FOUCAULT'S PROPHECY: THE INTELLECTUAL AS EXILE[1]

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In an interview conducted in 1982, Stephen Riggins put the following question to Michel Foucault:

> Many people look at you as someone who is able to tell them the deep truth about the world and about themselves. How do you experience this responsibility? As an intellectual, do you feel responsible toward this function of seer, of shaper of mentalities? (Foucault 1996a, 380).

Riggins' question reflects a particular view of the role of the intellectual, one where the intellectual is called act as a provider of truth, as someone who can speak "the deep truth about the world." Riggins calls this role that of a "seer"; Foucault often uses the term "prophet," as he does in his response to the above question: "I am sure I am not able to provide these people with what they expect. I never behave like a prophet. My books don't tell people what to do" (1996a, 380). Foucault rejects the role of a prophet for himself:

> It is absolutely true that when I write a book I refuse to take a prophetic stance, that is, the one of saying to people: here is what you must do -- and also: this is good and this is not. (Foucault 1996b, 262)

Yet it is not just that Foucault refuses to prophesy himself; he also claims that "the role of the intellectual today" is not that of a prophet: "The role of an intellectual is not to tell others what they must do" (1996c, 462); "I hold that the role of the intellectual today is not that of establishing laws or proposing solutions or prophesying . . ." (1991, 157). Thus in responding to the above question by rejecting the role of a "shaper of mentalities," Foucault indicates how he believes other intellectuals ought to behave as well.

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[1] Much of the substance of this paper is taken from my dissertation, entitled *Prophets in Exile: A Diagnosis of Foucault's Political Intellectual*.

In his most well-known discussion of the role of intellectuals in the political arena, Foucault argues that there are fewer and fewer of the kind of intellectual most likely to engage in prophecy -- the "universal" intellectual -- is waning:

> For a long period the 'left' intellectual spoke and was acknowledged the right of speaking in the capacity of master of truth and justice. He was heard, or purported to make himself heard, as the spokesman of the universal. . . . Some years have now passed since the intellectual was called upon to play this role. (Foucault 1980a, 126)

Those intellectuals who purport to grasp and to relay universal notions of truth and justice are likely to play the role of the prophet, since the universality of their knowledge would seem to justify efforts to guide others towards the truth, to tell them what is good and what is not and what they must do. Given his criticisms of intellectual prophecy, it appears that the decline of the universal intellectual is an auspicious development according to Foucault.

Still, even if intellectuals no longer work so much "in the modality of the 'universal', the 'exemplary', the 'just-and-true-for-all'," this does not mean there has been an end to the call upon them to play a universal and prophetic role (Foucault 1980a, 126). After insisting that he doesn't "behave like a prophet," Foucault laments: "And they often reproach me for not doing so (and maybe they are right) and at the same time they reproach me for behaving like a prophet" (1996a, 380). Foucault explains that he has been charged with acting like a prophet, for example, by those who read *Madness and Civilization* as presenting an "anti-psychiatry position" (1996a, 380). Those who misinterpret Foucault as an "anti-psychiatrist" may do so because they are looking, within his genealogical study of madness, for the universal truth about whether psychiatry is good or bad and what must be done about it as a result. Foucault uses this point to illustrate that there still exists a "call for prophetism," an expectation that the role of the intellectual is to tell others what they must do.

Of course, how the intellectual is received is not entirely up to the intellectual him/herself. Those who want to hear the truth from intellectuals may interpret their work as providing prophecy, whether this is intended or not. As long as people are looking for prophets, they will continue to find them; so it appears that it is not enough for intellectuals to refuse to accommodate such

requests. Since intellectual work is likely to be interpreted as prophesying anyway by those who want to find someone to follow, it is also necessary that the search for an intellectual leader be eliminated if the role of the intellectual is to be fundamentally transformed. Foucault thus asserts, in regard to the "call to prophetism," that "we have to get rid of that" (1996a, 380).

This is not, however, an easy or straightforward task. One cannot "get rid of" the "call to prophetism" by simply refusing to play the prophet oneself. Not only will those who are looking for prophets find them elsewhere, they may continue to interpret one's own words and acts as prophecy even when one intends otherwise. In rejecting outright the role of the intellectual prophet, therefore, Foucault may not be pursuing the most effective means of eventually breaking it down. Further, it is possible to read his genealogical work in texts such as *Madness and Civilization* and *Discipline and Punish* as exhibiting a kind of prophecy despite Foucault's claims to the contrary. I locate in Foucauldian genealogy a rhetorical strategy through which the intellectual acts as a prophet while also distancing him/herself from this role: the genealogist, I argue, speaks as a universal intellectual while also encouraging others to question the truths thus provided, as well as the role of the intellectual as prophet itself. I argue that in so doing the genealogist engages in a kind of *exile*, a term I borrow from Edward Said to denote a movement of distancing without effecting a clean break: the Foucauldian intellectual as exile separates him/herself from universality and prophecy while still retaining crucial ties to them. This intellectual, rather than rejecting outright the role of the prophet, works within this role while yet distancing him/herself from it -- acting as (what I call) a "prophet in exile." Whether or not Foucault himself *meant* to use the rhetorical strategy of a "prophet in exile" that I describe here, it can be read in his genealogical texts as a way for intellectuals who are concerned about their prophetic role to work to undermine it.[2]

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[2]I here suggest a role for those intellectuals who are already sympathetic to Foucault's concerns about the universal intellectual prophet. While I do believe an argument could be made that this intellectual role should be adopted more widely, I will not provide such an argument here, as my main concern is to explain the role of the "prophet in exile" itself and how it can be located in Foucauldian genealogy. I therefore restrict my discussion here to Foucault's explicit claims about the role of the intellectual, the concerns that seem to lie behind them, the inadequacy of some of his own efforts to fulfill this role, and the possibility of developing a different view of this role out of the rhetoric exhibited in some of his genealogical texts.

Agents of the régime of truth

There are numerous problems associated with the role of the universal intellectual prophet, according to Foucault. He argues that such an intellectual acts as an "agent" of the present "régime of truth" -- a system whereby "'[t]ruth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it" (Foucault 1980a, 133). For Foucault, "the truth" does not exist absolutely, universally, waiting to be discovered; nor does it consist in a set of statements given the status of "truth" according to their correspondence to some existing state of affairs. Rather, truth is something produced through relations of power, relations that set up rules governing what is to count as "true" and institutions that work to support and reinforce this truth.[3] According to Foucault, "truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power"; rather, it is "a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint" (1980a, 131).[4] Intellectuals are arguably caught up in the régime of truth, at least insofar as they are connected to institutions and practices that contribute to the development and dissemination of truth.[5] According to Foucault, intellectuals are "agents" of the régime of truth: "Intellectuals are themselves agents of this system of power -- the idea of their responsibility for 'consciousness' and discourse forms part of the system" (Foucault 1977a, 207).

As "agents" of the régime of truth, intellectuals can easily speak as if, and be received as if, they are providing others with universal, timeless truths. This is problematic, according to Foucault, because rather than being the absolutes they are said to be, claims to universal truth are contingent

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[3]Foucault changed his view of truth somewhat throughout the course of his career, focusing on the role of power beginning around the time that he gave the lecture entitled "Discourse on Language" at the Collège de France in December of 1970 (Foucault 1972). I present here a somewhat general overview of the interrelationship between truth and power that Foucault emphasizes in the mid- to late-1970s. For a comprehensive discussion of Foucault's earlier discussions of the production of truth, in his work on "archaeology," see the first part of *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983, 3-100).

[4] "I would say that we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function: we *must* speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit" (Foucault 1980b, 93).

[5]This applies most obviously to intellectuals who operate within truth-producing institutions such as universities and laboratories; but even intellectuals who operate independently of such institutions may still be tied to other aspects of the régime of truth. For example, they may publish books, or articles in journals or newspapers, that tend to claim the status of truth; or, they may give public lectures, speak on news programs, etc., through which media their words may be delivered and received as truth.

and historically developed. By speaking as if s/he has access to universal truths, therefore, the intellectual contributes to a system wherein contingent notions are treated as if they are necessary and unchanging. Foucault argues that those claims and knowledges that have come to have the status of universal or "scientific" truth, have achieved that status at least partly through power struggles, through tactics of coercion whereby competing claims and knowledges are "filter[ed], hierarchise[d] and order[ed] . . . in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects" (Foucault 1980b, 83). By speaking truths as if they were universal and timeless, the intellectual tends to support the continuing domination through power of "some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science." Foucault criticizes such intellectual activity, arguing that it works to "contribute to the functioning of a determinate system of power that . . . must be criticized" (Foucault 1991, 157).[6]

Another problem with the universal intellectual prophet is that s/he may use his/her authority as an "agent" of the régime of truth to compel others to work against it (e.g., by telling them that "true goodness and justice" requires that they engage in resistance against particular practices of power). Foucault criticizes such intellectual prescriptions, due to both practical and ethical concerns. First, the universal intellectual's suggested tactics for resistance may not be as effective as those devised by the individuals who are directly involved in particular struggles. Foucault contends that relations of power are multiple and heterogeneous, and work differently at different locales; and therefore resistances to power are most effective if they address it on a local, specific level (Foucault 1980b, 99; 1990, 95-96). The intellectual who makes universal, global pronouncements as to what must be done to resist relations of power within the régime of truth may

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[6] The role of the intellectual, Foucault argues, is rather to engage in active criticism of the régime of truth (Foucault 1980a, 133). One way of doing so is to use genealogical analysis to re-discover and re-present the struggles whereby "the truth" came to have that status, to dredge up "the memory of hostile encounters" (Foucault 1980b, 83). The intellectual as genealogist can thereby manage the task of "making things more fragile" by "showing both why and how things were able to establish themselves as such, and showing at the same time that they were established through a precise history. . . . [so as to show that] by changing a certain number of things, . . . finally what appears obvious to us is not at all so obvious" (Foucault 1996d, 412). Foucault suggests that the role of the intellectual is something akin to a "strategist":   the intellectual is to "make things more fragile" so as to clear a path for others to engage in resistance against certain aspects of the régime of truth, if they so choose and in ways they choose for themselves (Foucault 1977a, 207-208; 1980b, 83, 85; 1980c, 145; 1980d, 62).

therefore be offering ineffective advice: "global, *totalitarian* theories" have a "hindering effect" on "the efficacy of discontinuous, particular and local criticism" (Foucault 1980b, 80).

There are also ethical worries lying behind Foucault's injunction against intellectual prophecy and prescription. One of these is expressed by Gilles Deleuze in a published conversation with Foucault entitled "Intellectuals and Power." Addressing Foucault, Deleuze states: "In my opinion you were the first . . . to teach us something absolutely fundamental: the indignity of speaking for others" (Foucault 1977a, 209). It seems that for Foucault and Deleuze, in the act of speaking for others there is something ethically problematic, as if those others were not to be given the responsibility (and dignity) of speaking and acting for themselves. Foucault himself expresses a somewhat different ethical concern in an interview: "[I dream of the intellectual who] contributes to the raising of the question of knowing whether the revolution is worth it . . . it being understood that they alone who are willing to risk their lives to bring it about can answer the question" (Foucault 1996f, 225). Foucault's tone here suggests that the prophesying intellectual could send out calls to action that impact others in dangerous and perhaps even life-threatening ways; and the decision as to whether or not to act and how must, therefore, be left to those who will be carrying out resistance.[7]

Foucault insists that he himself writes so as to leave others free to decide whether they want to take action after reading his genealogies. Rather than telling his audience precisely what is good or bad or what they ought to do, Foucault leaves a "freedom . . . at the end of [his] discussion for anyone who wants or does not want to get something done" (Foucault 1996b, 262). Foucault indicates that he leaves others free to decide what must be done by refusing the role of a universal intellectual prophet. But it is questionable whether this is indeed the most effective strategy both for providing freedom for others to speak and act for themselves, and for working to eventually

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[7]The intellectual's universalizing prescriptions of remedy may also be dangerous in a somewhat different way, as Foucault warns: "[R]emember all the prophecies, promises, injunctions and plans intellectuals have been able to formulate in the course of the last two centuries and of which we have seen the effects" (Foucault 1996c, 462); "We have come to realize things never happen as we expect from a political program; and that a political program has always, or nearly always, led to abuse or political domination from a bloc . . ." (Foucault 1996e, 390). There is therefore an ethical concern that the intellectual's global directions may tend to lead to "abuse or political domination."

undermine the "call to prophetism" that Foucault laments. Further, I argue that Foucault himself can be read as continuing to play the role of a prophet, in a way that may allow him to encourage others to question this role itself. Rather than refusing prophecy altogether, Foucault may be acting as a "prophet in exile."

Prophets of negation and silence

As noted above, Foucault calls for a seemingly unqualified rejection of intellectual prophecy. But such an utter refusal may not be the most efficacious means of leaving others free to decide whether or not to engage in resistance and how, nor of reducing the "call to prophetism" going out to intellectuals. First of all, it seems likely that if Foucault refuses to answer this call, the audience that issued it may simply turn to *other* intellectuals for solutions, heeding the words of those who do not respond to the "call to prophetism" with silence. Perhaps this is part of the reason why Foucault does not simply restrict his refusal of prophecy to himself, but argues that it does not form part of the role of any intellectual.

Further, consider another possible consequence of intellectual silence in the face of the "call to prophetism." If an individual or group looks to an intellectual for guidance as to what is good or bad and what must be done, and if the intellectual refuses to provide any such prophecy, might it not be the case that, thinking the intellectual to possess "the truth" of the matter, those seeking guidance may decide that the answer as to what should be done is, simply, *nothing*? If the intellectual suggests nothing when others turn to him/her for solutions as a figure of authority and knowledge, it may well appear to them that, in "truth," there's nothing to be done. Rather than leaving others "free" to decide solutions for themselves, then, the intellectual might end up leading others into the silence upon which s/he insists.[8] As Ian Hacking points out, it may appear that Foucault would

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[8]It is also important to note that for Foucault, freedom need not require the radical refusal of prescription that Foucault seems to be advocating. First, we must ask whether the power relation set up between intellectual and audience provides for as much coercive potential as seems to be implied by the utter rejection of prophecy. Is it necessary, in order to leave a "freedom . . . at the end of [one's] discussion for anyone who wants or does not want to get something done" (Foucault 1996b, 262), that one must refuse altogether to say what is good or bad and what ought to be done? Might it not be the case that one could give such prescriptions and yet be ignored by one's audience, or at least not treated as someone whose directions must be followed without question?

respond to the Kantian question, "For what may we hope?", with a simple reply of "Nothing" --

thereby expressing a nihilist position (Hacking 1986, 39). Though Hacking himself rejects the claim

that Foucault is a nihilist, not all commentators agree. Michael Walzer, for example, asserts that

Foucault puts forth a nihilist view by giving us no reason to hope that things can ever improve

(Walzer 1986, 61).

Hacking claims that to accuse Foucault of nihilism is to misunderstand his views, as does

John Rajchman (Hacking 1986, 39-40; Rajchman 1985, 2). I agree, and I sketch here an

interpretation of Foucault that shows him appealing to and relying on particular truth and value

claims rather than rejecting them all, universally.[9] But perhaps Foucault invites the charge of

nihilism through his own comportment as an intellectual. It may be that critics who levy this charge

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In addition, we must consider Foucault's notion of "freedom" and what is required in order to leave one's audience free to decide what to do on their own. For Foucault, freedom does not come about when one experiences an absence of limitations, of constraints; rather, it is something one practices through efforts at resistance, by resisting limitations experienced within relations of power. Foucault describes "free" subjects as those who are engaged in a relation of power, yet faced with a set of multiple possibilities for action therein: "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized" (Foucault 1983, 221). "Liberty is a practice," Foucault insists, it is "what must be exercised" (Foucault 1996g, 339). This practice, or "work of freedom," is closely linked to the practice of resisting the ways we are limited by the relations of power in which we live; it has to do with "no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think" (Foucault 1997, 125, 126). John Rajchman characterizes Foucauldian freedom as a practice of resistance against the ways we are classified and defined by power relations: "freedom does not basically lie in discovering or being able to determine who we are, but in rebelling against those ways in which we are already defined, categorized, and classified" (Rajchman 1985, 62).

This means that in order to allow for the freedom of others, the intellectual need not necessarily refrain from providing any limits or constraints on them; rather, s/he must simply do so in a way that does not rule out the possibility of resistance, that leaves a field of possible actions open. The intellectual need not refrain from exercising any power or constraint, but rather must avoid what Foucault calls a relationship of "domination": "states of domination [exist when] the power relations, instead of being mobile, allowing the various participants to adopt strategies modifying them, remain blocked, frozen. . . . In such a state, it is certain that practices of freedom do not exist or exist only unilaterally or are extremely constrained and limited" (Foucault 1996h, 434). The point is to play "with as little domination as possible" (1996h, 447), which need not require a radical refusal of intellectual prophecy. One can engage in prophecy in ways that not only leave open the possibility of resistance, but that encourage it. I discuss below one way of playing the intellectual prophet that may be able to accomplish this goal.

[9]It is clear that Foucault uses normatively-charged language in his genealogical texts and in interviews, and that he indicates that some strategies of resistance are likely to lead to "better" results than others. See Nancy Fraser (1989) for a discussion of the normativity exhibited in Foucault's genealogical texts. Fraser considers carefully whether Foucault provides adequate justification for the normative force of his texts, and concludes that he does not. In what follows, I provide an interpretation of Foucauldian genealogy that may be able to answer many of Fraser's criticisms. For example, Fraser argues that Foucault seems to be caught in an outright contradiction when he both uses and criticizes the liberal, Enlightenment normative framework (Fraser 1989, 19, 30). I argue instead that we can think of Foucault as utilizing this framework while also distancing himself from it, using it precisely for the purpose of encouraging others to question it.

are looking to Foucault as an intellectual with something to say about resolving the problems raised in his genealogies, and when Foucault remains silent on this issue, it may seem that this is because he thinks there *is no* good solution. It is significant that Michael Walzer insists we still need "universal intellectuals," intellectuals who tell us what we ought to do, despite Foucault's claims that we do not (Walzer 1986, 66-67). Looking to Foucault as such an intellectual for an answer, then, perhaps Walzer interprets the latter's silence as an expression of nihilism. Walzer himself does not "follow" Foucault as an intellectual in this perceived nihilism, but is instead critical of it. Still, it is certainly possible for other readers to take this perceived nihilism seriously, and to follow Foucault as an intellectual by taking it up for themselves.

We can see why Foucault's refusal to prophecy might lead to a nihilistic conclusion if we think of it as a negation or opposition of the intellectual role of the prophet. In expressing an utter refusal, in saying "no" to intellectual prophecy, Foucault takes up a position on the "other side" of the prophet, acting as the negative "outside" that is required for the "inside" to define and consolidate itself. Such movements to the "other side," to the negative, do little to change the general structure of what is being negated. One merely negates what one resists, leaving it intact and simply adding a "no" to it. This phenomenon is manifested in the way Foucault's refusal to prophecy may be taken as itself an instance of prophecy: he may be viewed as the prophet who simply says "no," who believes that "the truth" in regard to what is good or bad and what must be done is that there is no way to judge between good and bad, there is nothing for which we may hope, and there is nothing to be done. Rather than encouraging others to speak and act for themselves, to reduce their "call to prophetism," such a strategy may instead continue to answer it with a negativity imbued with the authority of the truth.[10]

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[10]Foucault ends up acting the prophet through his refusal of prophecy in another way as well: by insisting he is not to be read as providing alternatives or solutions, he is telling others what to think and do in regard to how they approach his own work. Foucault's struggle with this issue is evident in an interview, where he laments that he is in a double bind in regard to misinterpretations of his work. He admits that to try to counter distorted readings of his texts means telling his readers what to think; but he also does not want to simply let the distortions stand: "Here we have a real problem: should one enter the fray and respond to each of these distortions, and, consequently, give the law to readers, which I am loath to do, or allow the book to be distorted into a caricature of itself, which I am equally loath to do?" (Foucault 1996i, 454). It does indeed seem problematic for Foucault to "give the law to readers" by telling them how to read his books, especially when he insists that there is no "law of the book": "The only law is that there are all manner of possible

Negation of prophecy, then, appears not to be the most effective strategy for promoting freedom or for reducing the "call to prophetism" directed towards intellectuals. Nor, actually, is it clear that Foucault himself lived up to such a rejection, despite his claims to the contrary.[11] I argue that it is possible to read Foucault's genealogies as exhibiting not so much a rejection of prophecy as an *exile* from it -- a distancing without a complete break, a separation just great enough to disturb the role of the intellectual as prophet without the negation that can too easily result in the further reinforcement of this role.

Half-involvements and half-detachments

I borrow the term *exile* from Edward Said, who characterizes the modern intellectual as a marginal figure, an "outsider, . . . disturber of the status quo," an "exile" (Said 1994, x, xvi). Said praises those intellectuals who embrace the condition of exile, in a metaphorical sense: they may be "lifelong members of a society," but they do not "belong fully to the society as it is"; rather, they are "the individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power, and honors are concerned" (1994-52-53). The intellectual exile is someone who has not physically left a particular society, has not exited its borders, but who does exist in a state of exile insofar as s/he disagrees, dissents, and distances him/herself from the status quo and the rewards of acting in support of it. This intellectual exists in a state similar to that of a political exile who has undergone a geographic displacement: "the state of never being fully adjusted, always feeling

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readings. I don't see any major inconvenience if a book, being read, is read in different ways" (1996i, 453). Yet there clearly *is* at least one such inconvenience for Foucault, since it is only a few lines later that he says he is "loath" to let a book of his "be distorted into a caricature of itself." To respond to the inconvenience of misinterpretation by telling readers not to treat him as a prophet is for Foucault to uphold and perpetuate his status as a prophet -- he insists, as a prophet, that others not read him as a prophet.

[11]Indeed, several commentators have criticized Foucault for precisely this point, especially in regard to a statement made near the end of *The History of Sexuality Volume I*, suggesting that we replace efforts to "liberate" sex in its truth with "the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance" (Foucault 1990, 157). Critics have argued that in addition to providing a "solution" here, a prescription as to what must be done, Focuault problematically appeals to notions of a "natural" or "prediscursive" body that is repressed by power, and that can be used as a source of resistance (Butler 1990, 93-106; Dews 1987, 161-170). It is possible to consider this prescription or prophecy as one made from a position of *exile*, as described below: Foucault may be offering it while also distancing himself from it, encouraging others to question this suggestions while also taking advantage of its potential benefits.

outside the chatty, familiar world inhabited by natives, so to speak, tending to avoid and even dislike the trappings of accommodation . . ." (1994, 53).

It is important to note that Said's intellectual exile experiences a condition of "in-betweenness," of being unable to feel "at home" anywhere. This is due to the condition of exile itself, according to Said, as it does not involve a complete separation from the place one has left:

> There is a popular but wholly mistaken assumption that being exiled is to be totally cut off, isolated, hopelessly separated from your place of origin. Would that surgically clean separation were true, because then at least you could have the consolation of knowing that what you have left behind is, in a sense, unthinkable and completely irrecoverable . . . . (Said 1994, 48)

Instead, the intellectual exile exists in a "median state," neither fully an "outsider" to the society s/he still inhabits, nor an "insider" in the sense of functioning as its advocate and champion:

> The exile . . . exists in a median state, neither completely at one with the new setting nor fully disencumbered of the old, beset with half-involvements and half-detachments . . . . (1994, 49)

Exile does not involve the clean break of an exit, the utter separation of leaving something behind forever. The intellectual exile retains certain ties to the institutions, discourses, or practices towards which s/he directs dissent, working against them without rejecting, opposing or negating them from a position "outside."

In what follows I argue that we can read Foucault as exhibiting movements of exile in his genealogical texts such as *Madness and Civilization* and *Discipline and Punish*. In such works Foucault dissents against particular discourses and practices from a *distanced* position within them: he seems "beset with half-involvements and half-detachments" in regard to certain universal truths and values currently dominant.[12] Foucault as genealogist does not reject or negate the role of the

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[12]I do not mean to indicate that Foucault and Said are in agreement as regards the political role of the intellectual. Indeed Said says a number of things about the intellectual with which Foucault would not likely agree. For example, Said emphasizes the intellectual's capacity for "universality," which involves both going beyond the particularities of our own background and beliefs to recognize and address the "otherness" of others, as well as "looking for and trying to uphold a single standard for human behavior" in regard to things like government policy (Said 1994, xiv). Foucault may have little quarrel with trying to move away from our own insularity and working to approach the "other," but it is doubtful that he would uphold an emphasis on something like a "single standard for human behavior," given his criticism of such appeals to universal truth. For his part, Said criticizes the kinds of claims Foucault might make, such as one quoted by Said from Lyotard: "'grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment' . . . are pronounced as no longer having any currency in the era of postmodernism" (1994, 18). Noting that postmodern intellectuals de-emphasize

prophet entirely, but rather *exiles* himself from it -- acting the prophet while also maintaining a critical distance from this role in order to unsettle it. I contend that as compared to the rejection of intellectual prophecy, this strategy of exile is likely to be more effective at promoting freedom on the part of one's audience and eventually undermining the "call to prophetism."

A rhetoric of disruption

According to Richard Bernstein, Foucault employs a rhetorical strategy in his genealogical work that elicits "conflicting disruptive reactions in the reader," thereby provoking his audience to question their previously-held beliefs (Bernstein 1994, 224). This "rhetoric of disruption," Bernstein argues, involves "skillfully eliciting and at the same time undermining the evaluative reactions of the reader," thereby "exposing fractures in 'our' most cherished convictions and comforting beliefs" (1994, 225). In other words, Foucault provokes the reader to respond to his genealogical analyses through appeal to Enlightenment, liberal concepts such as (universally) "true justice," "true freedom," etc.; but he also writes so as to bring the reader to criticize such notions by revealing "the dark ambiguities in the construction of these concepts and the role they have played in social practices" (1994, 224).

Bernstein points to the structure of *Discipline and Punish* as an example, arguing that the opening description of the execution of Damiens allows the reader to be at first "seduced in taking comfort in the realization that 'our' methods of punishment . . . are much more humane" than the violent torture visited upon the eighteenth century regicide (Bernstein 1994, 224). But this comfort is later undermined as the reader realizes that what s/he considers to be more "humane," modern punishments involve less physically violent, but no less restraining or coercive, methods. Worse, the reader comes to recognize that modern punishments can be more "humane" precisely because the society as a whole has become more "disciplined" (1994, 224-225). In other words, the reader is

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"universal values like truth and freedom," Said insists that these values still have important roles to play in today's society: "[f]or in fact governments still manifestly oppress people, grave miscarriages of justice still occur . . ." (1994, 18). Foucault would most certainly agree with the latter claims, but would probably reject the idea that the best way to approach such oppression and injustice is through an appeal to "universal principles." He would insist that doing so will ultimately work to uphold the kinds of power mechanisms that one wishes to resist.

encouraged to respond to the genealogical analysis with a preliminary appeal to the very concepts and beliefs that the genealogy itself works to undermine by revealing the "dark ambiguities" in their historical development and current implementation.

Taking a cue from Bernstein, it is possible to locate a double movement in the rhetorical structure of Foucault's genealogies, one that could be designed to accomplish what Foucault claims to be the positive role of the intellectual: "to re-examine evidence and assumptions, to shake up habitual ways of working and thinking, to dissipate conventional familiarities . . ." (Foucault 1996c, 462). The double movement in Foucault's rhetoric may be described as follows: first, he elicits responses from his readers that are based on their "habitual ways of working and thinking," and then second, he encourages his readers to question these ways of thinking, thereby unsettling them, shaking them up. In both of these movements Foucault acts as a universal intellectual prophet to some extent, though in the second he works to *exile* himself from this role. I argue that Foucault may be read as playing the role of the prophet in a way that may work to undermine this role itself.

Exile from intellectual prophecy

There are at least two ways that Foucault may be interpreted as acting the prophet in what I am calling the first movement of the rhetorical structure of his genealogies -- the endeavor to elicit a particular kind of evaluative response in the reader, one that is to be unsettled in the second movement. Within this first movement, Foucault acts as if he is: (a) providing "historically verifiable" truths about the past, and (b) appealing to dominant, universal norms and values in the way he presents his genealogical narrative. In both of these ways, Foucault seems to act as a universal intellectual prophet.

Foucault himself notes that in order for his genealogical texts to be effective in modifying habitual ways of thinking, it is necessary that they be received as, in some sense at least, "true" descriptions of historical events: "it is evident that in order to have such an experience [of modifying habitual ways of thinking] through a book like *The History of Madness*, it is necessary that what it asserts is somehow 'true' in terms of historically verifiable truth" (Foucault 1991, 36).

To this end, Foucault claims that he employs in his genealogies "methods that are part of the classic repertory" in discourses of truth, e.g., "demonstration, proof by means of historical documentation, quoting other texts, referral to authoritative comments, the relationship between ideas and facts . . ." (1991, 33).

That Foucault's genealogical analyses be "historically verifiable" seems important in terms of the goal of his rhetorical strategy as a whole. If the point is to bring out particular kinds of responses on the part of one's readers in order to unsettle the beliefs and concepts lying behind those responses, it is necessary that one be taken seriously enough by readers in order for this process of evocation to work. Given that most of Foucault's readers are still enmeshed in the current régime of truth, where universal truths are valued and the intellectual is looked to as an authority in regard to them, it seems that he would be most successful in eliciting the desired responses from his readers if he acts as they expect -- as a universal prophet, giving them "historically verifiable truth," hard "facts" about the past. His audience might then be more likely to think that he is someone who should be taken seriously, someone they ought to listen to. This seems necessary to get the double movement of his rhetorical strategy going.

In addition, Foucault's genealogies are presented in a highly normatively charged way, perhaps for the purpose of eliciting in his audience a response based on their habitual beliefs and values. For us as readers, this means that the way Foucault tells his histories evokes in us an evaluative response based on liberal, Enlightenment ideals such as individual "rights," "autonomy," etc. In other words, Foucault seems to act as if he is utilizing our current, habitual framework of norms to make value judgments regarding certain relations of power, particular discourses and practices, etc. Since the present normative framework (in the West) is centered around liberal ideals that are thought to be universal and absolute, in appealing to these Foucault appears to take on the role of the universal intellectual prophet.

For example, he seems to present a kind of liberal criticism of the "disciplinary society" he describes in *Discipline and Punish*, showing its dangers within an interpretive framework that appeals to liberal, Enlightenment norms to indicate the dangers of "discipline" and "normalization."

As Nancy Fraser argues, "[i]f one asks what exactly is wrong with [the disciplinary] society, Kantian notions leap immediately to mind" (Fraser 1989, 30).[13] In other words, reading about the ways in which modern, Western societies have and continue to "discipline" and "normalize" individuals, we may respond by appeal to the value of individual rights and autonomy and how these are not being respected. But we can read Foucault as employing a rhetorical strategy here whereby he writes within the bounds of current normative structures so as to evoke these ideals in his readers and then coax their disturbance.

In this sense, Foucault may be said to be acting as a universal intellectual prophet in the first movement of his rhetorical strategy, speaking as though he is appealing to the absolute, universal norms and values that are dominant in the current régime of truth. He appears to act as if he knows and is telling us what has, in "truth," happened in the past and what is good and what is not according to universal, liberal norms.[14] We might say that Foucault takes up the role of the prophet as a rhetorical device, in order to appear to his audience as an intellectual worth listening to, as someone providing universal truths and appealing to absolute ideals that are similar to those held dear by the audience.

It is in the second movement of his rhetorical strategy that Foucault works to *exile* himself from the role of the intellectual prophet and the universal truths to which he has made appeal.[15] The second movement of Foucault's rhetorical strategy occurs when, having evoked habitual ways of thinking in the reader, he then works to bring about their disturbance. For example, in *Discipline and Punish* our notion of an "autonomous" individual with an absolute set of human "rights" that keep it "liberated" from power is unsettled when Foucault shows that this view of the individual is a

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[13]Fraser treats this aspect of Foucault's genealogies as a problematic one, arguing that when Foucault makes implicit appeal to Enlightenment ideals in this way he is working in tension with the criticisms he also makes of such ideals (Fraser 1989, 30). I offer here an alternative reading, whereby Foucault may be said to be acting as an "agent" of the current régime of truth, upholding these ideals in the first movement of his rhetorical strategy, while also undermining them in the second movement. I argue that he may be appealing to liberal ideals while also maintaining a critical distance, *exiling* himself from them.

[14]He does not act the prophet as much as he might, however, since he (most often) does not offer specific solutions to the problems he raises.

[15]But even there, he works to bring about the unsettling of his readers' habitual ways of thinking and their view of him as a prophet *while still acting as a prophet* -- he encourages the questioning of his prophecy and his status as a prophet through playing the prophet.

product of oppressive techniques of discipline and normalization. This means that the individual's "rights" do not protect a realm of life that is free from power, and that its actions and decisions are not, indeed, as "autonomous" as we might otherwise think.

Looking at this second movement more closely, we can say that as readers we may come to question our previous ideals because the historical narrative Foucault provides, to which we respond negatively, is presented as the history of those ideals themselves. In other words, as we read about the disciplinary society whose history Foucault narrates, we may criticize it because it doesn't respect the ideals of individual "autonomy" and "rights"; but in the second movement we may come to realize that this history is presented by Foucault as the story of how those very ideals *themselves* developed. Accordingly, we may be brought to question Enlightenment ideals based on their history as presented by Foucault. Further, note that this is the history to which we readers responded negatively, through appeal to the very Enlightenment ideals that we now recognize as the subject of this history. This means that we can end up criticizing such ideals through a kind of immanent critique: we may criticize previously-held beliefs and ideals through an appeal to those very notions themselves, because the history upon which we are basing our criticism shows these ideals to fall short of their own standards.. I might find the ideal of individual "autonomy" problematic after reading *Discipline and Punish*, for example, because I have been presented with a genealogical history that shows this ideal to have developed (and to be currently sustained) through processes that seem to violate the ideal of "autonomy" itself.[16]

Foucault may therefore be said to play the role of the universal intellectual prophet, telling his audience the "truth" about the past and what is good or bad about it, while also distancing himself from it. He does not reject intellectual prophecy altogether, but is "beset with half-

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[16]Note that in this second movement of his rhetorical strategy, Foucault may still be read as playing the role of the universal intellectual prophet. It appears that how he might bring his audience to question their habitual ideals is by convincing them that the history he has provided is the "true" story of the development of those ideals themselves. As a reader, I may come to question my previous ideals such as individual "autonomy" because I think I now have the real, true history of these ideals, showing them to be constructed and supported by practices of power that do not live up to them. But if I am steeped in habits of believing in universal truths and values, the only way I am likely to embark on this process of questioning is if I believe that Foucault has provided me with the objective, universal truth about the history of the ideals I am to question. If I thought this history was simply fabricated, I could dismiss it; but if I think it is *the truth*, I will be much more likely to take it to heart and question my habitual ways of thinking on the basis of it.

involvements and half-detachments" in regard to it. In so doing, he may be able to accomplish both of the goals he sets for the intellectual, namely promoting the freedom of others to think and act for themselves, and reducing the "call to prophetism" directed towards intellectuals.

Regarding the first of these goals, by acting as a "prophet in exile," Foucault may be said to invite his audience to come to question their previous ways of thinking relatively independently. As a genealogist Foucault writes so as to evoke particular evaluative responses from the reader, ones that the reader (at least previously) thought of as the "right" responses. Then, by presenting a genealogical history of the concepts lying behind these responses, Foucault encourages the reader to take a critical look at the beliefs and ideals that s/he accepted as correct. This unsettling is managed, however, through a process of immanent critique, where the reader can engage in self-questioning by appeal to nothing other than what s/he already has at hand. In other words, Foucault encourages a critique of habitual ways of thinking by appeal to those ways of thinking themselves, meaning that the reader does not need to be given new evaluative criteria, by the intellectual or anyone else, in order to question their previous beliefs, values, and ideals. In this way, he may leave his readers "free" to engage in self critique without being told to do so, and without having an alternative normative framework forced upon them by Foucault himself. They can thereby be left free to develop alternatives on their own.

In addition, Foucault's use of intellectual prophecy as a rhetorical strategy may help contribute to the goal of eventually undermining the "call to prophetism," especially if this intellectual role is taken on more widely. If the reader is brought to question habitual ideals such as individual "autonomy" and "rights," s/he may then become suspicious of Foucault's own appeals to such notions in the normative force he attaches to his genealogical histories. The thoughtful reader will likely suspect that there is something amiss, that Foucault himself can't be in full support of the norms and values he seems to invoke in tracing the history of "disciplinary" and "normalizing"

practices, for example. The reader may thus begin to question Foucault's intellectual role: if he appeared to act as a universal intellectual to some degree in the double movement of his rhetorical strategy, then to the reader who has experienced this movement and come to question the beliefs and ideals to which he earlier made appeal, Foucault may seem to have provided truths that he also works to undermine. If we thought Foucault was an "agent" of the régime of truth before we began to question our previous ways of thinking, then afterwards he may seem to be a "double agent": an agent who appeals to some of the universal truths that make up the current régime of truth, while also working to undermine them.

I do not mean to say, however, that the goal of Foucauldian genealogy should be that the reader finally rejects the role of the intellectual as a prophet, gives up his/her "call to prophetism" altogether; nor do I think that the reader should completely reject the truth and value claims s/he comes to question through the genealogist's efforts. Rather, the goal should be encouraging a self-exile on the part of genealogy's audience, where readers distance themselves from their previous ways of thinking (and from their view of the intellectual as a prophet) without negating them completely. Indeed, if the process of questioning our previous ways of thinking occurs through an immanent critique as I have suggested, then we will not have entirely given up on the claims we now criticize, since we will appeal to these claims in the critique itself. Further, while we still reside within the current régime of truth, appealing to its dominant truths and values may at times be quite useful in order to make conditions better under this régime.

For example, as Jana Sawicki points out, Foucault acknowledged the importance of achieving civil rights for homosexuals, even though such efforts may be complicit with the idea of universal human rights and perhaps even the notion of a fixed, natural "sexuality": "[Foucault] believed that liberation struggles rooted in demands for a right to one's sexuality are limited insofar as they accept the fixing of a sexual identity . . . . He hoped to stimulate other avenues of resistance

to the disciplinary technologies of sex in addition to those premised on embracing homosexuality as a natural fact -- to open up possibilities for other ways of experiencing ourselves as sexual subjects. Thus he resisted the idea of a fixed sexual identity at the same time that he believed, of course, that homosexuals should have civil liberties as homosexuals" (Sawicki 1991, 100). After reading Foucauldian genealogy, we may come to *question* our previous ways of thinking, not reject them altogether; and this means that we may recognize the utility of appealing to such ways of thinking while the current régime of truth is still largely intact (even as we work to transform it).

This means also that we readers may come to question the genealogist's role as an intellectual prophet without negating it completely. After all, it is through following the genealogist as an authority that we may end up exiling ourselves from our habitual ways of thinking. I have argued that we may come to *suspect* the intellectual's prophecy and their role as a prophet -- we may take a step back from it and view it with a critical distance, but this is not the same as Foucault's suggestion that we "get rid of" the "call to prophetism." Rather, we may continue to view the intellectual as a prophet, but with the understanding that his/her prophecy needs to be taken not as universal truth, but as a suggestion that may be useful or may not; and we must submit this prophecy to question and critique. Indeed, despite Foucault's fears I think that it is better for the intellectual "prophet in exile" to offer solutions to the problems s/he raises than to be silent on this issue -- since, as I have argued, such silence can too easily be interpreted as a statement of universal truth that there is nothing to be done. Whatever solutions are offered, however, must be approached through movement of exile, where others are encouraged to question and criticize the prescriptions rather than take them as pronouncements of universal truth. [17]

I have argued that the rejection of intellectual prophecy tends to perpetuate rather than undermine the "call to prophetism," since intellectual silence in the face of this call may appear to those who expect the truth from intellectuals to be a statement of the truth about what to think and

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[17]One way to do so could be to subject one's solutions to a genealogical critique, providing a history of the "dark ambiguities" and the dangers of such prescriptive answers so that they are taken with a measure of caution. There are likely other ways for intellectuals to exile themselves from their own prescriptions, though I have not yet developed a comprehensive analysis of what they might be.

do -- nothing. This strategy does not seem effective in undermining the "call to prophetism" nor in inspiring others to develop creative solutions to social and political problems. Paradoxical as it may seem, it is perhaps by remaining within the current régime of truth, accepting his/her role as its "agent" and using its framework for truths and norms, that the Foucauldian intellectual has the best chance of encouraging others to undermine it. It is, in other words, by *playing* the prophet that one may best be able to avoid *being* a prophet.

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