A Normative Foucauldian

Educational Futures

RETHINKING THEORY AND PRACTICE

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A Normative Foucauldian

Selected Papers of Mark Olssen

By

Mark Olssen

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To the memory of James R. Flynn

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FOREWORD

Critique, Ethics, Learning

Stephen J. Ball

Charles Taylor begins an essay on Foucault with the words "Foucault disconcerts" (1986, p. 69). That is the point of Foucault.

I want to say something here about how Foucault is read and used in the social sciences and explore a distinction between those who simply "read" Foucault as against those who "use" Foucault in an active and constructive fashion to "do" social science. There are then two sorts of writers who address themselves to Foucault's work. There are those who present themselves as Foucauldian scholars, who seek to identify exactly what it was that Foucault meant when he wrote or spoke at any point. They display "a persistence that borders on stubbornness" (Foucault, 1980a, p. VII) to know the *true* Foucault, and in doing so often make little attempt to grasp the style and attitude of his work. Their engagement is almost exclusively textual. Then there are those who "use" Foucault, and take seriously the attitude and orientation of his intellectual and political challenges to make things not as necessary as all that (Foucault, 1991a, p. 76). Mark Olssen is very much one of the latter. "Everything I do", Foucault said, "I do in order that it may be of use" (Defert & Ewald, 2001, pp. 911–912). The usefulness of Foucault lies in the application and development of his ideas and methods and concepts in relation to specific "enterprises" of "problematisation" (Foucault, 1984a, p. 3) as the starting point from which to begin to think differently. This is what Mark Olssen is doing in many of the papers in this book. As he signals: not simply going into Foucault but going beyond him: "This is going well beyond Foucault as he developed his position, of course" (Chapter 2, this volume).

Olssen uses Foucault for "cutting"—as Foucault said: "Knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting" (Foucault, 1984a, p. 88) and the task each day, he suggested, is to decide that which is of the greatest danger. He went on to explain: "My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism" (Foucault, 1983a, pp. 231–232). That activism joins up the intellectual with the political in complex ways (see Hoffman, 2015).

Over and against this, I would argue, much writing "about" Foucault both misunderstands and misrepresents him. Misunderstands in the sense of failing

to grasp the method and raison d'être of his endeavours and concomitantly the status of his statements. Perhaps the most egregious example of this is the Zamora and Behrent (2016) collection *Foucault and Neoliberalism*. As Vogelmann (2016) notes in his review of the book: "By consistently refusing to reflect on how Foucault reads and by neglecting to reflect on their own way of reading Foucault, the authors of this collection obstruct further discussion by obscuring rather than criticising Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism". Vogelmann goes on to point out that the argument for Foucault's neoliberal sympathies proceeds by "simply referring to a sentence or two where it suits their particular aim, without any attention to their conceptual status or their context within the lectures". Johanna Oksala (2015) responds to Zamora, as others have done, by arguing that he and Behrent are asking the wrong questions:

> The only relevant question the academic left should be asking regarding Foucault's analyses of neoliberalism is whether they provide us with any useful tools that can be successfully deployed against the current neoliberal hegemony. And I believe that the answer to this question is, significantly, also a yes.

Zamora's particular argument (p. 70) is that the politics implied by Foucault's analysis—implies mind you, what ever that means—involves the displacement of struggles over the redistribution of power and against exploitation and for equality with a politics of identity. Aside from the fact that Foucault was concerned with subjectivity and not identity, surely what this illustrates is a profound inability to understand Foucault and particularly to understand *governmentality* as a form of power and an art of governing. It also displays a studied neglect of Foucault's views on political struggle and his own political militancy.

> Nowadays, the struggle against the forms of subjection—against the submission of subjectivity—is becoming more and more important, even though the struggles against forms of domination and exploitation have not disappeared. Quite the contrary. (Foucault, 1982, p. 213)

While Foucault does reject any utopian impulse revolving around the laws of economic development or the role of the proletariat in history, the question Foucault raises in his work on neoliberalism is what kind of self, what kind of subject have we become, and how might we be otherwise? Or more succinctly: "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are" (Foucault, 1982, p. 785) and perhaps "refusing, changing and ridding ourselves are only the ethical conditions, made possible by genealogical work, of creation, innovation and invention" (Cremonesi et al., 2016, p. 14). This is

hardly a commitment to the subject Homo economicus as the one possible way of being within the neoliberal episteme. Rather this is a particular form of what Foucault called in his Dartmouth Lectures (2016, p. 15) a "politics of ourselves". That is to say, "All those on whom power is exercised to their detriment, all who find it intolerable, can begin the struggle on their own terrain and on the basis of their proper activity (or passivity)" (Foucault, 1977, p. 216). That is, a modern form of politics for a modern form of government. Struggle on this terrain is an engagement with and can involve *a refusal of neoliberal governmentality in its own terms*—a combative relationship to oneself and others not some kind of accommodation to or celebration of neoliberal sensibilities.

For Foucault, as the earlier quotation illustrates, philosophy was not a body of knowledge; rather, it was a critical practice, a relentless questioning of dogmatic beliefs and intolerable practices in contemporary society, a practice of "insolent assertion". He did not set out to develop a general theory of society, or adopt a specific political strategy but rather to identify a set of "problems" and to outline some methods of analysis (archaeology and genealogy, in particular) and develop a set of tools, a toolbox of concepts, which he hoped others would use and develop further in the struggle to be freer than we think we are. "My role" he said, "is to show people that they are much freer than they feel" (Martin, Gutman, & Hutton, 1988, p. 10), but he goes on to say: "whether our freedom is liberating or not is something that is not guaranteed to us" (May, 2011, pp. 80–81). This does not come with the promise of an end point of freedom.

The other point about the many attempts to pigeon-hole Foucault, or to capture the true Foucault—neoliberal, nihilist, hedonist, structuralist or whatever—is the failure to come to grips with the modalities and method of his intellectual practice. That is to say, his body of work consists of a set of incomplete forays and false starts. His writing is always "work in progress, and it is not certain when or even if the work will be conclusive—or to what degree it has even begun" (Kromann & Andersen, 2011, p. 230); he is "continuously analysing, developing and displacing concepts" (p. 230). When asked in a 1982 interview if he was a philosopher, historian, structuralist, or Marxist, Foucault replied, "I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning" (Martin, Gutman, & Hutton, 1988, p. 9). In other words, he was always moving on rather than taking up fixed positions. Furthermore, perhaps disingenuously at times, Foucault expressed many doubts about the clarity and coherence of his work. He saw himself as experimenting with ideas and possibilities that often led to what he regarded as dead ends.

> None of it does more than mark time. Repetitive and disconnected, it advances nowhere. Since indeed it never ceases to say the same thing, it

> perhaps says nothing. It is tangled up into an indecipherable, disorganised muddle. In a nutshell, it is inconclusive. (Foucault, 1980b, p. 78)

We can think about Foucault's oeuvre in the same way he characterised the problems of historical analysis, to be understood as: "discontinuity, rupture, threshold, limit, series, and transformation" (1972, p. 21). Foucault (1997a, p. 180) described his methodological shifts as "auto-critique". The shifts, the dead ends, the unstable use of terms and concepts in Foucault's work are all the more evident, and all the more irrelevant in themselves in as much that a great deal of what we now read of Foucault was never intended for publication, never intended to be read and poured over. The Collège de France lectures in particular which have been endlessly interrogated and dissected by Foucauldian scholars were very much works in progress and opportunities to try out ideas, some of which were disavowed or altered from one lecture to the next, but which are now often read in isolation as definitive statements. Foucault's "final book" recently published, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 4: Confessions of the Flesh* (2021), is also a case in point. Foucault was editing and revising the manuscript in hospital in the weeks before his death and specified in his will that he did not want this work to be published after his death. The now published text was "drawn together" from hand-written notes by the editor. But it will no doubt come to be read, like other posthumous publications, as a finished and fixed book, whereas Foucault saw his books as a means of clarifying his thinking and then moving beyond: "I write a book only because I still don't know what to think about this thing I want so much to think about, so that the book transforms me and transforms what I think" (Foucault, 2000, pp. 239–240). Foucault was preoccupied with writing, and described it as "like a game that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses it limits" (Foucault, 1998, p. 206). He attributed great importance to the act of writing as a practice of freedom and in a very late paper explored the possibilities of what he called "self writing" (Foucault, n.d.), that is a process of self-shaping through the production of texts. "When I write I do it above all to change myself and not to think the same thing as before" (Foucault, 1991b, p. 27). His text do not refer to or report some prior thinking but gesture towards new possibilities of thought. In this way he was clear about how he approached intellectual problems and approached writing. He regarded his intellectual endeavours as a way of working on himself; he was always a work in progress, always unfinished, restless, and bellicose. There is no singular and definitive Foucault to be found on the surfaces of his texts. Indeed, more generally, Foucault was suspicious of the book as an original single-authored text—which we know that *Confessions* is not. "The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous

form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network" (Foucault, 1972, p. 23).

How then does Olssen read and use Foucault? Olssen's Foucault is a political Foucault, in a numbers of senses, and relatedly he is a materialist Foucault. And Olssen's Foucault is read in relation to a network of other thinkers—Marx, Wittgenstein, Keynes, Hegel, Nussbaum, Hobbes, Sartre, Althusser, Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Spinoza. Through the engagements and dialogues with these interlocutors offered in Olssen's papers we get a sense of the way Foucault's thought was shaped and influenced by many philosophers almost all of whom he disagreed with, deviated from, subjected to criticism but made use of. His relation to them is one he seeks to encourage among his readers, not to agree with him but to use him, question him and to move on. These engagements are starting points for thinking otherwise. Olssen's Foucault is also very contemporary—a Foucault of globalisation, of neoliberal political economy, of citizenship and complexity and democracy. He is a pragmatic and practical Foucault. Olssen uses Foucault in particular to explore issues of education. Olssen's Foucault is not a lonely nihilist but a troubled provocateur who encourages in us toward the political project of self-formation—our relation to ourselves and always, to others.

Crucially, as Olssen (2007, p. 207) makes clear, such "ethical action is not, for Foucault, an individual affair but presupposes a certain political and social structure with respect to liberty". The "care of the self" Olssen argues, is set against the performative individualism of modernity and rests in contrast on what he calls "thin" communitarianism, which "has no common goal or bond but comprises of a minimal structure of agreements, rules, practices, and understandings necessitated to permit a social ontology of difference" (Olssen, 2009, p. 489) and he goes on to say "freedom, in this sense, is a historically and politically constructed space" (p. 491). Thus, "far from being a lonely and selfish process, self-care fosters generosity and solidarity, enables stronger and more meaningful ties with others" (Sicilia-Camacho & Fernandez-Balboa, 2009, p. 455). Ethics here concern the kind of relation one has to oneself and others and indicate a different form of self-government, structuring and shaping the field of possible action of subjects.

Olssen (2009, p. 267) suggests, drawing on Sen and Nussbaum in particular, that all of this presupposes "a range of capabilities" that education must develop and he goes on to offer a list of requirements for such an education.

> Taking Foucault's emphasis on "self-creation" as fundamental, we can say that a number of things are clearly required. These include: (1) basic material and institutional supporting structures and resources, (2) training and knowledge, (3) non-humiliation, respect and dignity, (4) a protected

> space where freedom can be practised, (5) structures that permit dialogue and communication.

These he also calls "agentic skills", such as "the capacity to understand and access global knowledge systems; the awareness of multi-perspectival orientations to self and culture, based upon an understanding of diverse human experiences, as well as the ability to construct new ideas" (p. XX). Education in these terms involves a commitment to fostering ethical learners with a healthy suspicion of the present, while at the same time being able to acknowledge their own fallibility, and the adoption of a critical stance that moves through experiments in living intended to re-create ourselves, and the world. Olssen (2017) suggests that this has parallels with Dewey's sense of learning as "a cooperative and collaborative activity centred upon experiential, creative responses to contingent sets of relations to cope with uncertainty in a never-ending quest". Learning thus becomes an exploration of limits—mapping, testing and crossing them when possible. The work done "at the limits of ourselves", must always be experimental, we may never be able "both to grasp the points where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take" (Foucault, 2000).

Foucault's project of critique is not a particular and specific set of actions it is a permanent orientation of scepticism, it is "a mode of relating to contemporary reality" (Foucault, 1984b, p. 39). This involves both "a critique of what we are saying, thinking, and doing" (ibid., p. 45) and experiments with "the possibility of moving beyond" (ibid., p. 47). This is not just a "gesture of rejection" rather we have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative; we have to be at the frontiers" (ibid., p. 45). In relation to this, Foucault studiously avoids the prescription of particular actions that should be employed in order to escape or oppose the phenomena of being governed. Instead, he asserts that criticism is comprised of "analyzing and reflecting upon limits" (ibid., p. 45). This is a stance of liminality that is intended to address specific transformations in "our ways of being and thinking, relations to authority, relations between the sexes, the way in which we perceive insanity or illness" (ibid., pp. 46–47).

The "limit attitude" is a means by which a subject can positively resist power, through "counter-conducts" and creative strategies of resistance that "open up processes of "autonomous and independent" subjectivation, that is, "possibilities for the constitution of oneself" (Lazzarato, 2009, p. 114). This requires that we cultivate "the art of voluntary insubordination, and a practice of reflective intractibility" (Foucault, 1997c, p. 32). "In this sense, critique aims to free us from the historically transitory constraints of contemporary consciousness as realised in and through discursive practices" (Olssen, 2003, p. 73). Drawing on Nietzsche, Foucault sought to displace the humanist/progressive traditions of

Western philosophy, with their promise of personal well-being and collective progress, and which require us to search for and link our essential qualities to inherent abstract principles, and instead set the challenge "of creatively and courageously authoring one's ethical self" (Pignatelli, 2002, p. 158). The task is to avoid fixity in order to become "a stylist, an ironist, a hero by taking oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration" (Foucault, 1986, p. 166), to take responsibility for the *form* of one's life and character, the constitution of oneself as a subject. The question is "How is one to live?" and the response is an "aesthetics of existence", an appeal to beauty as a weapon "which can be used to bring down the tyranny of modern morality" (O'Leary, 2002, p. 1). The task of giving style to character in this way is always unfinished.

This is a *negative ethics*, not a matter of asserting ideals, but rather an imaginative creativity. This is ethics as a practice rather than a plan, as "the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself" (Foucault, 1984c, p. 352). It is the cultivation of a self that is both a product and a disruption of various discourses that requires one to practice the art of living well. It is creating a space within which it is possible to make oneself thinkable in a different way—"to become other than how you find yourself" (Foucault, 1983b). This is very different from and indeed opposed to some kind of grand design for a new world of experience; it is rooted in local situations and specific incidents. It is about the relation between knowing and acting, rather than some kind of inner state or planned alternative. Self-formation is an active and engaged process, based on learning from the immediate and quoditian, forming and testing at the same time; an "exercise of oneself in the activity of thought" (Foucault, 1992, p. 9), over and against or redeploying the techniques of *governmentality*. There is a dynamic interplay here between what it is one does not want to be and what one might become. Nonetheless, and without resort to a traditional code-based morality, Olssen's Foucault is a normative Foucault—but this is a certain sort of normativity, a kind of consequentialist normativity that rests on the concept of life and well-being, and from which a politics of possibility might be constructed. This turns on a commitment to the interests of survival and continuance of all as a basis the basis for ethical judgement and politics.

Following from all of this, as noted, Olssen argues that education can contribute to the development of ethical skills and sensibilities, but only if it is itself a form of ethical practice:

> Learning must be seen, in this sense, as a goal-directed activity, related to the evolution and survival of life. It involves a qualitatively different type of thinking, one that recognises uncertainty, unpredictability, novelty, openness, a balance between order and disorder, and which represents discursive elements, such as concepts and words, as conventional and

> historical. Due to human fallibility and limitations, the type of knowledge that complex learning results in is bereft of the arrogance of the Enlightenment claim to know (*aude sapere*) according to the newfound faith in reason. Rather, it is more modest, humble, less self-assured, recognising "partial knowledge", "human error", and limited cognition. At the same time, it also encompasses processes of creativity and of possibilities of unexpected developments within situations. Complex education implies, say Trueit and Doll (2010, p. 138), a view of "education as a journey into the land of the unknown taken by ourselves but with others". (Chapter 15, this volume)

What Olssen does is to deploy Foucault to address a set of fundamental contemporary social and political problems. He takes up Foucault's conceptions of power, of freedom, of self-creation and makes these into a very practical framework for thinking differently about community and about democracy. And in relation to this education becomes a very relevant concern, a particular site at which capabilities and "agentic skills" for self-creation and for community building can be elaborated. Whereas many commentaries focus on "the relation to oneself" and neglects "and to other", and conceive of self-formation as a lonely process of self-discipline, Olssen puts ethics firmly into a collective context, a political context. Olssen starts from and goes beyond Foucault to begin to envision another form of life, a militant life, beyond discipline and security, "a struggle against and for self, against and for others" (Foucault, 2011, p. 283). Olssen offers directions in which we might go, "lines of flight" if you will.

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SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Mark Olssen: Foucauldian Social Democrat

Michael A. Peters

Mark Olssen is a political theorist who specialises in education and political sociology with an accent on the theory of social democracy. He is also an internationally acknowledged expert on Foucault whose philosophical ideas inform his work on neoliberalism. His work critiques neoliberalism both as a mode of governmentality, as well as an alternative social democratic conception of politics and education for the 21st century. His recent work utilises Foucault and complexity as the basis of a new ontology in order to escape deterministic views of history and society, associated with Marx and Hegel. Together, these elements ground a new conception of social democracy where public education, and the social basis of citizenship, will once again play a major role.

Actually, I based this description on an official statement that Mark Olssen uses to succinctly summarise the value of his intellectual labours for the New Zealand performance-based assessment framework (Performance Based Research Fund, PBRF) that monitors and determines institutional and research rankings. It tells us precisely where he locates himself in relation to Foucault and Marx and what he is working toward—a social democratic theoretical account of public education as the basis of social citizenship. It also tells us how he regards Foucault and what use he wants to make of his work. These essays organised into six parts—(1) Michel Foucault, (2) Foucault, Marx, Hegel, (3) Social Democracy in the 21st Century, (4) Neoliberal Governmentality, (5) Complexity, Democracy, Ethics, and (6) Political Theory in the 21st Century—show us the trajectory and progression of Olssen's work. Without doubt he is one of the leading theorists working in this area and his work is widely cited and justly so.

I invited Mark to contribute to my book series because I thought it would be useful to have a comprehensive approach to his papers organised into a coherent whole that guides the reader through the theoretical debates and issues that he has engaged over many years. I have known Mark Olssen for over 20 years from when he was at Otago University in New Zealand in the 1980s, where he was a voice in the wilderness. He had stronger ties and shared theoretical interests with Jim Marshall and me at Auckland University during the 1990s, and with a small group of scholars interested in the work of Michel Foucault that Marshall Olssen and I helped introduce to New Zealand scholars, especially in educational studies. The reception of critical sociology in New

Zealand had been held up until relatively recently with the ascendency of Karl Popper, who occupied a position at the University of Canterbury in the period from 1937 to 1943. Even when Popper was debating with Adorno in the positivistic disputes of German sociology in the late 1950s and early 1960s—a dispute between the critical rationalists and the Frankfurt School—little of it rubbed off on sociology of education in New Zealand. Philosophy of science in New Zealand was dominated by Popper, perhaps rightly so, given the influence of *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, originally published in 1934, and rewritten and published in English in 1959. Little did the University of Canterbury in the late 1930s appreciate Popper's work nor did they much appreciate the concept of "research", loading Popper up with teaching about which he complained bitterly.

Mark, well read in the work of the Frankfurt School, I imagine, would have sided with Habermas and the Frankfurt School that collectively held that critical sociology could not been cut off from its base in metaphysics with the consequence that all empirical questions are in some sense anchored in philosophical issues. I think Mark would also hold on to this proposition. And I suspect also that he, like Foucault, does not see any deep contradiction between the Frankfurt School and Foucault.

At the University of Otago in New Zealand philosophy was dominated by Alan Musgrave, who edited with Imre Lakatos the wonderful book *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (1970). He became Head of the Philosophy Department at Otago in 1970 and only retired in 2005. The atmosphere was not very receptive to Foucault. James Flynn in the Department of Politics, where Olssen studied as a student, managed to combine moral and political philosophy with psychology to write about issues of race, class and IQ, as well as issues of social and political concern. I know that Olssen and Flynn were on good terms.

The problem was really an Education Department committed to empiricism and psychology that did not try to make room for other approaches, and like education more broadly in New Zealand, in the main drew up firm disciplinary borders between educational psychology and sociology. And yet at the same time the reception of Foucault in educational studies was a major influence on his reception in New Zealand. The downside is that now there are a large group of PhD students who want to use discourse analysis and theory who have never read "The Order of Discourse", Foucault's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1970. Mark Olssen certainly changed the intellectual landscape in sociology of education and in relation the concept of social democracy, always with a policy orientation. He also worked closely with his colleagues at Massey University, including John Codd and Anne-Marie O'Neill in 2001

He left Otago for the Politics Department at the University of Surrey, where he focused on his project of developing approach to Foucault's ethics and elab-

orating Foucault's normative approach to education. He has been there ever since but also took an adjunct role as professorial chair in higher education at the Auckland University of Technology, for the period of the 2018 PBRF. The result of his life's work is a strong vision of social democracy and a coherent account of education's role within it. Olssen is a thinker. He is a meticulous scholar and a creative writer.

I have had the good fortune to work and collaborate with Mark and I count him as a friend and colleague, so it is with great pleasure that I am able to offer this collection to his readers and to the academic community at large.

Preface

The following papers represent a selection of academic articles that I have published over the last 25 years. The themes I have chosen to guide my selection include Michel Foucault, Marxism, neoliberalism, complexity theory, social democracy, and political theory. All of these themes are related and indeed are highly interconnected in my own mind to the intellectual project I embarked upon and which I improvised and altered over the course of my academic career. Essentially, I have followed Michel Foucault in his opposition to Marxism and Hegelianism, in his pluralistic endorsement of democracy and freedom, and in the need to rethink much of the project of Western liberalism in relation to its views on philosophy, science, reason, history, the subject, and democracy.

Foucault's work has guided my thinking specifically in relation to all of these themes. When I was in my first academic position, at Otago University in New Zealand, I initially started lecturing on what was termed by my department, the "social foundations of education". I lectured on Plato, John Dewey, Antonio Gramsci, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michael Foucault. I also taught a course in the sociology of education, where I dealt with what in those times were called "the new sociology of education", which included debates over the nature of knowledge and what counts as knowledge by academics such as Michael Young, Basil Bernstein, Michael Apple, Stephen Ball, Henry Giroux, and many others. The discovery of Foucault came as a bombshell in the sense that here was a thinker intent on sidestepping the traditional problematic of Marxism, concerned as it was with the perennial issue of base and superstructure and the interminable difficulty of how to present a model of the social structure which explained how all the elements of the superstructure—cultural, political, ideological, scientific—could both reflect and yet maintain independence from the central role of the economic base. Foucault was interesting in that he retained a view of historical materialism as a broad theory of change which stressed the integral role of both history and social construction, while not becoming encumbered with the problems of economic determinism, of a closed totality, or of the inevitability of historical progress towards a communist utopia.

Since those early days of my first academic appointment my academic programme has continued to be influenced by Foucault in important respects. With Foucault I found a liberation from the prison house of received opinions and conventional social science verities. Foucault managed to look back at history and ask whether it was necessary that our received understandings and institutions were in fact strictly necessary or whether they could have been dif-

ferent if certain events in history had only occurred in a different way. While in that we are, like other living beings, constituted in history, and some things will be necessary if we are to survive, the way these become organized and structured within any complex social whole at any time will also express contingent patterns of power and hierarchy which give to any social structure a particular relativity. The sense in which Foucault is a historical materialist is that he sees the evolving structures of society as dynamically affected by and changing in relation to incremental changes of their parts. Rather than a theory of dynamics which is linear and deterministic, in the tradition of Newton, Kant, or Hegel and Marx, as was characteristic of the Enlightenment, what Foucault effects is a post-quantumization of history and of the social, now characterized by uncertainty, non-linearity, non-predictability, openness, and chance. In this new non-Hegelian version of holism–particularism, history implies the relativity of all established orders, whether social or discursive, whether of societies, institutions, systems, or concepts.

That such a relativity creates problems for truth and morality can be acknowledged as the hard issues, and I quickly recognized, as did Foucault, that there is little prospect of confronting and solving the issues head-on, in any simplistic manner. Yet, in my books, as well as my articles, I express concern and awareness of these issues, and indeed, the inclusion of articles within this volume can be seen to contain insights as to how best these issues can be tackled. While truth and ethics must be seen to operate as necessary codes in terms of such a historical materialism, what is important to understand is how what is necessary and what is relative mutually coexist and implicate each other, without cancelling each other out, and without turning into incoherence. It is how truth and ethics manifest themselves and are justified, or warranted, within a contingently assembled social order that generates the most interesting and most difficult issues to understand.

Relativity also applies to knowledge and the disciplines themselves irrespective of any verities revealed. The emergence of the disciplines of science themselves reflected the imperatives of particular social structures and particular historical changes. Facts were incomplete, partial, mixed with other values and perspectives, represented from a particular point of view. It is no accident that psychology emerged with the Enlightenment and reflected the new-found position of man at the center of the universe, even of the cosmos. In this sense, psychology could be represented as an apparatus (*dispositif*) of power itself constructed as a means of disciplining and positioning individuals within a new hierarchy of life. Although several articles on educational psychology are not reproduced within this volume of papers (see Olssen, 1991, 1993), the Kantian emphasis upon autonomy is referred to in Chapter 1. In this article, Kant's emphasis on autonomy is briefly subjected to a Foucauldian cri-

tique. Foucault is useful for questioning normative axes and beliefs that have become embedded in modernist culture, such as autonomy. In the Kantian tradition, autonomy serves to indicate both rationality and moral independence or self-sufficiency of each individual in the face of the moral law. Such a view reflects the arrogance of the Enlightenment. Kant is able to recognize such an autonomous nature by abandoning all contingency, including situationally specific constraints, or context specific imperatives, that serve to constrain or bear down on each individual making the fact of any moral adjudication much more fraught and uncertain than merely implementing some universal maxim. To the extent that individuals can be represented as autonomous it is only as the effect or outcome of complex historical–institutional developments and supports. The individual and their capacities are in this sense the product of the social conditions of existence. Foucault sees the world as characterized by multiple and conflicting demands and, in this sense, much more complicated than did Kant. In that individuals can be said at all to achieve autonomy it presupposes, I argue, elaborate historical–institutional, social and educational pre-conditions. To the extent that these pre-conditions unleash mature forms of critical reflection and thinking as possible, mankind can still never be certain, which is to say that it is never vouchsafe, that reason stands "clear and distinct", or separate from falsehood and superstition. Indeed, the legacy of the Enlightenment would suggest that it does not offer any comfort in this regard. While we are certainly moving forward it is not clear that we are moving uphill in a progressive direction, or that we are going anywhere in particular. To the extent that good sense and reason are possible, however, they presuppose complex social, political, and institutional structures, which underscore not so much the autonomy of each individual, but their interdependency and interconnectedness in networks and structures of social support and facilitation. The individual, in this sense, is not "self-made" or responsible for their own good fortune, for they are dependent upon institutional structures of social and historical support which have made their development possible. Similarly, individuals do not reason autonomously, based upon their own cognitive faculties. For it is the shared dimension of life that typifies the social, in its essential feature, and it is the integral feature of the social that renders decision-making and judgement as capable of being mature. The classical liberal view of knowledge and autonomy is thus overly individualistic and overly arrogant in obscuring and misrepresenting the social supports to knowledge and reason, as well as the extent of the fallibility of knowledge, limited cognition or partial knowledge, uncertainty, as well as the need for cautiousness, tentativeness and humility in our attitudes and dispositions.

Foucault was also influential in terms of my understanding of the political. Firstly, his conception of critique was important. If Descartes's axiom that rea-

son can be separated from superstition is false, that the *Evil Genius* of the *First Meditation* cannot be evacuated from the process of knowledge, then critical interrogation and scrutiny become epistemologically necessary to unmasking the real conditions of existence. Critique in this sense becomes pivotal to understanding the world, both in terms of epistemology and in terms of ethics. Perhaps Foucault's concepts of "limit-experience" and "transgression" establish the conditions for partially overcoming relativism and establishing certain degrees of confidence that we are encountering the real world of the pre-discursive. Testing limits seems to be Foucault's answer, not just in science, but in all of the domains of experience. Hence, in science, via falsifications, as Popper devised; in politics, via "intolerability", as mobilized prisoners in their protests, or peasants in their revolutions, or Black Lives Matter advocates in their marches, manifest; via the body or the other, as in sexuality, or the erotic; via new forms of understanding or communication, as in literature. Ultimately, testing limits secures the primordial character of affects in asking what it is that our actions and thoughts do, what forces do they unleash, what truths do they necessitate, what lies do they conceal. Testing limits for Foucault is the only way to establish footholds.

Foucault was also important in terms of his opposition to Hegel and Marx, or perhaps, to express the point better, in terms of the particular way in which he opposes Hegel and Marx. I have included three chapters on my writings or reflections on Marx and/or Hegel. These express how I have read Foucault, and what for me Foucault articulates. All of these express different aspects of Foucault's relation to Marxism, and serve to highlight, or illustrate, the senses in which Foucault draws on Marx and Hegel, and the senses in which he stands opposed to Marx and Hegel. "Foucault and Marxism: Rewriting the Theory of Historical Materialism", published in *Policy Futures in Education*, serves to suggest the particular nature of Foucault's own form of historical materialism in contrast to Marx's historical materialism. The article with my New Zealand compatriot, Michael A. Peters, "Marx, Education and the Possibilities of a Fairer World: Reviving Radical Political Economy through Foucault", was initially published in a book edited by Anthony Green, Glenn Rikowski and Helen Raduntz, *Renewing Dialogues in Marxism and Education* (Olssen & Peters, 2007), and subsequently revised and republished in the journal *Linguistic and Philosophical Investigations* (Olssen & Peters, 2015), and it is this later version that appears here. The interview with Rille Raaper sets out clearly the senses in which Foucault stands opposed to Marx and Hegel, as well as his incorporation of Nietzsche as a means of displacing Hegel, in addition to addressing many related issues in poststructuralist thought, including the issue of relativism. What emerges overall is that to the extent that Foucault is a historical materialist, his is a profoundly non-Marxist version of that doctrine. In essence, his version is simply a theory of change which characterizes how changes in one part of the

system or structure interact with and affect changes in other parts, and on the structure overall. Foucault's historical materialism is profoundly pluralist in its nature. While this may be thought to eclipse a central or foundational role for the economy, as in Marxism, Foucault seems to argue in lecture courses such as *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008) that the economic and the governmental must be viewed as a couple, contingently articulated differently in different historical contexts.[1] My own view of Foucault paints him also as a social democrat, a thin communitarian, and as a post-quantum complexity theorist. The papers included in this volume that deal with the subject of social democracy take off in this light. When I started writing on Foucault, that he could be located as a realist interested in radically retheorizing the historical and the domain of the social, together with the post-quantum insights unleashed by Henri Poincaré[2] and later by Ilya Prigogine,[3] regarding indeterminacy and chance, as well as being an advocate of a form of radical social democracy, complete with a radical conception of pluralism, was to say the least, uncommon. Such a view is now standard. I still stand by every element of this view, and indeed, also included in this volume, is a paper in the Italian journal *Materiali Foucaultiani* (Olssen 2018), which argues that his lecture notes on neoliberalism, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, incorporate the last chapter on Adam Ferguson because Ferguson's model of civil society represents Foucault's preferred model, essentially articulating a conception of the economic within the political. By utilizing Foucault to undergird a conception of social democracy also unburdens traditional conceptions as in the work of writers such as Bosanquet, Green and Bradley, of Hegelian assumptions, or at least, those Hegelian assumptions that are most objectionable, those that stress unity and "thick" conceptions of community which place too much emphasis on conformity. As the traditional theories of the welfare state were spearheaded by the English Hegelians over the latter part of the 19th century, up until the ascendency of logical positivism in the 20th century, Foucault enables a retheorization of social democracy, incorporating post-quantum onto-epistemology with respect to uncertainty, interconnectedness, interdependency, indeterminacy, nonpredictability and chance. Accepting Foucault's radical critique of neoliberalism and the present, social democracy should, if practice followed theory perfectly, be ascendant once again. I believe that this sort of articulation puts Foucault's scholarship on a better and more assured footing than those that would falsely represent him as a neoliberal, a libertarian, or anarchist, or as neutral and agnostic with regard to all things political. My articles on neoliberalism included in this volume incorporate many of the insights of Foucault's 1978 course at the Collège de France, *The Birth of Biopolitics*.[4] My major insights on neoliberalism, however, are developed in specific regard to the university, or to education generally. It is interesting in this respect to extend Foucault's approach to neoliberalism

with respect to a specific institutional site within society, as the importation of neoliberal technologies to higher education represents a dismantlement of the traditional liberal conception and stands in marked contrast with the earlier model of the liberal university as conceptualized by both John Henry (Cardinal) Newman and Max Weber. The self-governing status and professionalism of academics has been undermined and supplanted under neoliberal governmentality and has witnessed at the same time the professionalization of a new breed of recruits: *Managers*. The consequences of such a marketization process are explored in the three papers that are included in this volume.[5]

Finally, I have maintained an interest throughout my work on Foucault on normative political theory, especially in relation to ethics and education. While in the early and middle period of his writing, Foucault took a view of the subject as constructed and shaped by power, in his later writings, from 1978, after the publication of *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, he sought to develop a more ethical sense of the subject. Although, as is well known, Foucault eschewed advice-giving and shied away from facing the conundrums associated with normative justification. To my mind this avoidance, together with the perceived absence of ethical foundations within his work, constitute limitations to what is in all other respects a powerful correction to the lacunae and omissions of the Western intellectual tradition, from Plato to Kant, and from Kant to Nietzsche. How could his work inspire an ethics and an education if it was solely concerned with genealogy? The insight that power is ubiquitous and constitutes both a limitation and enabling condition of action and thought is just one insight which until the 20th century only thinkers like Nietzsche and Marx took seriously. The insight that it is people who make history but under conditions given and transmitted from the past is another. While neither of these insights are, in themselves, therefore novel, with Foucault they are assembled in relation to a new theory, one which manages to avoid the determinism of Hegel and Marx, and which permits the incorporation of conceptions of liberty, pluralism, and power, compatible with liberalism itself.

I have sought to develop a normative conception for Foucault from within the body of Foucault's later work, a conception which is set out more fully in another book, *Constructing Foucault's Ethics: A Poststructuralist Moral Theory for the 21st Century*, published in June 2021 by Manchester University Press. Hopefully this book will dispel the view that Foucault's system necessarily constitutes a quagmire of ethical and moral relativism. Here, in this collection, however, the attentive reader will be able to discern the early echoes of my interest in the issue of normativity within Foucault, especially in the articles such as, "Foucault and the Imperatives of Education: Critique and Self-creation in a Non-foundational World" (Chapter 1), "Totalitarianism and the 'Repressed' Utopia of the Present: Moving beyond Hayek and Popper with

Foucault" (Chapter 17), and "Invoking Democracy: Foucault's Conception (with insights from Hobbes)" (Chapter 19).

Taken as a whole, these essays represent a selection of my published work between 1995 and 2020. Although minor edits have been performed in several chapters, these have only been undertaken for the purposes of resolving ambiguities, correcting errors in the original, or clarifying textual comprehension. In addition to these minor edits, some textual repetition occurs across the different chapters. This applies to repetition in quotes, sentences, paragraphs, or to longer sections, which while occurring only in a few instances, have been retained in this volume in the interests of accuracy and completeness so that the integrity of each original published work is preserved. The original publishers are acknowledged as each chapter merely reproduces the initial article, and the title and co-authors are retained in the order as originally published. Here I would like to thank the co-authors and publishers of the originals for the reproduction in this context. I hope that this book makes their work as well as mine more accessible to a wider public. I would like to thank Michael Jones for assistance with bibliographical querries. I would also like to thank Jolanda Karada, Henriët Graafland, and John Bennett for steering this project so efficiently to its conclusion. I would also like to thank Michael Peters for inviting me to compile this volume, and to him and Stephen J. Ball for the respective forewords that they have so kindly written for it.

Notes

1 See especially the April 4th Lecture where Adam Ferguson's model of civil society is discussed, a model which revolves around both the economic and governmental as linked.
2 Poincaré was important for the topographical conception of the social and physical realms, a mathematical formulation which echoes in important ways Spinoza's field metaphysic, as well as his resolution to the "three body problem" as always defying determinism. Importantly, this makes Poincaré the father of chaos theory.
3 Prigogine is important in his contributions to chaos theory and for his formulations relating to chance, that is, to constraint and necessity, in scientific terms.
4 See note 1.
5 My most significant journal article on neoliberalism, co-authored with Michael Peters, published in the *Journal of Education Policy* in 2005, is not included in this volume (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Not only is this a very long article, comprising almost 20,000 words, but it has already been republished numerous times. This article, titled "Neoliberalism, Higher Education and the Knowledge Economy: From the Free Market to Knowledge Capitalism", was also constructed in an unusual way, where I constructed it by simply adding my article first, followed by Michael's article following on. The entire first part, up until the subheading "Knowledge as the new form of capital under neoliberalism", was written by me, Mark Olssen, and Michael Peters wrote the latter part from and including that subheading. That this article was actually constructed in a highly unusual fashion can be accepted, and it is partly for this reason, together with the fact that it is easily available that I have decided not to reproduce it again in this volume.