1997), Johanna Oksala *Foucault on Freedom* (2005), and Colin Koopman “Foucault’s Historiographical Expansion: Adding Genealogy to Archaeology” (2008).

to talk about the analytics of power as they pertain to his developing notion of subjectivity throughout the 1970's.<sup>15</sup> Since *assujettissement* (subjugation) and *sujétion* (subjection) are practically synonyms in French, both having roots in the subject (*sujet*) and describing how power intersects with subjectivity, they have been translated to “subjection” in English versions of the text (Kelly, 87).<sup>16</sup> Foucault develops a technical understanding of subjection, conveying how one is *made* into a subject by describing how effects of power and objects of knowledge render a form of subjectivity possible or intelligible at a given historical moment. However, the quotidian use of “subjection” and its association with power as a form of domination (Kelly gives the examples of being subject to the king, the subject of grammar etc.) lead to misunderstandings about Foucault's technical use of the term.<sup>17</sup> Given this association, Foucault's idea of “subjection” is critiqued by critical theorists, feminists, and postcolonial scholars (as I will develop further in chapter II) due to the way it is perceived as utterly dominated by power relations, and therefore lacking the capacity for agency.<sup>18</sup> In this scenario, the subjected subject is relegated to the symbolic realm where discourse is reduced to abstract symbolic language and responds to the whims of dominating shifts in unpredictable and unstable power relations. That is, “subjection” leaves the subject no place outside of power to ground action and produce change. Many of the critiques that recur to this argument read discourse and power in Foucault in a way that situates the subject as completely determined by the confines of symbolic language, subjected to

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<sup>15</sup> Foucault refers to the subject as “subjected” in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and in *History of Sexuality Vol.1: The Will to Knowledge* (1976).

<sup>16</sup> Mark Kelly also notes that in some translations also employ “subjugation” (*sujétion*) to translate *assujettissement* causing quite a bit of confusion surrounding Foucault's use of these terms and the critical, theoretical work that he inscribes through them.

<sup>17</sup> In the Larousse Online French dictionary ([www.larousse.com.fr](http://www.larousse.com.fr)), synonymous with *assujettir* (verb form of *assujettissement/sujétion*) are words like: *dominer, opprimer, assevir, condamner, forcer, soumettre, arrimer, fixer, immobiliser*. All these verbs have associations with domination, fixity, force and rely on a hierarchical understanding of power relationships.

<sup>18</sup> Most notably, in critical theory, Nancy Frasier's “Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions” (1981) and Jurgen Habermas's “Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present” (1984). Feminists Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and again Nancy Frasier take Foucault to task for his agent-less subject in a collective anthology *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (1995). And finally, postcolonial scholars Edward Said, in his later work, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) along with Gayatri Spivak's canonical piece “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988) critique Foucault's conception of the subject in this way.

unpredictable social powers within which they are immersed. This reduction of subjection to domination through language and power is met with despair at the thought of engaging a world that is always already overdetermined.

In response to this reception of discursive practice, Foucault introduces his own term, “subjectivation” to his vocabulary in the 1980’s.<sup>19</sup> Subjectivation grants the subjected subject a modified notion of agency through “techniques” of self-transformation, thus differing from the subject of discipline.<sup>20</sup> The distinction between subjection and subjectivation marks the evolution of Foucault’s thought on the subject as well as a notable tension between two modes of interpretation in Foucauldian scholarship. There are those who see continuity in his work, thus attributing political viability to his project and those who reject his earlier work as politically and ethically irresponsible thus favoring his later work. For many, the category of subjectivation suddenly provides an answer to agency (or a modified conception of it at least) that Foucault’s genealogical subject of power is unable to produce.

However, the reliance on Foucault’s later work to articulate an agency-based concept of critique denies the continuum that these moments weave together in their complexity. Foucault’s subject of genealogy is not only embedded within his ethical subject, but it is precisely that genealogical subject that creates the conditions of possibility for self-critique through “techniques of the self”. To explore this continuity in his thought, I will take an in depth look at his adaptation of Nietzschean genealogy (understood as a form of critique) and then look at his Kantian heritage, which lends not only a philosophical gravitas to his project in critique, but also works genealogically, looking for “conditions of possibility”. Once Kant and Nietzsche are understood as lending key concepts to Foucault’s analysis, his genealogical method can be understood as taking part in the transformation of the subject in a way that substantiates the notion of subjectivation in his later works.

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<sup>19</sup> Foucault starts using “subjectivation” in his second two volumes of the History of Sexuality, *The Use of Pleasures* (1984) and *The Care of the Self* (1984) as well as in his lecture series at the *College de France*, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (1982).

<sup>20</sup> Daniele Lorenzini develops this distinction in his essay, “Foucault, Regimes of Truth and the Making of the Subject” (63-77) in *Foucault and the Making of Subjects*.

## Foucauldian Genealogy

Genealogy works on history but also on the subject (conceived as the product of a particular history) through a philosophical mechanism of critique. Foucault opens his discussion of genealogy in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* with a beautiful description of the reinterpreted capacity it lends to history. When explaining his understanding and interpretation of Nietzsche's use of genealogy, Foucault looks first to the body. This can be understood in terms of the genealogical heritage that a particular body evokes, but also in terms of a body of thought (perhaps history itself). He explains how in history,

the body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume of descent, perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body (83).

This passage can be read in the framework of the agent-less critiques cited above, but it can certainly also be read in another way. Perhaps history finds a way to claim the body as historical, as the mark of historical practice. In this way, history subjectivizes while genealogy desubjectivizes as historical analysis continually returns to critique.

It is the emphasis he gives on visibility that grants genealogy the capacity to replace the vocabulary of discovery (that conjures Truth and origin) for that of critique. Genealogy can thus be understood as a form of critique.<sup>21</sup> It is a critical intervention into the past that sifts through events as they pile up and accumulate through practice and habit. Genealogy tries to see a different sort of story than the one that gets told and retold, illuminating not just one, but “numberless beginnings, whose faint traces and hints of color are readily seen by a historical eye. The analysis of descent permits the dissociation of the self, its recognition and displacement as an empty synthesis, in liberating a profusion of lost events” (Foucault, *NGH*, 81). Loftily referring to history as “the history

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<sup>21</sup> Colin Koopman articulates genealogy as a form of critique *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (2012) by identifying critique for Foucault as a form of problematization, a theme he develops in his later work. Amy Allen follows suit in *The End of Progress* (2016).

of errors” rather than truths, Foucault reassures us that history is far from perfect and definitely not uniform. In fact, history is filled with disingenuousness, deceit, wrongdoing, messiness, and violence. With Nietzsche as his teacher, Foucault learns to trust genealogy precisely in following this mistrust in the search for origins, which he sees as harboring a moral concept of purity and innocence which is disingenuous at best, and dangerous at worst. He says, “historical beginnings are lowly: not in the sense of modest or discreet like the steps of a dove, but derisive and ironic, capable of undoing every infatuation” (Foucault, *NGH*, 79). History can no longer be seen as the search for the purity of an origin that exists prior to the messiness of situated, contextually determined mistakes and errors. And knowledge can no longer be understood as a form of discovery that is revealed with determination and insistence, but rather as a compilation of accidents. Therefore origin is really no origin at all, but rather chance that paves the path for history, and it is genealogy that allows us to tread ever so lightly so as to follow those irregularities as they collect and emerge from the dark underground of the grand narrative of history.

This form of seeing becomes extremely powerful in its reorienting potential, in terms of the capacity to resituate the self as a product of history differently. At one point in the *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* text Foucault likens history to medicine, insinuating that the task of history “is to become a curative science” (Foucault, *NGH*, 90). It is with that intensity and that inward-looking transformative potential that I look to genealogy as a mode of historical inquiry. Genealogy resituates the past while also necessarily resituating the self within that past. Foucault describes how history and the historian actually “share a beginning that is similarly impure and confused, shar[ing] the same sign in which the symptoms of sickness can be recognized as well as the seed of an exquisite flower” (Foucault, *NGH*, 90). So doing genealogy becomes curative and restorative, and it works on the self. The very concern with a particular historical problem, approached genealogically, already imbues the historian as well as the history itself, with a sense of commonality. Once the task of critique is exposed and underway, the two become imbricated with one another and both transform as a result. In fact, to deny this entanglement, this utterly non-objective perspective of the historian, “to blur his own perspective and replace it with the fiction of a universal geometry, [is] to mimic death in



order to enter the kingdom of the dead” (Foucault, *NGH*, 91). It could not be more clear that this endeavor into history or with history, once undertaken, is necessarily transformative of both doer and deed. Insofar as genealogy is capable of recognizing and actually affirming the historian as in part a product of the way that historical narrative is articulated, the question of place becomes inevitable to address. In fact, for Foucault, historical context is always tangled up in the historian’s concern for history. This is precisely what he finds so fascinating about Kant in his 1784 essay “What is Enlightenment” (*Was ist Aufklärung*) where he recognizes Kant recognizing himself as both product and producer of the history he narrates, while trying to grapple with the question of the limits of knowledge. This prepares the ground for a kind of historicized conceptualization of the kinds of philosophical questions that are engaged at a given time.

### **A Kantian Sense of Critique<sup>22</sup>**

The kind of philosophical work Foucault sees in genealogy relies on reading Foucault as Kantian. In his 1984 essay “What is Enlightenment” (*Qu’est-ce que les lumières*) Foucault reflects on his life’s work and proceeds to situate it in line with the Kantian critical tradition. While he clearly departs from Kant’s argument for a transcendental subject, he advocates for an understanding of genealogy as following up on Kant’s project of critique. Translating certain aspects of the Kantian project into his own terms, Foucault sees how, “[c]riticism 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” (Foucault, *E*, 46). Therefore, Foucault radicalizes Kant for the purposes of his own critical project by replacing transcendentalism with his methods of grounded historical inquiry (namely, archaeology and genealogy).

More recently, in her work *The Politics of Our Selves*, Amy Allen cites Foucault’s understanding of Kant as greatly influential to his interventions in the field of philosophy from the beginning of his career (his *thèse complémentaire* on Kant’s *Anthropology*) until

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<sup>22</sup> This chapter offers a fairly controversial interpretation of Foucault’s intellectual heritage though some, including Colin Koopman (*Genealogy as Critique*), Ian Hacking (“Self-Improvement”), Beatrice Han (*Foucault’s critical project: Between the transcendental and the historical*), and Amy Allen (*Politics of Our Selves*), affirm the Kantian tradition as helpful to locating Foucault’s project within the philosophical tradition in terms of critique. On the other hand, for others, Jurgen Habermas (“Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present”) and David Hoy (“Foucault: Modern or Postmodern?”), Foucault’s initial rejection and then affirmation of Kant at the end of his life remains a troubling mystery.

the end (his response to Kant in “What is Enlightenment”). With the caveat that historicizing Kant’s transcendental project might render it virtually unrecognizable, she proceeds to translate Kant’s four main questions into Foucauldian terminology. Allen suggests that it would, in fact, be conceivable to think of Foucault spending:

his entire career reworking Kant’s famous four questions, historicizing and contextualizing them as he went. ‘What can I know?’ becomes, in Foucault’s archaeologies, ‘how have discursive structures positioned me as a speaking and knowing subject?’ ‘What ought I do?’ becomes, in Foucault’s genealogies, ‘how have norms functioned insidiously to position me as a normalized, disciplined individual?’ ‘What may I hope?’ becomes, in his late work, ‘how can I attempt to turn myself into an ethical subject and my life into a work of art via practices and techniques of the self?’ And, as with Kant, it is the fourth and final question—‘what is man?’ which he might recast in Foucaultian terms as ‘what has human subjectivity been and what might it become?’ (Allen, 40).

Despite this radical transformation of Kant, Foucault remains faithful to the Kantian idea of critique. But in addition to the affinity between their critical questions, the way Foucault underscores the importance of the kinds of questions Kant was asking in his *Aufklärung* piece gets to the heart of Foucault’s concern with doing a “history of the present”. By asking: “[w]hat is present reality? What is the present field of our experiences? What is the present field of possible experiences?” (Foucault, *GSO*, 20), Foucault associates a critique of history with the present conditions of possibility in a Kantian sense. Following Kant, he establishes the conceptual and philosophical ground for investigation into the conditions of possibility of knowledge and the search for the limits of that knowledge through the activity of critique. And it is this form of philosophical critique that allows him to elaborate on the way critique operates in relation to the self in his later works.

### **Genealogy and Self-Transformation**

Once genealogy is established as a form of critique that coincides and in a way extends Kant’s project, the relationship between critique and the transformative potential of the self can be explored. Several scholars have studied the relationship between Foucault’s middle and late writings, that is, the connection between genealogy and

technologies of the self.<sup>23</sup> But Foucault himself can also be seen to reveal his thoughts about the nature of a strictly *philosophical* activity of critique, and the implications it has for the transformation of the self. By exploring the archive and considering the places where the limits of knowledge are contingent upon a diverse array of contextually determined artifacts, Foucault posits how those discontinuities make room for a fundamental decentering that has potential to modify at once the subject's relation to history and to the self. In an anonymous interview ("The Masked Philosopher") given to *Le Monde* in 1980, Foucault addresses what he wishes to accomplish with philosophy and his work. Though brief, his exposition clearly indicates a commitment to a shift in thought that marks a shift in the self. Philosophy as critique is meant to provoke a "displacement and transformation of frameworks of thinking, the changing of received values and all the work that has been done to think otherwise, to do something else, to become other than what one is" (Foucault, *EW*, 327). Here we can see resonances of the Kantian theme that explores the limits of knowledge alongside Foucault's addition to those limits as they push on our understanding of ourselves within those limits. Desubjectivation is made possible by a certain kind of critical activity that Foucault aligns with philosophy and historical (specifically genealogical) inquiry. In a sense, Foucault's Kantian heritage affords him the critical foundations necessary to posit how desubjectivation makes way for transformation of the self through critique, all while staying grounded in history.

Explaining Foucault's notion of subjectivation, Daniele Lorenzini clarifies its two-step nature. The process of subjectivation works first as a reactive and then a creative moment to render critique as work on the self. He says subjectivation is:

a first, *reactive moment*, which can be defined as a moment of 'de-subjection' (*désassujettissement*) and consists in resisting and trying to get rid of the mechanisms of power that govern the individual within a certain regime of truth; and a second, *creative moment*, which is *strictly speaking* the moment of subjectivation, that is, of the invention of a

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<sup>23</sup> For examples of secondary literature that explore the connections between genealogy and Foucault's later ethical writings on the transformations of the self, see: Colin Koopman "The Formation and Self-Transformation of the Subject in Foucault's Ethics" (2013), Frédéric Gros "Sujet moral et soi éthique chez Foucault" (2002), Martin Saar "Genealogy and Subjectivity" (2002), and Alan Schrift "Foucault's Reconfiguration of the Subject: From Nietzsche to Butler, Laclau/Mouffe, and Beyond" (1997), and Jana Sawicki "Queering Foucault and the Subject of Feminism" (2006).

different form of subjectivity, implying a series of  
'practices of freedom' and the inauguration of new ways of  
life (Lorenzini, 71)

In analyzing these two moments carefully in terms of how they relate to Foucault's project overall, certain resonance with the first moment of subjectivation can be seen as referring to genealogical subjection. In other words, that first (reactive) moment would not be able to be understood without an understanding of genealogy and the kind of subjection made intelligible through power-knowledge. In fact, genealogy as critique could be articulated in parallel to Lorenzini's first moment of subjectivation in a certain analytic sense. Genealogy looks to the past to see how different configurations of knowledge-power operate and change through history, allowing one to trace how certain subjectivities are rendered intelligible at particular historical junctures. In this way, genealogy de-centers the subject from a familiar historical past. It simultaneously de-subjects and subjects. It removes the subject from a past which was previously thought stable and then presents a new, altered past. Just as in subjectivation, in genealogy these moments are not broken down into distinct facets, but rather the work of de-subjecting and subjecting is done simultaneously. If genealogy as critique does the work of providing a history of the present, then it proposes this destabilizing historical work as a way to resituate the present with regards to the past. Therefore, the critical work of subjection (*assujettissement*) done in genealogy provides the ground for the self-critical subjectivizing work done through practices of freedom or technologies of the self.

Foucault's work ought to be seen as building on itself such that technologies of the self are in need of genealogy which in turn builds on archaeology.<sup>24</sup> Thinking about how the subject is made, how *assujettissement* looks at the process by which one is constituted as a subject through knowledge-power and how those formations transform from one historical period to another provides a platform from which to think about *assujettissement* reflexively through the process of subjectivation. Concretely, the power-knowledge complex that renders subjection intelligible in a particular historical moment becomes the site of self-critique in Foucault's later ethical works. Arguing for a radical

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<sup>24</sup> Mark Kelly suggests that there is continuity Foucault's oeuvre in *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault* (2009, 80), as does Arnold Davidson in "Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics" (1997, 230).

shift in perspective that favors only the later period for work toward social critique actually weakens the complexities and tensions that Foucault draws out between knowledge and power over the course of his career. For Foucault, “there is no subject outside the process of subjection and subjectivation” (Lorenzini, 74). Ultimately both are determined by and through the same logic of knowledge-power and contain the implicit tools for desubjectivation. Subjection to discursive techniques and practices thus determines the limits of intelligible subject relations while also establishing the need for (self)critique. In this way, subjectivation can be seen as expanding Foucault’s field of analysis yet again, not by replacing genealogy, but by rendering the subjected subject reflexive and capable of practices of freedom, which are, incidentally practices of on the self that resituate the self in relation to history.

### **Cultivating a Critical Attitude**

Once established as continuous developments of the same project, working towards a conception of subjectivity that posits change while also remaining historically and contextually grounded, Foucault’s project seems to lend itself to the kind of work that decolonial thought proposes, namely a critique of dominant narratives in history. Thinking back to Kusch’s example of the indigenous grandfather, perhaps his reaction could be understood differently, or the cultural dissonance between him and the anthropology students be approached from a different angle through a Foucauldian approach to self-critique. Using genealogy as a method of critique, maybe this lack of communication could be resituated with an orientation to the colonial wound and the historical events that led to this incommunicable exchange, thus rendering effective communication somehow less impossible. The emphasis placed on historical specificity in genealogy effectively paves the way for the formation of a bridge in communication while also proposing a platform from which a particular kind of subject can cultivate a critical attitude with regards to dominant narratives in history.

Cultivated through a particular form of self-critique with genealogical roots, the critical attitude, for Foucault, arises initially as a rejection of a certain form of government. This rejection or “counter-conduct” (*contre-conduite*) emerges as a collective response to the imposition of a particular form of conduct imposed by the Christian Church. Rather than a political revolt, “counter-conduct” emphasizes the notion

of *resistance* to conduct-driven practices. By highlighting the word “conduct” in this account, Foucault signals how the Church enforces particular sorts of conduct, “conducting individuals in their daily life through a game of generalized obedience that takes the form of terror” (Foucault, *STP*, 201). This conduct focused mode of organization becomes known, in Foucauldian analysis, as pastoral governance. The Christian Church introduces a personal, moral code of conduct into the political sphere of government. With this pastoral mode of governance, participation in politics no longer pertains to the public sphere alone, but now is responsible for orienting the private lives of individuals in a particular way. Thus, the notion of “counter-conduct” introduced in his lectures on “Security, Territory, Population” in 1978, helps explain the initial impetus for the cultivation of an attitude that could confront this oppressive political situation. Foucault describes this form of resistance as “movements whose objective is a different form of conduct, that is to say: wanting to be conducted differently, by *other* leaders (*conducteurs*) and *other* shepherds, towards *other* objectives and forms of salvation, and through *other* procedures and methods” (Foucault, *STP*, 194-5, emphasis mine). The emphasis placed on the “otherness”, toward which this counter-conduct strives, points to the nature of this form of resistance that is driven by a kind of desire for something different, for anything to be different while at the same time leaving that idea of change open-ended and unforeseeable. Born out of negation, specifically a will to be governed otherwise, the critical attitude begins to take shape.

## CHAPTER III

### FOUCAULDIAN SUBJECTIVITY THROUGH THE DECOLONIAL TURN

In this chapter, I will work to demonstrate what is at stake in the radical critique of Enlightenment ideals and Eurocentrism that grounds post/decolonial critique. Through an initial engagement with Ann Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire*, I introduce the colonial context into Foucault's theoretical apparatus, bringing to light an explanation for why critique in postcolonial theory is articulated in terms of visibilization. In addition to providing an explanation for the importance of visibility in *postcolonial* theory, Stoler's critique of Foucault serves a critical role in exemplifying the *decolonial* rejection of his work. Decolonial scholars in Latin America forming the modernity-coloniality (MC from here) group, point out the theoretical constraints of European thought (Foucault's work included) for theorizing the non-European contexts. They work not only to visibilize Eurocentrism, but to extend beyond it to dismantle the pretention to universality by visibilizing alternative epistemologies. Highlighting "other" knowledges and working towards the visibilization and recognition of different epistemological perspectives and practices is precisely what constitutes the *decolonial attitude*.

#### **Postcolonial Theory: Modes and Motivations for a Theory<sup>25</sup>**

Postcolonial theory emerges in direct response to a noticeable silence that pervades the European and North American academy about the effects of colonialism.<sup>26</sup> With the exception of colonial studies departments, colonialism is typically treated as a passing historical "fact" (in the most mundane sense of the word). If not plainly ignored,

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<sup>25</sup> Young begins his book by exposing an interesting debate about terminology used to properly locate the body of literature that invokes a direct interpolation of the legacy of colonialism. He goes through "Third World" and "Global South" "non-west" and "postcolonial" before arriving at the term "tricontinental" which he suggests might be the better suited of all the terms. This, due to the fact that it was proposed by Anouar Abdel-Malek, Egyptian political scientist, as a possible category of analysis at the first conference of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America at Havana in 1966. The term "tricontinental" highlights geographical location (Latin America, Africa, Asia) and "captures its internationalist political identifications, as well as the source of its epistemologies" (Young, 5) in a much more meaningful and autochthonous way than the other terms, although it could still be debated.

<sup>26</sup> The emergence of colonial studies departments in North American and European universities, dating roughly to the end of WWII (coinciding with official state projects of decolonization), can attest to the production of literature and theory surrounding the colonial condition since its inception. However, as I cite later on, postcolonial studies intends to focus more on the experience of individuals and effects of colonialism in terms of existentialism, ontology, epistemology, than the process, explanation, and deployment of colonialism as an historical practice.

it is (conveniently) forgotten or misplaced. This silence refers both broadly to theory and ideas in history and the social sciences and in particular to the pervasive silence in Foucault scholarship, that is, Foucault's own silence (barring fleeting mentions) and in the secondary literature on Foucault (Stoler, 1995). In light of this silence, postcolonial theory proposes an intervention into the dominant practice of history raising awareness about the extent to which certain practices and narratives that circumscribe present-day political, economic, and social reality are actually both theoretically and practically imbued with the legacy of colonialism. Robert Young explains the motivation for postcolonial theory as a much needed field of research apart from colonial studies because of its attention to the postcolonial *experience*. Whereas colonial studies is concerned with the practice and motivations for colonialism at a state level, “[p]ostcolonial cultural critique involves the reconsideration of this history, particularly from the perspectives of those who suffered its effects, together with the defining of its contemporary social and cultural impact” (Young, 4). Young makes sure to stress the main purview of postcolonial theory as specifically attuned to the ways in which the past continues to inform present-day social structures.

The broad category of epistemic violence that is associated with colonialism is manifest through concrete practices of invisibilization (of certain people, words, languages, discursive techniques). Those practices constitute what has been termed the “colonial wound,” in an attempt to give name to the depth and breadth of colonialism.<sup>27</sup> Nearly 500 years of history attest to the entanglement of a life imbued with the colonial logic of erasure, such that contemporary understandings of what constitutes life can only be seen through the lens of a colonial history.<sup>28</sup> Recognized as a radical, fundamental, or at this point, almost genetically-modified form of “hybridity,” “mixing,” “criollo” (understood in a broad sense), colonial history has been so deeply ingrained that it *becomes* life itself. Impossible to separate, colonial history has become just plain history. It therefore seems that it could not be any other way. And yet, going back, digging

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<sup>27</sup> For more on the notion of the “colonial wound” see Nelson Maldonado-Torres’s *Against War* (2008) and Walter D. Mignolo’s “Coloniality of Power and De-colonial Thinking” (2007).

<sup>28</sup> Schematically, colonialism is typically determined as effective between 1492 and 1942, that is, between the “discovery of the Americas” and the end of World War II, when official decolonization efforts were being implemented.



through archival material could perhaps glean an understanding of the specific ways in which that blending occurs, visibilizing histories and lives that have long since been forgotten or effaced due to the dominant/dominating forces of the colonial perspective.

### **The Colonial Difference**

In order to talk about colonialism specifically, there needs to be something inherently *distinct* about those forms of domination and oppression that set it apart. This insistence on the particularity of colonial forms of domination (as opposed to a kind of idea of domination *in general*) is surely related to the prolonged duration its practice (if it can even be said to have been fully terminated), but also to the massive global impact of European Enlightenment Ideals which serve(d) to justify and propagate its own expansion. These are both topics addressed by Walter Mignolo in his concept of the “colonial difference”. Pointing to the epistemic dimension of colonialism, Mignolo offers a critique of Eurocentrism that gets to the heart of the difference between colonial and other forms of historical domination and oppression. For him, the difference is in part, the compliance of Western philosophy and its universalizing tendency.<sup>29</sup> The *colonial difference* points to epistemological invisibilization that covers over pre-colonial forms of knowledge, resulting in an epistemological hybridity or borderland that is not fully European but no longer fully non-European. In his own words, the “limit of Western philosophy is the border where the colonial difference emerges, making visible the variety of local histories that Western thought, from the right and the left, hid and suppressed” (Mignolo, 66). That is, the colonial difference signals the effects of colonialism on knowledge (rather than only citing physical domination), and suggests that this process of invisibilization of other knowledges has come to produce something new, that can be only hinted at on the border of Western thought. The first step in understanding *colonial difference* then, is to recognize the limitations of Western thought. Colonial difference becomes an axis for critique of Eurocentrism and the specifically colonial forms of domination that led to its production. Uncovering Western bias depends

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<sup>29</sup> Walter Mignolo provides an historical timeline, detailing the mechanisms of the turn away from Western philosophy through his concept the “colonial difference” which he develops in “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference” from the compilation *Coloniality at Large: Latin American and the Postcolonial Debate* (pp. 225-258).

on a mechanics of visibility that would allow critique to attend to the differentiation between an historically specific *pre* and *postcolonial* form of knowing.

### **A Postcolonial Critique of Foucault: Visibilizing Eurocentrism**

Attuned to visibilizing a particular past, postcolonial theory, at first glance, shares common ground with Foucauldian genealogy. And since a critique of Foucault as Eurocentric is at once necessary and banal (in the sense that it is perhaps obvious looking at his corpus) there seems to be a glimmer of hope for exploring the shared interest in a particular attention to sight. Foucault's field of study is clearly restricted to a very specific historical and geographical location, namely 16th through 20th century France. He remains wedded to the Western canon which is, for better or worse, typical of the French academic environment of the 1970's (Stoler, 1995). But does the scope of his archival research necessarily prevent Foucault from producing concepts, ideas, and methods that might be useful in other contexts? After all, he is interested in doing a "history of the present" which already entails a kind of temporal displacement such that the cultivation of a different relationship to history might address or inform contemporary issues in new ways. What, then, would be the problem with other kinds of displacements, namely geographic? What exactly is the nature of this falling out between postcolonial and Foucauldian scholarship? Perhaps revisiting some of the most poignant critiques lodged against Foucault will bring to light the post/de-colonial disenfranchisement with Foucauldian ideas and methodologies, despite the seemingly parallel aims their projects entail. The major criticisms seem to congeal into one main argument that has multiple ramifications. Foucault is seen as not only unfit for thinking through the postcolonial context, but actually dangerous for doing so. The argument against Foucault is dedicated to showing the ways in which his work is Eurocentric, and that due precisely to that limited scope of his archive, the kinds of concepts *and* methods he develops are also limited.

The critique of Foucault's Eurocentrism entails a meticulous demonstration of the limitations of the scope of his archive that question whether or not his concepts and methodologies can do justice to non-European contexts. This entails asking how or in what ways broadening the scope of his archive to include Europe's colonies (along with the discourses surrounding the impetus, justification, and maintenance of colonialism)

might modify or perhaps completely undermine Foucault's conceptual network.<sup>30</sup> In her book *Race and the Education of Desire*, Ann Stoler begins by asking: "Why, for Foucault, [do] colonial bodies never figure as a possible site of the articulation of nineteenth-century European sexuality" (Stoler, vii)? In other words, Stoler wonders how it is possible that a discourse explaining the emergence of sexuality in the 19<sup>th</sup> century could be devoid of any mention of race and its relationship to colonialism, seeing that the dates overlap almost perfectly. With this in mind, it seems clear that Foucault could benefit from a critique that could rise to the challenge of the Eurocentric nature of his arguments, or at least explain the conscious omission an archive that pertains to the same period and involves (some) of the same subjects.

There are three decisive choices that motivate Foucault's historical periodization according to Stoler. She outlines them out in her initial critique in an attempt to explain the structural framework of his project which highlights certain omissions in the following way: 1) his acceptance of a particular nineteenth-century history of race (despite that particular narrative's contested nature in the discipline) 2) his concern with state racism rather than "popular forms" of racism and 3) an implicit teleology that culminates and seeks to critique the rise of fascism in Europe (Stoler, 28).<sup>31</sup> In her first

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<sup>30</sup> In addition to Stoler's canonical critique of Foucault for his archival choices, other scholars have taken Foucault to task for the same issue of the archive. In an interview "Ways of Doing Genealogy: Inquiry after Foucault. A Group Interview with Verena Erlenbusch, Simon Ganahl, Robert W. Gehl, Thomas Nail, and Perry Zurn" conducted by Colin Koopman, Verena Erlenbusch, for example, considers "that a consideration of non-Western contexts and attention to colonialism has important consequences for genealogical analysis and the concepts it generates" (Koopman, 10). In that same interview, she asks these important questions, that I allude to as well: "In what ways are our concepts of madness, sexuality, discipline, biopolitics, and so on, internally structured by a disavowal of colonialism? What can attention to colonial and non-Western contexts teach us about these concepts? Are these concepts useful to consider in these contexts? If so, in what ways do they have to be modified?" (Koopman, 4).

<sup>31</sup> I will briefly address claims two and three here, saving the first claim for the body of the paper, as it is most relevant to the progression of my argument at hand. The second claim justifies Foucault's archival choice by pointing to a distinction drawn out in a tension she finds between Foucault's 1976 lectures at the *Collège de France* and his *History of Sexuality* vol.1. In my view, drawing a distinction between state and "popular" racism overemphasizes a subtlety that is counterproductive to thinking about Foucault's overall theoretical commitments and his conception of power. Stoler even admits the subtlety of this distinction, by pointing out that "it may seem like a curious formulation, given the common rendering of Foucault's position that the state is not a privileged site for the discursive construction of power" (Stoler, 28). The third claim about teleology aims at a heated debate in Foucault scholarship addressing his normative/non-normative stance with regard to history. I will not go into this debate at length due to the thickness of the arguments, except to say that I do not endorse the criticism that charges Foucault as projecting normative claims onto his work in history. In my view, this undermines his genealogical method as though it were driven by a particular aim.

claim, Stoler calls into question Foucault's choice in accepting a particular history of race while rejecting the theory of sexuality of the same period. This point pertains to Foucault's Eurocentrism and is later rejected by the Latin American MC group which I will address in detail shortly. Wondering what motivates Foucault to endorse a narrative of race that was contested in the discipline at the time while rejecting the standard narrative of sexuality, Stoler endeavors to find an explanation. Given that they emerge around roughly the same period, she notices how:

even among historians who place the emergence of modern racism in the nineteenth century, this emergence is often dated earlier than does Foucault, around 1800. [...W]hy, then, does Foucault embrace this particular version of the nineteenth-century history of race but categorically reject the standard story of nineteenth-century sexuality? (Stoler, 28)

There are, for Stoler, two reasonable answers to this question. First, this decision works in the service of promoting a particular portrait of late nineteenth-century European bourgeois society that Foucault is interested in depicting, such that his concept of biopower could emerge as an explanatory mechanism.<sup>32</sup> Focusing on sexuality as the object of analysis (and not explicitly race), Foucault defines a limit for his archival work that he considers pertinent to his particular object of study. Admittedly, this question of the limit of the archive is a question *every* genealogist must attend to, and then justify accordingly. So, Stoler attends to Foucault's decision by positing a potential answer for why he may have made that choice, namely by reaffirming that he simply was not

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<sup>32</sup> Here Stoler points to the *History of Sexuality* vol. 1 to reference how Foucault frames the "making a bourgeois 'class' body in the eighteenth-century"(29) wherein he draws a connection between discursive practices around the body and the notion of health, which therefore "attest to the correlation of this concern with the body and sex to a type of 'racism'" (*HS*, 125). Whereas originally, racism is a nineteenth-century phenomenon, in *HS vol. 1*, it emerges in the eighteenth-century. Foucault will use *both* in the construction of biopower. It is this crucial contrast that he relies upon for his genealogical method which ultimately allows for emergence of the concept of biopower. Without those two iterations of race, first in relation to health (technologies of maintenance/control on the individual level) followed by a second that attends to the life of the species (in the form of "regulatory controls" and management/control of life as a population), biopower might not emerge in such a forceful and convincing way. Following Foucault's method, Stoler relies on the tensions between Foucault's 1976 lectures and *HS vol. 1* to highlight, "not modern racism's break with earlier forms, but rather the discursive *bricolage* whereby an older discourse of race is 'recovered,' modified, 'encased,' and 'encrusted' in new forms" (61).

interested in studying race.<sup>33</sup> Second, for Foucault, colonialism is posited as an extension or an extreme manifestation of the discourse on race that becomes explanatory through the notion of biopower. That is to say, “[c]olonialism [is] clearly outside Foucault’s analytic concern, to him a byproduct of Europe’s internal and permanent state of war with itself, not formative of those conflicts” (Stoler, 28). If Foucault were to consider colonialism as constitutive (as opposed to an effect) of discourses on the emergence of race and racism, the analysis might take a different direction. Rather than defend Foucault’s choices here, granting his argument and conceptual network theoretical consistency, it seems that both of these answers can be summed up through a critique of Foucault’s Eurocentrism.

Stoler’s *Race and the Education of Desire* aims to do just that, to point out Foucault’s Eurocentric tendencies such that his concepts might be rendered more attuned to colonial history. Looking to the archives, she finds examples of concepts that recall Foucauldian themes. For example, she finds documents that attest to state regulated discourses on sexual promiscuity in the Dutch East Indies dating back to 1612. Likewise, in the British ruled American colonies there were legislative sanctions that barred white women from sleeping with “non-white” men as early as 1664. Both cases predate Foucault’s strictly European reference by far. These examples are, at least superficially, relatable to Foucault’s framework about the emergence of discourses surrounding sexuality and health (first of the body and then of the state) that become the archival references for the development of the theory about the “defense of society” (although not theorized along those lines, of course). Taking these examples from the European colonial archives into consideration in some cases simply adds nuance to the account of the emergence of discourses concerning race and sex that Foucault posits as a foundation of biopower. But in other cases, that expansion of the field implies a modification of the

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<sup>33</sup> In her text, she points to several references where Foucault explicitly says he is not studying race. At the beginning of chapter 3, she cites Foucault in a block quote from his February 3<sup>rd</sup> lecture in his 1976 series “Society Must Be Defended” explicitly stating, “I do not want to write a history of what in the Occident could be the consciousness of the appearance of a race, nor the history of the rituals and mechanisms by which one could exclude, disqualify, and physically destroy a race..” (Foucault cited in Stoler, 55).

concepts as well.<sup>34</sup> For example, Stoler points to racialized sexuality and discourses on libidinal desires in the Dutch East Indies to reconfigure Foucault's conceptualization of the defense of European society as a function solely of the European bourgeoisie class. Fear of contamination was especially prevalent in response to the colonial situation where mixing was inevitable and fueled depictions of non-European animality, sexual promiscuity, and sexual vigor which served to code and distinguish participation in European identity through gendered and racial lines.<sup>35</sup> Contending that it "was not just sexuality in which the truth was lodged, but how productive that sexuality was" (Stoler, 48), Stoler decentralizes the European bourgeoisie class as the sole proprietor of the discourse on sexuality to the production of the defense of European society so fundamental to the development of biopower. This is not to say that with the expansion of the field of analysis, that Foucault's concepts would inevitably or necessarily change. However, even with just this one example in mind, it is already apparent that race codes and distinguishes bourgeois bodies from the colonial perspective in a way that contributes to the production of the "European" bourgeoisie bodies themselves, thus transforming certain components of his claims. Even while the "Dutch case does not discredit Foucault's claims as much as it transforms them" (Stoler, 47), other cases are wont to varying degrees of transformative potential. In other words, while this example that Stoler cites here does not radially modify Foucault's claim to the defense of European society leading to biopower, that is not to say that an examination of different colonial contexts, or different aspects of the Dutch East Indies would not yield a more drastic modification of Foucault's concepts.

While Stoler's analysis zooms in on the question of sexuality and race as they pertain to Foucault's inaugural articulation of biopower, the argument she makes stands as one possible thread to follow in exemplifying a wider theme of Eurocentrism running through Foucault's oeuvre. Following a postcolonial mode of critique of Eurocentrism,

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<sup>34</sup> Stoler offers a glimpse of what form this take when she notes that the "Dutch case does not discredit Foucault's claims as much as it transforms them" (47). She later admits, referring to , that "Foucault's account may allow for such an understanding, but does not provide one" (52).

<sup>35</sup> Here Stoler refers to an argument made by Ian Hacking in "The Looping Effects of Human Kinds" (1993), pointing out that "[s]exual promiscuity or restraint were not abstract characteristics attached to any persons who exhibited those behaviors, but as often post-hoc interpretations contingent on the racialized class and gender categories to which individuals were already assigned" (115).

she demonstrates how the limited (strictly European) scope of his archive indeed has broad implications in the concepts he develops, that because they are derived precisely out of the archive, they might be susceptible to change were the archive to be expanded. In other words, as long as Foucault espouses the primacy of the archive in the development of his concepts, it would follow that omission of certain archival material would somehow distort the conceptual network he develops. As long as he omits Europe's colonial history from the scope of his archive, Foucault's concepts run the risk of presenting a Eurocentric bias. The question then remains, as to the effect the change of the scope of the archive would have on the method he employs as well. Can Foucault's *method* of genealogy be said to have a Eurocentric bias?

Stoler's project is posited against that view, namely that critiquing concepts as Eurocentric does not necessarily imply a Eurocentric method. Coinciding with a postcolonial form of critique, her project sets out to *extend* Foucault's analysis to the colonial context, to expand the archive to include the portions of he left out in an effort to address Eurocentric bias by tweaking concepts where needed. In the introduction she clearly states her aims: "[o]n the one hand, I look to how [Foucault's] insights play out in a colonial setting; on the other, I suggest that a wider imperial context resituates the work of radical thinking in the making of European bourgeois identity in a number of specific ways" (Stoler, 5). So by widening the scope of the archive, she finds that his concepts do indeed change. Why, then, does the methodology go uncriticized?

### **The Modernity/Coloniality Group: the Decolonial Turn**

Skepticism of method (especially methods emanating from Europe) is precisely the position established in decolonial thought as articulated by several scholars in the Modernity/Coloniality (MC) group.<sup>36</sup> The MC group is comprised of scholars predominantly from Latin America who seek to visibilize the inherent colonial

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<sup>36</sup> The Modernity/Coloniality group is a self-proclaimed group of scholars predominantly from but also working in Latin America that take on a decolonial perspective towards the argument that seeks to demonstrate the connection between modernity and coloniality. They can be seen as united in the fact that they consider 1492 (with the Conquest of the Americas) as foundational to a new world order that continues to operate through logics and structures implemented in modernity, and the fact that they distinguish themselves from postcolonial theory. The group's Wikipedia page ([https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grupo\\_modernidad/colonialidad](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grupo_modernidad/colonialidad)) has a pretty exhaustive bibliography and description of how the members of the group contribute to the discussion of modernity and coloniality (and consequently decoloniality).

underpinnings of European modernity and then search for alternative practices and narratives to undermine the universalist tendencies which sustain and endorse knowledge production as a purely European phenomenon. Kiran Asher succinctly sums up the MC group's critical purview as one that aims "to go beyond critique and deconstruction to foster decolonial thinking, [...locating] critiques and proposals of liberation [as they] emerge from the cosmovisions of exploited and marginal groups rather than from privileged institutions of higher learning" (Asher, 833). The stakes of this project can be seen in the way Aníbal Quijano situates his thought in his piece "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality". He says:

With the conquest of the societies and the cultures which inhabit what today is called Latin America, began the constitution of a new world order, culminating, five hundred years later, in a global power covering the whole planet. This process implied a violent concentration of the world's resources under the control and for the benefit of a small European minority. (Quijano, 168).

The conquest of the Americas instilled a new world order, one that would irreversibly change the shape of history through the specific deployment of colonial power. Latin America, now understood as a unified geographic region, can be said to have been made intelligible through categories of analysis that the process of colonialism imposed. That is, the establishment of European power gave Latin America its name and a unified identity, tightly bound up with its colonial past. Therefore, when Quijano speaks about power and about the violent control of resources, there is a sense that modernity (though maybe sometimes quietly) always echoes the reminder of colonialism in Latin America. A few lines later he defines "Eurocentered colonialism" as a "relation of direct, political, social and cultural domination [that] was established by the Europeans over the conquered of all continents" (Quijano, 168). It is within this colonial paradigm that Quijano, along with others in the MC group, seeks strategies and alternatives that at once undermine the dominant narrative which celebrates (European) modernity and also creates space for non-European epistemologies and ontologies to emerge.

Decolonial thought must be equipped with a vocabulary that facilitates the recognition of the colonial legacy. Therefore, Maldonado-Torres explains the difference between colonialism and coloniality in his text, "On the Coloniality of Being". Whereas



colonialism essentially identifies an economic and political hierarchy between two nations or peoples, coloniality “refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, [he says] coloniality survives colonialism” (Maldonado-Torres, *AW*, 243). The survival of coloniality is the key point in contrast to colonialism. That which survives colonialism remains present and festering, perhaps just underneath the surface. It is therefore presented in terms of a colonial wound and is not simply a legacy or a heritage that must be rectified. It is rather a *living* legacy, one that is continually reinstated, and actively informs current forms of sociality and geopolitical power relations. With that terminology in place, the critique of (European) modernity and the way it continues to instantiate colonial logics (through coloniality) must be contested through decolonial projects (*decoloniality*). Thus the namesake of the MC group (modernity-coloniality, sometimes accompanied by decoloniality) accurately reflects its political commitments. Instead of visibilizing specific Eurocentric aspects of (European) methods, decoloniality actually turns away from the idea of method all together.

The shift in focus away from European methods can be described as an effort to “shift the geography of reason” so as to render knowledge production more rigorous.<sup>37</sup> The logic of discovery that is characteristic of (European) modernity is oriented by an idea of progress. Both discovery and progress stand out as particularly consistent with justifications of colonialism, presenting a clear, future-oriented vision of what progress looks like.<sup>38</sup> The rejection of European method is part of an effort to identify the ways in

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<sup>37</sup> The “shift in the geography of reason” is first proposed in Enrique Dussel’s account of world history. His narrative effectively de-centers Europe from the trajectory of history. (See especially Dussel’s *Filosofía de la liberación*, 1977; “Eurocentrism and Modernity” 1993; *Politics of Liberation: a Critical World History*, 2011). This idea is taken up later, mainly by Eduardo Mendieta (*Reading Kant’s Geography*, 2011) and by Lewis Gordon (“Shifting the Geography of Reason in an Age of Disciplinary Decadence” 2011).

<sup>38</sup> Here we might stop and ask: Progress for *who* or according to *what*? Amy Allen’s recent book *The End of Progress* (2016) addresses these questions by engaging conversation between Michel Foucault and critical theory (mainly the Frankfurt School, but she also considers other critical traditions, namely feminist, queer, post and decolonial thought to inform her critique). Particularly relevant is chapter 5, “From the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to the *History of Madness*: Foucault as Adorno’s Other ‘Other Son’” where Allen compares Foucault to Adorno in their similar approach to absolve history of the notion of a transcendental idea of progress, while also maintaining a commitment to the possibility/desirability for radical social change.

which particular conceptions of progress and discovery are embedded within scientific and philosophic methods that are especially adept at theorizing how a *particular* conception of humanity that tends toward a *particular* idea of progress, have historically promoted dehumanization (and dehumanizing tactics). Lewis Gordon provides a poignant assessment of the impact of the foundation of the modernity-coloniality coupling, when he describes that “[a]gainst these intellectualist formulations of modern life, Dussel raises the question of its underside, of the geopolitical, material impositions and the unnamed millions whose centers collapsed not simply from the force of ideas but from sword and musket” (Gordon, 95). This is not to say that *all* European methods operate under this logic or with that intention, but simply to recognize that historically, practices of colonial domination have been justified using precisely *these* logics. Due to this history, the presumed universal applicability European theories tend to purport are treated with trepidation by groups (such as the MC group) whose primary interest is in promoting decoloniality by distancing themselves from colonial forms of thinking. Additionally, turning away from European methods implies expanding an idea of what counts as knowledge in the first place. If European theory takes pride in producing rigorous methods and concepts of analysis, then indeed rigor cannot be produced, “by adhering to the questions, concepts, and standards on the basis of the views or needs of only one region of the world, and even less of a region that has been characterized by either colonizing or ignoring other regions” (Maldonado-Torres, *TDT*, 10). Maldonado-Torres takes the notion of rigor to task, defining it in terms of diversification rather than the kind of purity, unity, or singularity that defines, for example, the scientific method coming out of the European Enlightenment. In this view, shifting the geography of reason by prioritizing those voices that have been historically overlooked and forcibly silenced actually renders knowledge production *more* rigorous.

Once rigor is defined through plurality, the shifting geography of reason becomes an assertion and affirmation of the different spaces that work towards the production of theory from traditionally marginalized places. Put simply, for decolonial thinkers, the geographic region where theories and ideas are produced is taken seriously as having an effect on the *kinds* of words, theories, and concepts that can be used to describe and conceptualize theoretical categories to explain social phenomena. Those categories that

are endemic to one historically and geographically specific place but absent from another renders the idea of universal knowledge untenable. Rather than simply an incidental or biographical additive, considering the geopolitics where reason (theories, justifications, methods, etc.) emerges actually elucidates differences in theoretical approaches while also highlighting the extent to which Europe has not only historically dominated the field of knowledge production, but on top of that it has exported its ideas through a kind of epistemological colonialism. In other words, shifting the geography of reason refers to a move that “take[s] seriously the South-South dialogue, that the work to be done becomes one that raises the question of whose future we face” (Gordon, 100). In the spirit of pluralizing knowledge production, decolonial thought looks to, “Africana and Caribbean philosophy, African American theology, feminism, Latina/o epistemology, Latin American liberation philosophy and theology, and modernity/coloniality/decoloniality” (Maldonado-Torres, *TDT*, 2) to inform the production of those theoretical spaces. These non-European places of enunciation will evidently produce a kind of critical work that theories emerging within Europe cannot perform. Thus decoloniality works toward:

a world in which non-occidental systems of knowledge can be incorporated into the curriculums of occidental universities on equal terms in areas like law, medicine, biology, economy and philosophy. A world in which for example the Yoruba cosmovision, the Buddhist cosmovision of Zen, or the cosmovision of the Cuna Indians, can serve to advance towards a more integral science, more organic, *more centered in the common good* than in the needs of capital (Castro-Gómez, *Empire*, 444).

The combination of rigor with plurality culminates in a radical reevaluation of the grounds of knowledge production, ultimately valorizing the incorporation of different epistemologies to comprise a more rigorous field of knowledge as a whole. This involves not only not only a critique of Eurocentrism, but a turn away from Europe to be able to effectively *see* those other possibilities.

As part of an effort to make space for other kinds of thought, critique takes the form of visibilization in decolonial thought.<sup>39</sup> Once colonial practices are understood in

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<sup>39</sup> The notion of visibility is a major themes in post/de-colonial (that is postcolonial, decolonial, and colonial studies) literature. Those disciplines seek primarily to broaden the scope of the (Eurocentric) canon to provide a space of recognition for non-European thought. Incidentally, this one of the points of

how they shape the way events, experiences, words, languages, and people are narrated in colonial histories, visibilization becomes a mode of intervention into dominant discourse that can be broken down in two moments: 1) a moment of resistance to the dominant narrative which posits colonialism as an *constitutive* of (European) modernity rather than an effect of it and 2) a moment of rejection of European methods in lieu of *other* methods. Effectively seeing how coloniality is continually (re)produced through the intimate relationships between European and non-European knowledge is perhaps a first part of this critique. A second part would look to other spaces to begin to produce (or maybe to recover?) diversity in such a way that it would be valued in an equal way to the knowledge produced in Europe. Catherine Walsh dedicates much effort to the cultivation of what she deems “other” knowledges.<sup>40</sup> She contends that it:

requires making visible that which has been made invisible and subalternized. That is, the epistemological perspectives that emerge from colonial subjectivities, histories, memories, and experiences; subjectivities, histories, memories, and experiences that do not simply remain anchored in the colonial past, but that are (re)constructed in different ways within the local and global coloniality of the present. These are the ‘other’ knowledges, the ‘other’ philosophies—knowledges and philosophies otherwise—

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contention highlighted in the attempt to clearly demarcate a difference between postcolonial and decolonial scholarship. The latter accuses the former of remaining “stuck” within the confines of the Western canon while the former claim to expand it. On the one hand, thinkers such as Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said theorize the colonial situation in India through European philosophy are typically grouped together as the “postcolonial group”. On the other hand, Enrique Dussel, Anibal Quijano, Walter Dignolo, Maria Lugones, Nelson Maldonado-Torres and somewhat more peripherally Santiago Castro-Gómez form the major interlocutors of “decolonial scholarship”. Decolonial thought emerges primarily from Latin America and highlights the conquest of the Americas (specifically 1492) as a supremely important moment that provokes a paradigm shift, ultimately responsible for facilitating the development of a new set of global social relations. European modernity, they argue, continues to shape our current modes of sociality today, and demonstrating this is part of the critical purview of their project. This debate is a delicate one, spurring much secondary literature on the topic, some insisting on this division for political reasons, while others insist on seeing continuity as the only way to rigorously and realistically contend with the problem of coloniality. For the purposes of this paper, and without diminishing the perhaps important political implications gained through this distinction, I try to stay on the fringe of this debate as much as possible so as to focus on the concepts that contribute to the development of my own argument.

<sup>40</sup> Catherine Walsh, originally born in the United States, moved permanently to Ecuador where she currently resides to engage in what she calls “shared activist-intellectual work” (21). This entails engagement with Afro-Ecuadorian communities to establish an “Afro-Andean Archive and Document Fund, which houses, for community, educational, and research use, a large collection of oral histories, testimonies, and photographs” (22). Her work seeks predominantly to create space for ‘other’ knowledges to emerge, to interact, and challenge the Eurocentric focus of knowledge production.

that the continental model continues to refuse and deny  
(Walsh, 14).

Both Walsh and Castro-Gómez (in addition to others in the MC group) emphasize the importance of *looking* elsewhere as a way of cultivating a more rigorous field for the production and recognition of the diversity of knowledge that exists in the world. The idea that colonialism continues to operate on an epistemological level cannot be resolved through immanent critique of European ideas, through relying on strictly European theories and methods, but must be cultivated elsewhere. The dual role of visibility as seeing Eurocentrism at work and choosing to look away from it, locates visibility as a form of critique that works in the service of decoloniality. Thinking back to Kusch's indigenous grandfather and the cultural dissonance described there, grounds the importance of this dialog. It highlights the one-sidedness of the conversation, and the silence of the grandfather becomes heightened. But perhaps by looking elsewhere, by cultivating other ways of seeing, the grandfathers' knowledge might not be so quickly dismissed as irrational and nonsensical. He might be understood instead simply as expressing an "other" rationality, equally valid as a form of knowledge, or maybe even understood as a form of critique rather than a missed opportunity.

### **Decoloniality: an Attitude in the Making**

Silence and invisibility are the products of Eurocentrism. They are the trends that continue repeat the colonial move. Even Foucault, so attentive to marginalized and forgotten lives, continues to exclude the same peoples and stories that dominant narratives neglect. Through his archival decisions, Foucault performs the colonial move by remaining contextually bound to European soil for the production of his conceptual apparatus. Foucault fails to recognize the intimate connection between modernity and coloniality through his conception of race as an effect (that is, not constitutive) of European colonialism, yet again rearticulating the same, centuries-old, colonial invisibilization. In a postcolonial move, Ann Stoler attempts to remedy this by expanding the archive and demonstrating how Eurocentrism distorts concepts, while preserving his methodology, and using it to reinterpret history. However, the expansion of European theory is seen by decolonial thinkers as a mere afterthought of inclusion that maintains alliance to a Eurocentric form of logic, one that remains incompatible with truly

dismantling coloniality. In this way, postcolonial theory remains bound to Eurocentrism. Consistent and repeated omission along with a (perhaps structural) inability to recognize the coloniality of the very logic employed in postcolonial critique demonstrates the extent to which Western thought not only endorses coloniality but maintains and continues to justify it through these kinds of invisibilizing practices. This prepares the ground for the emergence of the *decolonial attitude* and its existential awareness about place. Expanding existing theory to make adjustments and accommodate for what is constantly left out is no longer enough. Thus, the decolonial attitude is born out of negation, out of an unwillingness to be theorized in this way.

## CHAPTER IV CULTIVATING ATTITUDES

Several scholars in the MC group warn against recourse to European thought to theorize non-European places and therefore abstain all together from critical engagement with its theory.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, although critical of the Western canon, Foucault still warns against a categorical (albeit tempting) rejection *or* acceptance of the Enlightenment. However fiercely dissonant these positions remain, they are actually held in tension with one another by virtue of their overlapping and interwoven historical context. Work in postcolonial theory and decolonial thought that pose critiques of Eurocentrism, demonstrate lacunas in European thought and provide compelling arguments that demonstrate its incompleteness while also highlighting the importance of *why* those gaps need addressing. The work of exposing Eurocentrism to show how modernity is co-founded with colonialism effectively expands the field of research to a discussion about the effects of Enlightenment reason beyond European borders. But what follows from that critique for many scholars in the MC group, is an effort to somehow “escape the bounds of philosophy and reason” by exchanging European thought for thought that operates on a kind of rationality that is not indebted to European modernity.<sup>42</sup> As Castro-Gómez (somewhat of an outlier in the MC group) points out,

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<sup>41</sup> This tendency in post/de-colonial theory to reject European thought without serious textual engagement is an argument posited by a handful of scholars. Kiran Asher in “Latin American Decolonial Thought, or Making the Subaltern Speak” (2013) and Robert Nichols in “Postcolonial Studies and the Discourse of Foucault: Survey of a Field of Problematization” (2010) both point out the lack of sufficient textual engagement with European thought before rejecting it as Eurocentric. For example, Asher points out that both Quijano and Dussel draw and build on Marx’s critiques of capitalism, and yet “there is little or no serious engagement with Marx’s *oeuvre* in the formulation of the MCD [what I’m calling MC] theses” (Asher, 840).

<sup>42</sup> Santiago Castro-Gómez, although forming part of the MC group, for the most part does not endorse the rejection of European thought wholesale in the way that others in the group do. Reflecting on his text 1996 text, *Critique of Latin American Reason* at a conference in October 2017 (later published under the title *Filosofía política y genealogías de la colonialidad: Diálogos con Santiago Castro-Gómez*), Castro-Gómez expresses his unapologetic critique of the kind of thought that seeks refuge in Latin American philosophy as a place that exists completely outside of European thought. For Castro-Gómez the move away from Europe ends up glorifying and essentializing other places for the sake of their otherness rather than engaging in truly critical work. Especially poignant is a list of reasons he develops for that critique on p. 211, saying: “...Latin Americanism discursively creates the image of Latin America as a cultural identity situated ‘outside’ modernity, and is characterized by all those values which are considered ‘other’ to modern reason: poetry and feeling instead of science, communitarian traditions instead of individualism, the lavishness of the party instead of intra-worldly asceticism, folk religiosity instead of secularism, the charismatic leader instead of juridico-political institutions, racial miscegenation instead of cultural

there is this turn toward the “outside” of theory and the “other” philosophy that decentralizes (European) rationality in exchange for (non-European) poetry, art, indigeneity. However, this categorical rejection of European thought seems to paradoxically undermine the work of critique done to identify Eurocentrism in the first place. Once modernity is understood as so profoundly impacted by colonialism (and European thought) it becomes a global phenomenon that cannot so easily be disentangled from European history and theory. Therefore, any “other” place to which thought might seek refuge, is necessarily already imbricated with that European colonial legacy (which includes European philosophy). The “other” places can no longer be understood as really, wholly “other” viewed in this way. Rather than turning away from European ideas and theories as though they were all inherently Eurocentric, Castro-Gómez confronts the narrative of European expansion to suggest that colonialism and domination are already inscribed within the very terms of that dialog. For Castro-Gómez, expansion and domination already situate both Europe and its Other in conversation with each other, even if that “conversation” is heavily one-sided.<sup>43</sup> His argument focuses on highlighting how the effects of colonialism have produced new forms of subjectivation, new knowledge practices, and new effects of power that remain specific to the ways these practices were/are implemented historically. He then suggests a way for the already ongoing conversation to be reconfigured on different terms.

Seeing complementarity between these two spaces does not imply a rejection of the central premise of either, nor does it conflate them or force them to occupy the same theoretical space. Rather, there are nodes, junctures, or intersections where they touch and come into contact. And despite their disparate theoretical approaches, logic, and

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homogeneity, the generosity of the poor and the excluded instead of the egoism of the capitalists, the literary essay instead of the philosophical treatise...” (my translation).

<sup>43</sup> It might prove fruitful to venture an investigation into the (potentially different) uses of the concept of *hegemony* employed in many decolonial critique about colonial domination. Hegemony is used as a way of understanding how colonial domination came to dominate other forms of being and knowing. Said (1978), Castro-Gómez (2007), and Quijano (2000) use *hegemony* in this way to explain European colonial expansion in which they seem to hint at a time prior to colonialism in which there existed a plurality of forms of knowing, but which have since been erased due to the colonial process. It would be worth it to thoroughly go through and compare the uses, since none of the sources I have come across cite Gramsci or any other scholars in reference to the term hegemony.



general grounding, both emerge from history with an attitude. Rather than seeing critique as a theoretical apparatus populated with concepts, models, and trajectories, critique as *attitude* operates on a slightly different axis to offer a disposition that is born and trained in the context of struggle. Instead of dismissing Western thought as inherently colonial, or decolonial thought as a total rejection of method and rationality, there is a productive way in which this intersection can be interpolated through the notion of attitude. An exploration of decolonial critiques of Eurocentric thought and postcolonial discussions of European modernity prepares the lush and fertile ground upon which to engage these critical attitudes together, without rashly reducing all critical thought emanating from Europe to being Eurocentric or dismissing the poignant and insightful contributions decolonial scholars have contributed to European thought as mere skeptics.<sup>44</sup> With that kind of grounding, it might be possible to begin to look at those points of contact where decolonial critique meets Foucault and think about how and where their respective attitudes collide in a productive rather than colonizing way.

In this chapter, I want to think through the intersection between Foucault and decolonial thought in terms of how the notion of attitude works as a mode of critique that also provides a disposition for subjectivation. Because the category of attitude is relevant to both decoloniality and Foucauldian subjectivation, I will explore the ways in which those attitudes, although different, emerging from different contexts and serving different purposes, meet at specific intersections. In those intersections, I hope to demonstrate moments of complementarity, such that each attitude could be cultivated to work towards visibility and freedom while carefully and thoughtfully attending to the colonial wound. I work through three of those intersections to grapple with how they complement and reinforce each other to produce a more rigorous and robust notion of critique in each case. In sequence, I address: 1) how Foucault compliments decoloniality by theorizing attitude as a particular kind of subjectivizing action, 2) how the decolonial attitude compliments Foucault's critical attitude by expanding his strictly European response to the Enlightenment, and finally 3) how visibility operates as a kind of atypical methodology uniting critical and decolonial attitudes in the service of critique. By

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<sup>44</sup> I use the vocabulary of skepticism following Maldonado-Torres (1995) who identifies decolonial critique as a form of deep skepticism of European rationalities to be able to contend with the colonial context.

addressing each of these intersections, I hope to make a case for complementarity between the critical and the decolonial approaches to critique, highlighting productive resonances between their attitudes.

### **Attitude as (Subjectivizing) Action**

Attitude is posited, first of all, in terms of a reaction to an oppressive context. Both Maldonado-Torres and Foucault describe the emergence of attitude as it pertains to critique in similar ways. For Maldonado-Torres, the *decolonial attitude* emerges in response to the dehumanizing effects of colonialism through a state of violence that has been sustained and justified over the past 500 years (Maldonado-Torres, *AW*). On the other hand, for Foucault, the *critical attitude* is initially born out of a 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century unwillingness to be governed in a certain way by the Christian church (Foucault, *C*). Both scholars posit attitude as a response or reaction to their surrounding social context in similar ways. Attitude first arises out of discontent, but then quickly manifests in the form of action that rejects the respectively constraining social contexts within which it is born. Therefore, perhaps more than a *reaction*, attitude can better be described as a form of *action*.

Maldonado-Torres draws heavily on the work of Frantz Fanon to give voice to the context where the decolonial attitude emerges as an action. With a background in Hegelian dialectics, Merleau-Pontean phenomenology, Sartrean existentialism, and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Fanon—and therefore, the decolonial attitude—inherits the kind of theoretical language that allows for the visceral urgency of decoloniality to be expressed. Through Fanon, the decolonial attitude comes to life. It emerges out of concern for a past that is wholly determined by slavery and domination. It is a past that infects the present with the legacy and consequences of colonialism. At the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon addresses his motivation for engaging in this revolutionary struggle to search for a new humanism.<sup>45</sup> He says: “I find myself one day in a world

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<sup>45</sup> The humanist foundation in decolonial thought may be seen as incompatible with Foucault’s rejection of humanism. Just as Fanon is skeptical of the notion of equality, Foucault is skeptical of the notion of liberation in terms of its finality and the way it is often equated with an idea of freedom. But this tension is actually fairly easily resolved. Foucault famously rejects humanism as an *axis* for critique, but he doesn’t reject its practical value in the struggle for liberation (Foucault, 1984). Along those same lines, it’s not clear that Fanon would be opposed to Foucault’s conception of “practices of freedom” once liberation from a situation of political oppression were achieved. Humanism, then, for both is a strategic political tool, to be employed in the service of work *toward* freedom.

where things are hurtful; a world where I am required to fight; a world where it is always a question of defeat or victory” (Fanon, 203). Finding himself immersed in this unjust and violence-ridden world, the decolonial attitude is simply born, and it is immediately translated into the realm of action. It is out of a vital kind of necessity that action in the form of a decolonial attitude is produced.

While Fanon looks to the future to reinterpret a hurtful past, Foucault looks backward to history, locating the critical attitude as an action in the form of a task or an obligation to attend to history. In 1978, Foucault describes the emergence of the critical attitude in a similar way to Fanon’s emotive description above, that is, as the need to respond to an oppressive context.<sup>46</sup> However in 1984, he revisits the notion of critical attitude to suggest that it actually is not only a form of action, but a *subjectivizing* action. Inspired by an ambiguity he detects in Kant’s 1784 Enlightenment essay (*Was ist Aufklärung?*), Foucault experimentally reinterprets the Kantian project. He situates Kant’s project as a reflection on “the question of the present as a philosophical event to which the philosopher who speaks of it belongs” (Foucault, *E*, 12). The Enlightenment is now posed as a task/obligation to reflect on the ways in which philosophy connects past with present through the activity of philosophizing. This becomes, for Foucault, emblematic of the Enlightenment period more broadly, thus defining modernity in terms of a particular approach or *attitude* toward philosophy with attention to its place in history. It becomes a philosophical *ethos* of sorts for Foucault, lending attitude the ability to be thought about in a way that interpolates subjectivity. Continuing to work through a Kantian framework, Foucault locates “the critical ontology of ourselves as a historico-practical test of the limits that we may go beyond, and thus as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings” (Foucault, *E*, 47). By positing the critical attitude as a form of action that subjectivizes, Foucault connects the reinterpretation of history to a form of work on the self.

Foucault’s critical attitude compliments the decolonial attitude by presenting history as something that not only can, but *ought* to be reinterpreted, and not only that,

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<sup>46</sup> Foucault first mentions the “critical attitude” (*l’attitude critique*) in 1978 in his essay “What is Critique” (“Qu’est-ce que la critique”, 4), but then addresses it again in 1984 in “What is Enlightenment” (“Qu’est-ce que les Lumières”, 586). He also mentions it in between those dates, in the inaugural class in his 1982-3 course “The Government of the Self and Others” at the *Collège de France*.

but the reinterpretation becomes a reinterpretation of the self along the way. The ambiguous framing of Kant's project allows Foucault to understand him in both the more general, historical sense (in terms of the task/obligation central to Enlightenment thinking) and in the individualized, subjectivizing potential of critique, situating both as they contribute to the formation of a specifically modern (and therefore critical) attitude. The critical attitude offers a subjectivizing element of critique to the decolonial attitude insofar as it becomes a way of reinterpreting history *and* the self as positioned within that history differently.<sup>47</sup> History no longer needs to be something that is necessary to overcome or to turn away from in order to overcome it. Instead, it is a philosophical task/obligation to reinterpret history (which in turn works on the subject) to resituate past, present, and future. While both attitudes are perceived initially as *reactions* that immediately transform into *actions* the decolonial attitude lacks an articulation of the kind of subjectivizing component that Foucault can offer. In this way, Foucault's critical attitude lends the decolonial attitude an articulation of subjectivation in a way that might compliment the aims of decoloniality. After all, decolonial attitude is not just any kind of attitude, it is one that engenders a specific kind of subject through the process of subjectivation traversed by colonialism. With this notion of subjectivation at hand, decolonial attitude becomes more than just an orientation toward decoloniality, it actually activates a philosophically motivated critique of the subject that is continually reinvested in the work of critique as a subjectivizing attitude.

### **A Response to the Enlightenment**

Faced with Enlightenment reason, the critical and decolonial attitudes stand on different ground as they respond to the same history. Foucault's response to the Enlightenment is, as discussed above, apparent in the way he takes up and grounds Kant's critical philosophy historically. For him, the critical attitude is both a product and a critique of the Enlightenment. That is, critical attitude is a "type of philosophical interrogation—one that simultaneously problematizes man's relation to the present,

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<sup>47</sup> Perhaps this claim could be contested from a decolonial perspective that tends to operate in a way that is not subject centered. However, close attention to Foucault's notion of the self (in his genealogical, but *also* in his ethical period) ought not be read strictly as an individual. Although he did not posit theories of subjectivation that operate on collectivities himself, his work arguable lends itself to a more collective-based notion of subjectivation.

man's historical mode of being, and the constitution of the self as an autonomous subject" and this, he says, "is rooted in the Enlightenment" (Foucault, *E*, 42). Foucault tries to avoid what he calls the intellectual "blackmail" of the Enlightenment (a normative stance that entails acceptance or rejection of Enlightenment reason), suggesting instead, that we "try to proceed with the analysis of ourselves as beings who are historically determined, to a certain extent, by the Enlightenment" (Foucault, *E*, 43). Therefore, neither accepting nor rejecting Enlightenment rationality, Foucault takes the Enlightenment itself as an organizing principle of contemporary life.

However, this Enlightenment-inspired mode of social organization is precisely the stifling environment within which decolonial attitude emerges and seeks to dismantle or escape. Seeing the Enlightenment neutrally fails to recognize the colonial baggage that comes along with it. One of the major points of contention being, *whose* Enlightenment we are discussing and how geopolitical context determines the way that Enlightenment thinking takes hold of and interprets those rationalities as they are deployed (with attention to *how* and *where* they are deployed). Decolonial critique firmly situates the Enlightenment as a *European* phenomenon with *global* consequences that manifest in its complicity with the history of colonialism. So, while like Foucault, decolonial critique seeks to understand the ways in which we can be understood as historically determined by the Enlightenment, decolonial attitude is oriented to the dismantling of Enlightenment reason. This results in a search for alternative epistemologies and ontologies that stand outside Enlightenment reason. In light of the expanded archive that demonstrates Enlightenment complicity with colonialism and the presentation of different modes of organizing thought and knowledge, Foucault's critical attitude can no longer remain neutral toward Enlightenment rationality. As long as the goal remains to understand the ways in which Enlightenment reason structures contemporary life, it is in need of a decolonial critique that will not only expand the scope of the archive to encompass all the places where Enlightenment reason justifies/justified colonialism, but in the spirit of epistemological rigor, would allow the space to resituate what counts as knowledge in the first place. Here, the decolonial attitude complements the critical attitude by reorienting critique toward decoloniality.

## Visibility

The focus on vision, or visibility, is foundational for the cultivation of both decolonial and critical attitudes as forms of critique. Vision serves a dual function for critique in decolonial thought, both rendering visible Eurocentrism and visibilizing non-European knowledges. At the same time, visibility also happens to be precisely what operationalizes Foucault's method of genealogy, rendering visible those historical discontinuities that begin to dismantle dominant historical narratives, replacing causality with chance. Therefore, decolonial and critical *attitudes* can be seen as contributing complementary modes of critique through a common sensibility toward vision.

When Foucault looks back to history, he does not see a fixed narrative that destines and defines the present, but rather an opportunity. History viewed genealogically reconstitutes the past and resituates the self in relation to that past in the process. Foucault explicitly states that the purview of this new way of seeing the past through genealogy is a function of the search for freedom. He asserts that genealogy "is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom" (Foucault, *E*, 46). Genealogy strives toward an unforeseeable freedom based on a conglomeration of concrete practices at a given historical moment. It is therefore an uncommon sort of method that lacks a procedural order, and also (perhaps more importantly) a hypothesized outcome.

If Foucault looks back to see change, then Fanon looks forward, with visions of a future that is different from the past *and* the present. Fanon's perception of history can only see how the dominant narrative stabs menacingly at the present, dredging up a return to a past that he is struggling at all costs to move away from. Decoloniality relies on hope in the future and invention and creativity in the present to inspire change. Seen that way, when Fanon explores history, it comes as no surprise when he declares: "I am not a prisoner of History. I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction. I must constantly remind myself that the real *leap* consists of introducing invention into life. In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself" (Fanon, 204). Fanon's future-oriented hope for change reflects how he must see himself differently in order to see the world differently. It is up to him to create, and recreate himself, such that the

world he looks forward to in the future might eventually shape reality differently. Motivated through a decolonial attitude, an inability to live, let alone flourish under present conditions, Fanon looks forward to create and recreate himself.

With a shared emphasis on vision as transformative for critique, both the decolonial and critical attitudes complement each other in different ways. Neither Fanon nor Foucault hope to provide a formula or to prescribe an end-goal for emancipation. In a sense, the decolonial preoccupation with method is absolved in Foucault's non-prescriptive genealogical approach to history. But attention to visibility in itself is not enough to reconcile these different approaches to critique. Resonating with Foucauldian and decolonial approaches to visibility, is an orientation toward a particular conception of freedom. This idea of freedom is given the name of struggle for Fanon, and along with Foucault, it remains a struggle must be met strategically, remain open-ended, and yet be informed by way of habit, through concrete practices, and a bit of creativity.

As soon as that critical orientation becomes defined and locked down by a set of geographic parameters, it risks essentialization, thereby forecloses opportunities for critique. In other words, the way decoloniality is articulated by some members of the MC group risks essentializing place (and indigeneity/indigenous identity in particular) as a kind of salvation from European (read colonial) logics and forms of rationality. By so starkly and categorically rejecting *European* methods and *European* concepts, this way of articulating decoloniality surrenders to a vision of critique that perhaps raises its "other" to an ideal standard. The enthusiastic turn toward indigenous knowledge as a resource for thinkers trained in the Western philosophical canon seems problematic at best, and at worst risks essentializing place/location through a logic that is, in some ways, similar to colonial logic. Even if that visibilizing is strategic and not essential, it threatens to become a kind of "strategic essentialism" that glorifies the other in a Europe/non-Europe binary. Stoler concurs about the dangers of the radical rejection of European methods pointing out that:

'strategic essentialism' may represent the *contre-histoire* in racial discourse, the form in which subjugated knowledge make their space. That may be its political virtue. But as a political strategy for rewriting histories that reflect both the fixity and contested boundaries of taxonomic colonial

states, it is, if not untenable, at least problematic (Stoler, 199).

But before denouncing decoloniality as proposing a critique of Eurocentrism that is itself Eurocentric or worse, as essentializing (even strategically essentializing) indigeneity, by thinking about critique as attitude attention to place is reoriented. Through visibility as a practice trained in seeing the colonial wound, decolonial attitude motivates critique as a kind of disposition that allows for a focus on place and in context without essentializing it.

Like the decolonial attitude, Foucault's critical attitude also emphasizes context as a function of visibility. Trained through discursive practices and in particular historical contexts, the critical attitude emerges through techniques of seeing history differently via genealogy. In this way, Foucault complements decolonial critique by offering a theoretical articulation of the way techniques of the self operate in conjunction with discursive practices that contribute to shaping his critical attitude. So while the two orientations provide different perspectives that accent the way attitude emerges and is trained differently, they ought not be understood as completely incompatible with one another. If the decolonial attitude emerges in response to practices of invisibilization and due to a particular experience of colonial history, and Foucault's approach to history provides a strategic method for reinterpretation of history through techniques of visibilization, then the two attitudes might actually supplement each other in productive ways. But ultimately it is the orientation of critique *as an attitude* that allows the two to come into contact, even if they are trained through different practices.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite their differences, the critical attitude and the decolonial attitude complement each other by grounding the project of critique in different ways. On the one hand, critical attitude lends decolonial attitude the vocabulary of subjectivation and a groundedness in history articulated through concrete practices. On the other hand, decolonial attitude lends critical attitude the urgency to attend to the limits of European thought, while also pointing to spaces where other possibilities can be found. Both attitudes are attuned to the importance of the radical potential for change that visibility lends to the dismantling of dominant narratives. While visibility alone might not be enough to motivate change fully, it certainly acts one of the main initial catalysts in facilitating the conditions of possibility through which change might be staged. Sharing a mutual distrust for methods, both Foucault and decolonial thought use visibility to reject the teleological and universal standards within which most methods operate, opting instead for strategies, tactics, techniques that look ahead to the future and behind to the past to open up spaces to *see* differently. This seeing is a way of seeing oneself immersed in a different world, with a different *attitude* toward history and time, past, present, and future. It has a way of reconstituting the past and resituating the present self *in practice* through the cultivation of an attitude.

The critical and the decolonial attitudes can be seen to work on parallel projects that resonate with each other and mutually reinforce each other, coming into contact at critical intersections. They actually complement each other in productive and attentive ways such that through contact, no matter how brief or fleeting it may be, complementing each other precisely through their *different* orientations. By keeping them separate while still seeing their parallels, resonances, and mutual moments of compatibility, the critical and the decolonial attitudes can be cultivated in different parts of the world with attention to different motives for critique while maintaining critical distance between each other. That is, still benefiting from the theoretical and practical tools that each has to offer the other, they do not risk falling into one another, collapsing together and rendering them the same. This distance serves as a continual reference to the way differences can be rendered compatible through a constant return to critique. By cultivating an attitude that

orients critique in a particular way, within particular parameters and with a particular historico-political and geographic context in mind, attitude will always bring to bear those *particularities* to whatever is at stake, thus continually regenerating the need for critique and the space within which to cultivate critical attitudes. Attitude, after all, is born out of context and the need for critique. Without critique, life would risk becoming complacent, homogeneous, woefully ill adept at appreciating difference.

To return one last time to the scenario depicted at the beginning of this piece, about Kusch's indigenous grandfather and about the preservation of silence over translation or the translation to preserve the ability to keep silent, the answer will always remain both with the cultivation of attitude *and* the need for critique. They work in tandem, they feed off of each other in order to remain in constant motion. Just as attitude is born of the need for critique, critique is born of an attitude. Perhaps the circularity of this argument does not do justice to the question at hand, itself creating the conditions for critique. But at least those conditions will be met with concrete historical conditions and the discursive practices that sustain them to ground the conditions for an attitude that seeks change, and in the very process of looking for it, perhaps that change begins to take effect as a feeling of the need for critique.

**APPENDIX A**  
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- E*—“What Is Enlightenment?” In *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 32–50. New York: Pantheon Book, 1984.
- GSO*—*The Government of the Self and Others*. 2008. Translated by Graham Burchell. Lectures at the Collège de France 1982–1983. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
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- EW*—“The Masked Philosopher.” 1980. In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, edited by Paul Rabinow, translated by Alan Sheridan, 1:321–28. *Essential Works*. New York: The New York Press, 1996.

**APPENDIX B**  
**IN-TEXT REFERENCES TO NELSON MALDONADO-TORRES**

*AW*—*Against War*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

*TDT*—“Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-Continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique—An Introduction.” *Transmodernity*, no. Fall (2011): 1–15.

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