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Monuments of the Present: The Document and Monument in Michel Foucault's Archaeology

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Abstract

This thesis interrogates Michel Foucault's distinction between the monument and the document in his key methodological text *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), originally released in French as *L'Archéologie du Savoir* in 1969. Foucault attempts to formulate a new form of history based on the examination of the monument, where previous methodologies had examined the document.

The thesis first examines Foucault's theorization of this distinction and then questions the stability of these two categories through the comments of art critic Erwin Panofsky. I propose that the monument and document distinction implicates the historian in the power-relations that Foucault articulates later in his career. I attempt to locate some capability within Foucault's methodology for resisting power relations by asking if anything resists his hermeneutic. Finally, I examine Foucault's position in discourse through his own terms leading me to propose an alternative to the hegemonic episteme of history, which Foucault himself foreshadows.

Keywords: Michel Foucault, archaeology, monument, document, Erwin Panofsky, discourse, hermeneutic, epistemology

Dedication

For Elizabeth, whose work ethic and determination continue to be an inspiration.

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Introduction

This thesis originated from a key passage in the introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* in which Michel Foucault makes a sweeping claim about the discipline of history. He claims that history has undergone an “epistemological mutation” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 11) and that this mutation has had distinctive effects on different types of history. In his introduction Foucault is enigmatic about what he believes caused the mutation of history, claiming, “Now, through a mutation that is not of very recent origin, but which has still not come to an end, history has altered its position in relation to the document” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 6). He is slightly more specific when he later claims, “The epistemological mutation of history is not yet complete. But it is not of recent origin either, since its first phase can no doubt be traced back to Marx. But it took a long time to have any effect” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 11-12). Instead of a detailed analysis of the cause of the mutation, Foucault’s concern is to explain the key characteristics of the new forms of history. For Foucault, the crucial result of the epistemological mutation that precipitates all subsequent changes in historical discourse is a new relation to *the document*. Distinguishing between two ways to see the past, as documents or as monuments, Foucault claims that the shift from reading the past as the former to the latter is the key result of the mutation of history. This claim and its consequences are the subjects of this thesis.

When reading the introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* I was fascinated not only by the argument that Foucault lays out based on his reading of the philosophical tradition, but also by his combative language and unbridled critiques of philosophical positions he sees as mistaken. Foucault is clear that his goal in the text is not solely to describe the method that he used in previous texts, such as *History of Madness*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, and *The Order of*

Things (where he frequently used the term *archaeology*), nor is his goal simply to articulate the history of the philosophy of history. Instead, he aims to change how history is written. He does this by arguing that the discipline of history – both of ideas and the larger domain of political and military events – is linked to deeper philosophical commitments that must be questioned and that, when they are, will be found deficient.

Much of the secondary literature coalesces around two key inadequacies of nineteenth-century philosophies of history as causing the epistemological mutation of history. The first of these is a humanist tradition that placed humanity as the basis of history: “The problem with the structure of thought in modernity is that man appears on both sides of the divide. Since the transcendental and the empirical have fundamentally different temporal characteristics, this is either impossible, or else leaves man irreparably divided” (Webb 114). Positing mankind as the transcendental basis of the historical order while also attempting the empirical investigation of humanity is therefore untenable. Where nineteenth-century philosophies of history could ignore this problem so as to keep humanity as the transcendental principle of history, such a commitment is no longer possible according to Foucault (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 12). A new, non-anthropological history is required.

The second key flaw of nineteenth-century philosophies of history is that they relied on an understanding of language as purely representational. For Hayden White, Nietzsche offers a clear diagnosis of this failing: “the true problem which modern thought had kept hidden from itself was that of the opacity of language, the incapacity of language to serve the purpose of ‘representation’” (38). For Nietzsche, language cannot serve as the transparent medium recording and transmitting the temporal series of events, as many of his contemporaries and predecessors assumed it could. Due to these two problems, Nineteenth-century philosophy of

history and its manifestations in the twentieth-century therefore came to a moment, if not of crisis, then of transformation. What it meant to be *historical* changed.

The first pages of Foucault's introduction detail the shift in the history of ideas from continuity, often a function of the development of a transcendental principle, to the focus on discontinuity. Rupture and contradiction no longer disqualify a subject from being considered historical. The mutation of history has meant that *history* now means simply the past transformations of a given topic, not the pre-determined development of that subject. Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality* is indicative of this new form of history. There, he demonstrates how morality could have developed from a contingent set of historical conditions rather than a transcendental moral imperative (10). The veracity of Nietzsche's account of the history of morality is beside the point. His point is instead that morality *could* have been otherwise had its historical interactions been different. The morality that does exist is the product of contingent historical events. So too with all subjects. No subject, whether madness, sexuality, medicine or any other, has any essence that is wholly independent from historical contingency. It is the power of Nietzsche's genealogy that led Foucault to proclaim, even in *The Order of Things*, that "It was Nietzsche, in any case, who burned for us, even before we were born, the intermingled promises of the dialectic and anthropology" (*The Order of Things* 263).

Foucault both articulates this wider change in historical discourses in his introduction and attempts to build from it a new mode of history. He claims that in the wake of Nietzsche the novelty of the new epistemology of history is that it forsakes the traditional examination of the past as documents in favor of its examination as monuments. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is Foucault's attempt to articulate both the general shift in the discourses of history and his specific understanding of how he writes history in his new *archaeological* method.

My first chapter takes up this distinction between the monument and the document, my goal being solely to understand the claims and distinctions that Foucault makes. I begin by examining the passage in which Foucault is most explicit about his argument for the examination of the monument. I investigate the epistemological mutation of history further, including its diverse effects. Understanding Foucault's claims requires defining some of his key terms, such as his theory of the *statement*, the *document*, and the *monument*. I then address several critiques that were launched against Foucault's archaeological methodology. The chapter closes with examination of a film scene that helps to illuminate the two positions, historian-as-archaeologist and traditional historian, that Foucault formulates. This close reading of Foucault's distinction between the monument and the document lays the basis for my interrogation of that distinction in subsequent chapters.

In my second chapter I ask several questions of Foucault's archaeology. Doing so requires several definitions from Foucault's work more broadly, in this case of *discourse*, *episteme*, and *the author*. These terms are crucial to define because they allow me to question Foucault's own position as the author, within discourse(s) and within his own episteme. I argue that Foucault's understanding of the distinction between the monument and the document must be read as the distinction between two different hermeneutic modes. I then introduce the comments of art historian Erwin Panofsky on the concepts of the monument and document, which present new and challenging questions for Foucault's theorization. The chapter closes with the metaphor of Foucault's archaeology as a kaleidoscope. Using Foucault's own theoretical terms, along with Panofsky's understanding of the monument and the document, allows me to show how the monumental and documental hermeneutics might be useful in contemporary thought.

Finally, in my third chapter I attempt to turn many of Foucault's theorizations upon themselves. I question Foucault's own place in discourse, his concept of the history of the present, and the history of epistemes that he articulates. My goal is to examine how his archaeological hermeneutic might have a place in the contemporary theoretical landscape. I end by proposing a new relationship between the monument and the document based on Foucault's sentiments of being at the end of an era. I claim that the relationship between the documental and monumental hermeneutics can provide an ability to resist power relations that Foucault's archaeological work approached but did not reach. My attempt is to present a possible interpretation of the contemporary episteme based on Foucault's work, rather than definitively claim that I have uncovered it. In sum, my thesis is an exploration of what the monument and the document meant in Foucault's thought, the questions that his formulation provokes, and what the monument and the document might mean in the contemporary situation.

My hope is that my thesis can perform two functions. First, to describe and examine Foucault's distinction between the monument and the document. Given the wide and various effects Foucault attributes to the epistemological mutation of history, his crucial distinction is under-examined in the secondary literature. Even those texts that do consider the distinction between the monument and the document (see Edward Said, and David Webb's introduction) position that distinction as an introductory curiosity rather than a serious theoretical claim. While my thesis puts to the side the question of the accuracy of Foucault's claims about the mutation of history, consideration of the meaning and implications of those claims is necessary given the great influence Foucault attributes to the mutation of history.

The second function of my thesis is to critique Foucault's proposed archaeological hermeneutic with his own theoretical tools in the hopes of determining the extent to which any

archaeological hermeneutic, either Foucault's own or those inspired by his, can be useful today. My work determines that, based on his own standards, the hermeneutic that Foucault proposes is not suitable in the contemporary situation. However, instead of outright dismissing any hermeneutic of the monument, I instead propose a contemporary hermeneutic inspired by Foucault *and* Panofsky that incorporates Foucault's archaeology. I argue that despite the failures of Foucault's archaeological method, it may still have a place in contemporary analysis. I suggest what I term the *quantum episteme* with full recognition that it is only a possibility. I propose a place for the analysis of the monument only as a possible contemporary hermeneutic but I continue to subscribe to Foucault's limitation that the present is never fully knowable.

Chapter One

To be brief, then, let us say that history, in its traditional form, undertook to ‘memorize’ the *monuments* of the past, transform them into *documents*, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*. In that area where, in the past, history deciphered the traces left by men, it now deploys a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another to form totalities. There was a time when archaeology, as a discipline devoted to silent monuments, inert traces, objects without context, and things left by the past, aspired to the condition of history, and attained meaning only through the restitution of a historical discourse; it might be said, to play on words a little, that in our time history aspires to the condition of archaeology, to the intrinsic description of the monument. (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7 emphasis in original)

The above passage is a crucial and succinct description of Foucault’s understanding of the analytic shift from the document to the monument. The changes that Foucault describes in the introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, what he calls “the epistemological mutation of history” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 11), the mutation of both history proper and of the history of ideas, can, according to him, be traced to a new relation to the document. This new relationship has, in Foucault’s telling, reversed the focus of both mainstream history (usually manifest as political and military history) and the more opaque history of ideas. It is important that Foucault seems to be speaking about history as a field of inquiry and discourse, rather than a transcendental process. Foucault is describing the tangible shift in the methods and focus of both

political history and the history of ideas as disciplines. He attributes this transformation to a replacement of a key axiom of history. History in its traditional form used to focus on the document. Foucault claims that a new relation to the document has led mainstream political history to reverse its interest, moving from staccato events to the longer periods of climate or economics, among others. The new relation to the document has had the opposite effect in the history of ideas, changing its focus from long continuities and traditions of thought to rupture and discontinuity. Where the historian of ideas was once concerned with finding continuity of thought through different historical ages they became interested in ruptures in thought just as much. If such a great shift has indeed happened, we are led to ask how it occurred and what its effects might be. In examining Foucault's argument, let us first use the above passage to assemble preliminary descriptions of the document and the monument as he conceptualizes them.

Defining the Statement

The first step in understanding Foucault's claim about the shift from documental history to monumental history is to understand his theory of the historical statement, which is the goal of the third section of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Foucault begins by proposing that the statement, to which he refers throughout the previous two sections of the text, is the atom of discourse. "At first sight the statement appears as the ultimate, undecomposable element that can be isolated and introduced into a set of relations with other elements" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 80). However, Foucault immediately sees problems with this formulation, including what the statement is composed of and whether it reduces to the primary unit of the proposition, as it does for some analytic philosophers. Foucault instead claims that the statement is not reducible to the other primary units of the proposition, the speech act or the sentence (*The*

Archaeology of Knowledge 82). The defining trait of the statement in opposition to these other units is that a statement is not linked to an individual and specific correlate. The statement “is linked rather to a ‘referential’ that is made up not of ‘things’, ‘facts’, ‘realities’, or ‘beings’, but of laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are named, designated, or described within it, and for the relations that are affirmed or denied in it” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 91). The statement therefore seems to operate on one more level of abstraction than the proposition, speech act or sentence. The statement operates on the level that conditions the possibilities of the proposition, speech act or sentence.

Another important characteristic of the statement for Foucault is that it is always in some sense material. It can only exist through manifestation in some material sense. “Could one speak of a statement if a voice had not articulated it, if a surface did not bear its signs, if it had not somehow become embodied in a sense-perceptible element, and if it had not left some trace?” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 100). This emphasis on the materiality of the statement is an expression of Foucault’s desire to articulate the abstract logical functioning of the statement, as well as its grounding in real material processes. This theoretical move distances the statement from the categories of the proposition, speech act and sentence, which Foucault implies have tended to be abstracted out of their materiality. The statement is not reducible to its logical functions nor is it reducible to its manifestation in matter; instead, it always circulates in material instantiations (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 103).

Finally, important in Foucault’s formulation of the statement is that it is always within a network of other statements (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 99). One cannot isolate a singular statement in the way that propositions are often isolated, or at least doing so would be to misunderstand the statement. “There is no statement in general, no free, neutral, independent

statement; but a statement always belongs to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 99). It would therefore be a mistake to attempt the analysis of a singular statement, independent of the network of which it is part, because “there is no statement that does not presuppose others” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 99). These last two characteristics of the statement, its materiality and its connection to other statements, distinguish Foucault’s theory of the statement from the proposition, the sentence and the speech act. This theory of the statement is crucial in understanding Foucault subsequent analysis of his distinction between the monument and the document.

Defining Monument and Document

Before I examine the changes in historiography that Foucault claims, I want to define the monument and document according to Foucault. He claims that the document is some type of historical object or source that, prior to the epistemological mutation of history historians used as the means to construct narrative and discourse. The traditional historian assumes and therefore sees within the document some unspoken or hidden meaning or significance, which the historian is tasked with displaying. The task of the traditional historian was to find in the document and rescue from being forgotten the trace, however small, of the larger historical narrative. “The document was always treated as the language of a voice since reduced to silence, its fragile, but possibly decipherable trace” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 6). The traditional historian had the difficult task of assembling from the document of the past, even those which seemed least likely, the meta-historical narrative. The importance of the examination of the document lies in its utility as a part of a historical narrative. For Foucault, this conception of the document entailed a certain neglect of or disregard for it. The historian was interested in the document only as an unproblematic indicator of a historical narrative, not in itself. Any complexity that the document

had, whether in connection to other documents or within itself, was ignored if it did not fit into the historian's narrative. For Foucault, the tendency in both political history and the history of ideas has been to use documents to support a teleological narrative about the growth, evolution, or progression of humanity. In several works Foucault describes the traditional approach to history as consistently allegorical.

So contemporary criticism is abandoning the great myth of interiority: Intimior intmio ejus. It is completely detached from the old themes of nested boxes, of the treasure chest that one is expected to go look for at the back of the work's closet. Placing itself outside the text, it constructs a new exteriority for it, writing texts of texts. ("On the Ways of Writing History" 287)

Traditional history read every statement allegorically, while history-as-archaeology reads statements as decisively *not* containing a concealed but accessible inner truth.

Contrary to documents, monuments are "inert traces, objects without context, and things left by the past" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7). The monument lacks the precise trait that is the document's greatest virtue, which is that it supports a pre-existing narrative. Foucault's characterization of the monument as 'inert' communicates that it does not necessarily fit into a teleology as the document does. The monument is somehow simply sitting in time, isolated from any larger narrative around it. Where the document is a building block that is made to fit smoothly into a historical narrative, the monument, for Foucault, is somehow a cast-off, left behind by history, both as the temporal process itself and the discipline of its narration. We will later have to answer how permeable the barrier between document and monument is for Foucault. Having established these two categories of historical material and their differences for Foucault, we must first address the reversal that he terms "the epistemological mutation of

history,” which was nothing less than the movement from one of these categories into the other. What is the mechanism of this transformation?

Foucault claims that traditional history turned monuments into documents. In this technique, the recognition of a monument was always motivated by the desire to find within that monument a document. If the historian found a monument, an object that did not already easily fit into a historical narrative and context, it was the historian’s task to make it do so by reading it as a document. Historians saw the monument as having some previously undisclosed meaning that they had to uncover, so as to use the monument as another document among many that supported the prevailing historical narrative. This made the monument into a document that was recognizable as a brick in the construction of a historical narrative. This operation required seeing the monument not as a singular object, with its own internal logic, but rather as make the monument part of a narrative exterior to the monument itself. Any complexity or contradictions within the monument had to be flattened out, ignored or dismissed in order to make it a simple, one-dimensional exemplar of the prevailing narrative. The document is one-dimensional in the sense that it communicates only the later historical narrative, rather than a multiplicity of countervailing narratives. The examination of a monument, and its transformation into a document were only worthwhile to the extent that they reinforced the historical narrative.

“There was a time when archaeology... aspired to the condition of history, and attained meaning only through the restitution of a historical discourse; it might be said, to play on words a little, that in our time history aspires to the condition of archaeology, to the intrinsic description of the monument” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7). Archaeology once (Foucault does not hint if it still does) aspired to do what history did, to situate the monuments that it found within a historical discourse. To do this, it had to make them into documents that spoke. The value of

archaeology used to rest on the success or failure of this transformation of monuments into documents. Only the successful transformation of a monument into a document, and therefore into the larger historical narrative gave archaeology significance. A monument was only relevant for the archaeologist if it spoke in excess of itself. Archaeology required the extra step of the transformation of the monument to achieve the relevance and epistemological status of historical discourse.

In Foucault's account, this relation between archaeology and history has reversed. History as a discipline now tries to do what archaeology had done, which was simply to deal with monuments as such. Or more correctly, history now tries to do what archaeology *should* have done, which is to deal with the monument as such, without any attempt to transform it into a document. History no longer wants to make the monument "speak" as a document. The traditional method of constructing history through the examination of documents is no longer possible. Instead, "it [history] now deploys a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another to form totalities" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7). The attempt is no longer to decipher and change the monument, to hear the monument say more than it actually says, but rather to examine it in itself. The focus has changed from making every document fit into the historian's meta-narrative to looking within the document itself, not as indicative of the larger historical consciousness or narrative, but as a singular monument with its own complexities. As we will come to later, Foucault's goal is to examine the historical discourses that have existed by seeing assemblages of monuments rather than developmental chains of documents.

Foucault's description of the epistemological mutation of history raises the question of causation in these historiographical processes. Traditional history attempted to turn the

monument into a document, and history-as-archaeology attempts to turn the document into a monument. The question is which of these two terms, *monument* or *document*, as distinct ontological categories for Foucault, comes first. Before the historian, traditional or archaeological, begins their work, is the past only knowable through documents or through monuments? Is Foucault claiming that one of these terms is the natural state of historical objects? The answer is that the past appears as historical statements for Foucault. It is the hermeneutic of the traditional historian or the archaeological historian that determines whether they see statements as monuments or documents.

The traditional historian sees statements as originally monuments, that is, as singular and isolated individuals. The imperative felt by the traditional historian to create a teleological narrative means they see the statements of the past as necessarily communicating a narrative, which the historian must uncover. The hermeneutic of the traditional historian requires that these monuments be read as documents, as indicating a whole narrative beyond themselves. Through their examination of these monuments the traditional historian finds the narrative that connects them. The historian often comes to the monuments already with a narrative which they re-affirm through their work. The traditional historian therefore loses sight of the monumental reading of statements and the possibility of reading historical statements as anything other than documents disappears. The documental reading of statements becomes hegemonic, and every text is considered a simply a document in waiting.

Archaeological history reverses this move according to Foucault. It transforms documents into monuments, but this is not because historical statements are *a priori* documents. To expand the sense in which Foucault makes his claim, archaeological history transforms into monuments the historical statements which traditional history has dictated must be read as

documents. It is because traditional history dictated that all statements must be read as documents that history-as-archaeology can approach every statement as a document and transform it into a monument. The document is only the original ontological mode of historical statements within the hegemony of traditional history. Archaeological history is both a direct response to and a reversal of this hermeneutic. This is the sense in which Foucault's history is archaeological, because it attempts "the intrinsic description of the monument" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7) and sees historical statements not as documents that reinforce a teleology but as monuments to be described in all their internal complexity. One of my questions throughout this thesis will be whether the historian necessarily sees historical statements as either monuments or documents, or whether other interpretative modes are possible.

The traditional form of history "undertook to 'memorize' the *monuments* of the past, transform them into *documents*, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7). Another important consideration is what exactly it means to "memorize" a monument. If I stand in front of the Pyramids of Giza or the Book of Kells, how might I as a historian begin to "memorize" those monuments? Is the ability to do so genuine and assured, or was the goal of traditional history misguided? Is the awe one might feel in their presence able to be communicated in language? For Foucault, memory is somehow particularly linked to the document. The document is the medium that allows the preservation of history. Traditional history set itself the goal of the transformation of the monuments of history into documents so as to remember them. Foucault is therefore implying that the monument was somehow insufficient for the preservation of memory for traditional history. This brings us to the most crucial distinction that Foucault makes between the monument and the document.

The purpose of the traditional attempt to documentalize monuments was to articulate the unspoken traces locked within the monument. This attempt is premised on the belief that the monument might tell us things that it unintentionally recorded, and further, that the most important things that the monument can tell us are not about the monument itself, but about the larger teleology in which it is situated, “[i]n that area where, in the past, history deciphered the traces left by men” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7). To the traditional historian, the Pyramids have the ability, beyond telling us simply of the greatness of the pharaohs, also to be documents to so many aspects of ancient Egyptian society, ranging from construction techniques to mathematics to labor relations. One often hears the historian’s question, ‘what might this tell us?’ but in that question Foucault hears, ‘Yes, we know the pharaohs thought themselves exalted gods, but what *else* might this tell us about the development of humanity? What does this tell us beyond the content of the monument in question?’ How can we read the monument so as to make it into a document that tells us more about Egyptian society?

There are several key consequences of history-as-archaeology that lead to questions about how it might operate. First, Foucault continuously attributes to the monument the characteristic of silence. The documentalization of monuments attempted to tease out speech from the monument, or even from the absences within the monument, its “silences.” If history now makes documents into monuments, does this amount to a process of silencing? Does the document that once had so much to say (or that the historian assumed had much to say) become a silent monument?

Rather than an act of silencing, in becoming a monument the document ceases to speak about something other than itself. It is no longer made to speak in overabundant ways by the historian. The historian no longer attributes more speech to the monument than what it actually

says, and it is not assumed to be indicative of anything other than what it itself says. The shift is to a monument that speaks only about the totalities of which it is part. Or rather, the historian's shift is to only reading in the monument the discourses of which it is part. The volume of speech that the monument was assumed to say about things exterior to it, thereby making it into a document, is shifted to a volume of speech about the complexities internal to the monument. History now attempts the "intrinsic description of the monument" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7), the description of what is intrinsic to the monument rather than bringing to the reading of the monument an already extant narrative that is external to the monument.

Descriptive and Normative

An important point about Foucault's argument is that he is not simply making a normative claim about how history should be done, but rather both a descriptive claim and a normative claim. As I have summarized, Foucault's account begins with his description of the epistemological mutation of history that began long before his own work and had wide multifaceted effects (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 6). One aspect of these changes brought about from the new relation to the document is that the meta-methodological guiding question has changed for both conventional history and the history of ideas. Conventional history has shifted from focusing on the discontinuity of short-term events (individual people, politics, wars) to the long timespans exemplified by the research of the Annales school. Conversely, the history of ideas has shifted from its previous focus on long timespans to discontinuity. Discontinuity in historical accounts used to be the obstacle of historical writing. Now it is both the condition of history and its subject (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 9). According to Foucault, "the problem is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits; it is no longer one of lasting foundations, but one of transformations" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 5). The point is

that Foucault gives a detailed description of these transformations, providing the new relation to the document as the underlying cause, before making normative claims about this change. He makes clear later in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that his own work is not simply a shift in focus from continuities to ruptures, but instead “it considers the same, the repetitive, and the uninterrupted are no less problematic than the ruptures; for archaeology, the identical and the continuous are not what must be found at the end of the analysis” (174). Continuity and rupture have equal weight in an archaeological reading of history, both requiring explanation by analysis of the historical discourse.

Upon providing the description of these changes, Foucault makes normative claims about why they are positive in relation to the previous methodological foundation of both conventional history and the history of ideas. The traditional forms of history, and their theoretical basis, were for Foucault one of the last bastions of a humanism that promoted humanity’s subjectivity as the key to the universe. Traditional history and the narratives that it wrote were “to preserve, against all decentrings the sovereignty of the subject” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 12). One effect of this imperative was “a particular repugnance to conceiving of difference” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 12). Foucault’s articulation of archaeology is both a recognition of the methodological problems in the wake of the epistemological transformation of history and an attempt “to define a method of historical analysis freed from the anthropological theme” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 16). His new methodology is necessary given both the old foundations sundered by a new relation to the document and the normative flaws that have made traditional history untenable. Chief among the normative flaws of traditional history was its tendency to flatten any type of difference into its singular historical narrative. From Foucault’s perspective, he both must and should formulate a new method. It is important to be aware that

Foucault is not simply making a normative claim about how history should be done differently given all the deficiencies of traditional history, namely through the methodology he creates, but that he believes a new methodology is necessary in the wake of the collapse of the old one.

At this point, one might ask what history-as-archaeology can tell us that is new or novel. The new relation to the document that Foucault describes has led to new approaches in both conventional history and the history of ideas, but this shift might be seen as a loss. If history no longer assumes that it examines documents, those things that essentially point beyond themselves to a concealed idea, and instead now examines monuments, those things that do not imply any sub textual meaning, has the power of history waned? If history now only speaks of the monument, in its immediate and non-allegorical character, does this reduce history's function to a simple description of impossible-to-connect monuments? If history has lost its long-held ability to make monuments into documents, and therefore to bolster a transcendental historical narrative, what, if anything does archaeology do that traditional history could not?

Contradictions and Complexity

Firstly, we might point out that the epistemological shift Foucault outlines need not necessarily have brought some advantage with it. It might have been the case that the axioms of traditional history became untenable, and therefore the scope of history diminished. Foucault acknowledges that some would misread him in this way (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 14). However, archaeology does bring with it distinctly new capabilities. It allows the examination of the levels and interactions of discourse that are within and between monuments previously unattended to, as well as the complexity within each monument. Contradiction in traditional history, both conventional and the history of ideas, was something to be overcome or resolved. The appearance of contradiction was a sign either that the historian had failed in their task or of a

deeper underlying unity. However, “For archaeological analysis, contradictions are neither appearances to be overcome, nor secret principles to be uncovered. They are the objects to be described for themselves, without any attempt being made to discover from what point of view they can be dissipated, or at what level they can be radicalized and effects can become causes” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 151). The archaeologist does not work to smooth out the contradictions they find within a monument. Instead, the archaeologist attempts “to maintain a discourse in all its irregularities” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 156). Furthermore, archaeology has the ability, through the careful examination of the internal logic and intricacies of monuments, to find similarities in their ideas and can thereby examine a discourse. Hence Foucault’s attempts in *The History of Madness* and *The Birth of the Clinic* to read the texts of a particular discourse (psychiatry or medicine) in order to establish its characteristics in a particular period.

A crucial point, though, is that Foucault insists that archaeology does not overcorrect for the goals of traditional history. Archaeology does not amount to simply showing that a multitude of discourses, each with varying degrees of internal contradictions, simply happened at the same time. Its goal is to show how those discourses, each with its own particular inconsistencies and problems, nonetheless overlap, intersect and affect or fail to affect each other: “If there is a paradox in archaeology, it is not that it increases differences, but that it refuses to reduce them” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 171). This is paradoxical because archaeology happens in an unstable middle ground between the desires to reduce difference (often to a single narrative, traditional history) and to proliferate it. Instead, the attempt is to describe all the messy, difficult, irreducible entanglements of multiple discourses in a given period.

One demonstration of Foucault's own use of the archaeological method he articulates is provided in Ian Hacking's introduction to *The History of Madness*. Hacking points to Foucault's famous reinterpretation of Descartes' argument for the cogito and its necessary rhetorical move of quickly dismissing the possibility of Descartes' own insanity (Hacking, XXI). Reading Descartes in this novel way, Foucault sees his argument as "symptomatic of the parallel formation of modern rationalism and of institutions of confinement" (Hacking, XXII). The reading of the historical statement, in this case of a very widely read historical statement in the history of ideas, within its own historical discourses gives Foucault a new vantage point on the formation and operations of those discourses. Foucault's mobilization of archaeology is also demonstrated before his articulation of this method in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* through comments in *History of Madness* such as:

What matters here is to remove all chronology and historical succession from the perspective of a 'progress', to reveal in the history of an experience, a movement in its own right, uncluttered by a teleology of knowledge or the orthogenesis of learning. The aim here is to uncover the design and structures of the experience of madness produced by the classical age. That experience is neither progress nor a step backward in relation to any other. It is possible to talk of a loss of the power of discrimination in the perception of madness, and to say that the face of the mad began to be erased, but this is neither a value judgement nor even a negative statement about a deficit of knowledge. (122)

While his attempt to turn documents into monuments is not explicit here, and was perhaps not yet even clear to himself, Foucault does communicate the intention to read historical statements on their own terms and by their own connections to other statements, without the predetermination of any teleology.

Critique: Archaeology is ahistorical

This leads us to a common critique of Foucault's archaeological method, which claims that it is no longer historical. This critique can mean at least two different things. As mentioned earlier, saying that Foucault's archaeology is not historical might be a reaffirmation of the possibility of a chronological and teleological history. This critique might maintain that through all the philosophical upheaval of the twentieth century, history is still teleological and transcendental and that history can still tell us a larger narrative about the progress of mankind or the march of liberty. This is a rather philosophically dated critique of Foucault because it requires continued belief in the old axioms of traditional history that have faded in prevalence. One can not only dismiss this old-fashioned critique but also counter it. One could just as easily claim that, rather than falling outside of the category of history, Foucault's archaeological method is instead a new type of history. Traditional history was both uninterested in and unable to attend to the past connections between monuments that compose a discourse. Since it refuses to reduce the complexity in the monuments it examines archaeology-as-history can articulate what a particular monument meant in a particular historical discourse. More troubling for Foucault is the second meaning of 'archaeology is not history.'

Foucault's description of archaeology might lead one to ask whether such a method moves through time, following a particular discourse or the interactions of discourses, or whether archaeology might simply look at a particular cross-section of discourse in a particular moment. To exercise the metaphor of archaeology a little more, does Foucault's archaeology give a picture of the interactions of discourses on a localized and static stratum, or does it show the complex interactions of discourses both at a particular moment and through time? The concern is that, while it might give a more complex and nuanced picture of the interconnections of

discourses in a particular instant than traditional history could, archaeology remains unable to comment on the past or future of those discourses by showing their change through time.

Foucault's inability to comment on the future of discourses would be excusable, as such an ability is not usually a primary virtue of history. But as this critique runs, the inability to articulate the past interactions of discourses would be a fatal flaw to any method claiming to be historical. Furthermore, it seems that giving a series of snapshots at different historical moments would be insufficient to construct a historical account. Instead, this critique would have Foucault follow a discourse through time, charting its various interactions and permutations. Colin Koopman cites Sartre's as one strong articulation of this critique: "Sartre's worry was that history, when taken up through an archaeological analytic, is limp and unmoving, the dead frozen past dug up by careful excavation but incapable of living ever again" (*Genealogy as Critique* 40). Sartre's critique implies that, while Foucault is indeed doing historiography, his methodology produces a static and paralyzed image of history. By extension, Sartre's critique is that history-as-archaeology is not history to the extent that it produces an unacceptable version of history. Sartre's criticism implies that any historiography that is valuable yields a history that *is* moving and capable of once again living. The goal of historiography is to produce such histories and for Sartre Foucault fails to do so.

By way of answering this concern, we might turn to a comment made by Foucault in 1975. He states, "I would like to write the history of this prison... Why? Simply because I have an interest in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present" (*Discipline and Punish* 31). In an interview a few years later, Foucault elaborates that "What I wanted to write was a history book that would make the present situation comprehensible and, possibly, lead to action. If you like, I

tried to write a ‘treatise of intelligibility’ about the penitentiary situation, I wanted to make it intelligible and, therefore, criticizable” (On Power 101). Foucault’s idea of his own work as “the history of the present” is one way in which he responds to the concern that history-as-archaeology is static and cannot demonstrate the development of a discourse through time. His articulation of “history of the past in terms of the present” (*Discipline and Punish* 31) would seem to align with traditional history. Such a history would be concerned with examining the monuments of the past and documentarizing them, so as to fit them into a narrative about the present. This involves the approach and reflection upon the past using the categories and concepts developed in and about the present. Reading the past through the categories of the present makes the assumption of a certain amount of continuity and intelligibility between the two as well as concealing or forgetting any difference that is lost because it is unavailable to the present. Such an approach would tend to build the teleologies that Foucault is writing against.

Foucault instead attempts “to diagnose the present... to say what the present is, and how our present is absolutely different from all that is not it, that is to say, from our past. Perhaps this is the task of philosophy now” (“Foucault Responds to Sartre” 53). His attempt to write the history of the present seeks to acknowledge the discontinuities that make the past past. This approach, while attending to the rupture that demarcates past from present, nonetheless includes an assumption that there is some amount of cause and effect between the two. The past, as distinct from the present, is crucially interesting because of how it has shaped the present through what has been left in the past, now appearing as different from the present, and what has been carried through to the present. Foucault’s attempt is to examine the past to be informed about the origins of the present’s structures of power. So, Sartre’s critique of a dead and unmoving past is somewhat mitigated because in Foucault’s account, this critique assumes too much continuity

between the past and present, and because Foucault's attempt is precisely to write history so as to explain the present.

Steadfast in their commitment to a certain ontology of history the skeptic might reiterate the concern that Foucault's archaeology is not actually historical because it does not connect past present and future but instead provides a discursive still image of the past. While it may be an attempt to examine the past without assuming continuity up to the present, does this commitment resolve the concern at hand? Does archaeology demonstrate how the discourses of the past actually connect, or do not connect, with those of the present? How does one write an archaeological history, one that attends to the complexities of the monument and its connections to other monuments in discourse, while writing that history as not a history of the past, but a history of the present? It seems that the concern of an ahistorical history remains.

Furthermore, there seems to be a tension in Foucault, or a way that his methodology initially appears contradictory. He both wants to examine the past on its own terms, without teleology or anachronism, by addressing the past as monuments, not documents, and he also wants to examine the past as the history of the present as a way to understand the present, and to change the catalogue of possible futures. This approach leads to the concern that the autonomy of the past may be compromised for the sake of affecting the present/future. The archaeological historian may compromise their examination of what monuments have meant in the past for the sake of affecting change in their contemporary society, thereby lapsing into the traditional documental approach. This would amount to a failure to genuinely execute their methodology. The archaeological historian might, for example, read the monuments of classical age incarceration a certain way due to their hope for prison reform in the present. One possible reply to this concern is that archaeology, when done well, would leave open the possibility that an

examined discourse has not been influential in shaping the present. Perhaps the examination of a specific discourse would yield the conclusion that that discourse has not significantly shaped the present, and that the rupture with the past is more total than in other cases. One imagines that discourses about globalization before and after the advent of the internet might be one such example due to the internet drastically changing the terms of globalization. However, what is the likelihood of this conclusion? Does the archaeologist only choose to examine discourses where there is almost certainly some connection between past and present? Or is archaeology flawed in that it assumes that the discourse of the past, while distinct from the present, can still tell us the history of the present? Foucault might defend his method by reference to his willingness to find discontinuity in history.

Colin Koopman, upon bringing up Sartre's critique of Foucault's archaeology, concedes that this critique is warranted and that "Archaeology, by contrast, is not a study of emergence but rather of existence. Archaeology asks about what has existed in the past, and without concern for how that which existed came into being" (*On Genealogy as Critique* 40). Koopman argues that archaeology is insufficient for the writing of the history of the present. Archaeology is atemporal because it looks at a single stratum of history, and therefore cannot show development. However, Koopman only concedes this point in order to claim that Foucault needed to develop the later methodology of genealogy to both incorporate and correct for the deficiencies of archaeology ("Foucault's Historiographical Expansion" 339). To show the development of discourses through time Foucault needed genealogy.

To the extent that "history" is, in the general sense of the word and in traditional history, the examination of the changes in the past there is some truth in the claims that history-as-archaeology is not history. Given that there is some truth in Koopman's claim that archaeology

freezes historical change, especially in light of Foucault's later development of genealogy, one can imagine how the Foucault of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* might have defended his methodology. Foucault might argue that archaeology both shows how a discourse came about and the possibilities for it in the future, but in doing this, it looks backwards and forwards from a single point, rather than tracing a discourse through time. The attempt is to look at the layers of the past from the present, to examine the discourses of the past as factors of the present, as the history of the present. How is this different from a traditional historical approach? The archaeological method tries to examine the past as the history of the present, but without anachronism. It attempts to examine past discourses by their internal logic, which includes allowing any contradictions to remain, to see how they have affected contemporary discourses.

Another possible way that Foucault might defend his archaeology against the charge of being synchronic is with his description of it as "series of series" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 10). The new form of history he describes "speaks of series, divisions, limits, differences of level, shifts, chronological specificities, particular forms of rehandling, possible types of relation" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 10). The operation of archaeology builds historical series, with the goal not simply of writing a plurality of histories, but of writing about the relation between series, the "series of series" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 10). Foucault describes this as the examination of the various connections and overlaps between the different historical series that archaeology uncovers. The result would be the examination of the overlap between various histories, such as economic, religious, academic and political, all with a particular discourse as their subject matter. Foucault's answer to the ahistorical critique would be that archaeology, as the construction of "series of series," would be able to show the chronological development of a discourse, through the multiple series that it connects. Through

attention to the development of a discourse in multiple series through time, archaeology can follow the overall development of a series through history. One would be right to wonder whether Foucault's defense is convincing or whether the "series of series" fails to conclusively answer this critique.

Beyond the concern that Foucault's new historical method might not actually be historical, there are further critiques. One mentioned by Foucault is that the unities that he creates or discovers are not stable. The epistemological mutation of history had the effect of dissolving all the old, previously stable unities of history, such as the oeuvre, the author or the tradition (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 28). In light of this, how can Foucault claim that the unities that he builds would be any more stable? Foucault acknowledges that a skeptic might claim that he has only made historical work more complex and difficult by adding his new concepts, without solving any problems: "Why, then, proceed to such dubious regroupings at the very moment when one is challenging those that once seemed the most obvious" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 71). He has several responses to this. He emphasizes that the unities that he creates are different in character from the unities of traditional history. One key characterization that he uses in order to describe his subject matter multiple times is dispersion:

"This dispersion itself – with its gaps, its discontinuities, its entanglements, its incompatibilities, its replacements, and its substitutions – can be described in its uniqueness if one is able to determine the specific rules in accordance with which its objects, statements, concepts and theoretical options have been formed: if there really is a unity, it does not lie in the visible, horizontal coherence of the elements formed; it resides, well anterior to their formation, in the system that makes possible and governs that formation". (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 72)

Foucault's goal, the unities that he is looking for, come temporally prior to the unities examined by traditional history. These are unities in that they produce the more obvious and transparent unities that traditional history took as unproblematic. Foucault goes on to explain that these "systems of formation" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 75) are not categories that he imposes on discourse from the outside, but the way that a specific discourse is itself organized and regulated. Furthermore, this is not a movement from the level of discourse to something more original or primary; rather, Foucault claims that his examinations of systems of formation still remain on the level of discourse (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 75). In this way, he avoids the charge of simply reiterating the ontological moves of traditional history. In examining unities and 'systems of formation' "one is not seeking, therefore, to pass from the text to thought, from talk to silence, from the exterior to the interior, from spatial dispersion to the pure recollection of the moment, from superficial multiplicity to profound unity. One remains within the dimension of discourse" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 76). If the unities of formation that Foucault finds in history are themselves discursive, this allows him to avoid the critique that he is simply replacing one onto-mythological origin for another. Unities of formation may cause the more obvious unities of the oeuvre, the author etc., but they remain on the ontological level of discourse.

Is History-as-Archaeology Meaningful?

The concerns that Foucault's history-as-archaeology only provides a static picture and is therefore either not historical or poor historiography, along with the critique that it only creates new unstable unities bolster what seems an even more fundamental question. This question is what meaning history-as-archaeology can articulate or give to history now that the power of history to show the teleological development of humanity is gone. If the power to give meaning

to history is indeed gone, if history is now meaningless, what is the motivation to do history-as-archaeology? The harshest critic of Foucault might claim that his new methodology amounts to historical nihilism. The concern from the standpoint of traditional history is that Foucault's newly discovered discursive unities are unable to provide any meaning, and that in the wake of traditional unities, while they do provide new representations of history, those representations are in themselves without meaning. This critique is in part due to Foucault's attack on how traditional history formulated meaning.

Foucault states that traditional history (turning monuments into documents) "attained meaning only through the restitution of a historical discourse" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7). The monuments that it found were only meaningful through their transformation into documents situated within a teleological historical narrative. With the change to history-as-archaeology that Foucault describes we must ask where, if anywhere, meaning comes from. If the monuments found by archaeology were only meaningful by being situated in a historical discourse, what might the meaning-status of the newly created monuments of history-as-archaeology be? If the focus of history has become "the intrinsic description of the monument" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7), does this mean there is a sudden absence of meaning, where the description of each individual monument is not sufficient grounds for the creation of wider meaning, but is only meaningful in each monument's internal logic?

Foucault's defense is two-pronged. He first affirms that history-as-archaeology does do away with meaning in history, but only meaning as defined by *traditional history*. This critique is contained in his normative attack on traditional history and its attempt to anthropologize history. Traditional history was significant to the extent that it could bolster the subjectivity of humanity. "What is being bewailed with such vehemence is not the disappearance of history, but the eclipse

of that form of history that was secretly, but entirely related to the synthetic activity of the subject” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 14). This is the same form of traditional history that would claim history-as-archaeology is not actually history because Foucault forsakes this type of meaning. In light of the epistemological mutation of history, there is now “the impossibility of discovering or constituting a meaning in the inertia of the past and the unfinished totality of the present” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 11), which had been the goal of traditional history. The second movement of Foucault’s defense would claim that there is another way that history is meaningful while still de-anthropologizing history. If one is committed to the examination of monuments and not documents, a certain type of meaning is still possible.

Foucault’s defense would again likely rest on the possibility of the history of the present. If it is possible to examine the past, not simply out of academic interest, nor as “writing a history of the past in terms of the present” (*Discipline and Punish* 31) but instead by approaching the past as monuments, how does such an approach create or uncover meaning? How do Foucault’s *The History of Madness* or *The Birth of the Clinic*, as far as they are early attempts at history-as-archaeology, constitute or demonstrate meaning in history?

History-as-archaeology is able to create meaning by writing the history of a specific discourse and thereby helping one understand the meaning of the current form of that discourse. As I noted earlier, history-as-archaeology is interested in the unities of formation that create specific discourses. It is also interested in various thresholds that a discourse crosses, such as “the threshold of positivity... the threshold of epistemologization... the threshold of scientificity... [and] the threshold of formation...” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 186-7). These thresholds each mark a point in the development of a discourse, where its status changes in some respect. For example, the threshold of scientificity marks the point at which a discourse

is now considered scientific. A discourse might cross multiple thresholds at the same point, as Foucault claims mathematics did (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 188-189), or cross each at separate points. Archaeology examines a specific discourse, the unity that formed it, and when it crosses these thresholds. Meaning is found through archaeology by examining such discourses and seeing how they partake in meaning-making. History-as-archaeology examines both the conditions of discourse and the discourses themselves, and thereby examines the conditions of what is considered meaningful. The archaeologist sees both what meaning a specific discourse has had in its historical context and the mechanisms of meaning-making.

Implied in this is that, contrary to traditional historical accounts, meaning is multiple, diffuse and historical for Foucault, rather than singular and universal. Meaning in Foucauldian archaeology is generated by this process through its direct negation of the meaning of traditional history. The examination of the formation of discourses shows their historicity, which is to say, their non-teleological nature. The history of a discourse, through its contingencies, reversals, divergences, reassemblings and contradictions, undermines the claims of traditional meaning and the sovereignty of the subject. But this process does seem to demonstrate how discourse functions in the present, and how contemporary discourses are meaningful. This methodology allows one to look at current discourses that have perhaps not yet crossed all of those thresholds or are currently in the process of doing so and see how they may change. Conversely, this methodology allows one to see how a current discourse might be dividing, contradicting itself or falling back to the other side of a threshold. Moreover, attention to the complex histories of discourses allows for greater appreciation of the nuanced nature of discourse in the present, appreciation of both the complexity of a single discourse, and of the interconnections between “series of series” in the present. Archaeological meaning is generated by writing such a “history

of the present” and demonstrating the historical discursive conditions of what can be considered meaningful.

The Statue of Liberty

By way of a particular example, we might think of the infamous final scene of *The Planet of the Apes* (1968) starring Charlton Heston as astronaut George Taylor. The final scene has Taylor riding a horse down a beach with his female companion, *Nova*, portrayed by Linda Harrison, seated behind him. They gaze up at a structure that the audience only sees a small piece of in the foreground. Taylor dismounts and sinks to his knees in the surf and the camera pans out so that the audience realizes that Taylor is gazing upon the destroyed Statue of Liberty and rather than being on a faraway planet he has time-travelled to an earth far in the future. In Taylor’s absence, earth has been ravaged by nuclear war, to the point of unrecognizability. The scene is powerful thanks to the prominence of the Statue of Liberty as a monument, which symbolizes not only the democratic ideals of America, but also the waves of immigration through New York, signifying the national myth of America as the land of opportunity for anyone, no matter what their origin. The revelation of this monument at the end of the film is so potent because it symbolizes the destruction of not only the monument itself, but all the ideals that it represented and it thereby triggers feelings of outrage, sorrow and helplessness. The destroyed Statue of Liberty signifies that those ideals and the narrative they supported have also been destroyed. What is even more interesting for my purposes is that Taylor’s companion (presumably born on this future-earth) of course does not recognize the Statue of Liberty as anything other than an old ruin. She does not know the narrative of which it is a document. It is not invested with any particular symbolism for her. She perhaps knows that it *once* symbolized something, but its symbolic power has been destroyed. The scene unites the audience with

Taylor's character, (because the audience too knows the symbolism of the statue). They empathize with his anger and sadness because we see the symbolic implications of the destruction of the Statue of Liberty.

I propose that the contrast between the two positions in this scene is akin to Foucault's understanding of traditional history and history-as-archaeology. Taylor's position would be that of the traditional historian. He invests the Statue of Liberty with a whole catalogue of additional meanings supplemental to its "intrinsic description." The result is that the monument is transformed into a document. The Statue of Liberty speaks volumes about the teleological narrative of America in addition to itself. For Taylor and the film's audience, the narrative about the ideals of humanity is reversed to tell a story not about the rise of America to the beacon of liberty but of the general decline of human society. Reading this scene on another level, what causes the traditional historian to sink to his knees and cry out is not necessarily the narrative that they read into the monument, but rather Foucault's claim that traditional history no longer fits the epistemic conditions.

Contrary to this is Taylor's companion, Nova, or in our re-reading, the historian-as-archaeologist, typified by Foucault. From both Taylor's and the audience's perspective, through no fault of her own, she simply fails to understand the significance of the statue. Without the historical context how could she ever see the symbolism of the statue? Instead, she simply sees it as a statue, with some unknown symbolism. While Foucault's position of articulating the change in epistemic conditions is much more self-aware than hers, the traditional historian would still see Foucault as simply 'missing' the significance of the monuments that he examines, because he refuses to documentalize them. Or perhaps, from the standpoint of the traditional historian, even worse, because Foucault articulates why the documentalization of monuments is no longer

tenable. In response, Foucault's archaeological historian could reclaim the position of Nova as one of potential. The reaction of the traditional historian to seeing every monument as a document blinds them to the intricacies of each singular monument. How could Taylor ever look at the destroyed Statue of Liberty without seeing the larger historical narrative of humanity's decline? Likewise, the traditional historian sees every monument as a document, often already coming to the document with a teleology in mind and therefore inevitably reaffirming their narrative. Foucault can instead see new connections revealed when the historian commits to seeing the complexity of each monument and the connections between different monuments. The historian-as-archaeologist can see the monument within the discourses of the past and all the complexity those connections entail.

To move out of this cinematic example, one must imagine that these new possibilities for history articulated by Foucault happen every time an archaeological historian looks at any text, any piece of discourse and views it as a monument. I have attempted to articulate the key attributes of Foucault's archaeological method, as well as defend it from several critiques, in doing so, being as generous to Foucault's work as possible. However, there has been a key question simmering that will guide the rest of this thesis. The concern is that the distinction that Foucault draws between the monument and document, the distinction upon which he bases vast changes in the discourses on history, is not as assured as Foucault would have this reader believe. The very ways that he articulates the differences between traditional and archaeological history imply that a historical text can be read as *either* a monument or a document. While it is possible that history-as-archaeology might gain the ubiquity that traditional history held, it seems that its assumptions could never reach the same level of ubiquity and stability due to its tolerance of difference that was absent in traditional history. What are the implications if a historian can read

any particular text as either a monument or a document and this operation is to some extent at the discretion of the historian? The ability to oscillate between the two modes will be the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter Two

The intention of my first chapter was to understand Foucault's distinction between the monument and document on his own terms. I attempted this through both the close reading of his claims about the epistemological mutation of history made in the introduction of the *Archaeology of Knowledge* and by elaborating upon those claims with material several of his other texts. My goal was to understand Foucault's argument generously and in good faith. This chapter will focus on the analysis and critique of the monument/document distinction by Foucault and will interrogate both the stability of that formulation and some of its possible consequences. I will use comments made by the art critic Erwin Panofsky to demonstrate an alternative to Foucault's hermeneutic.

Discourse

Clarification of Foucault's understanding of discourse is necessary before I begin to examine the implications of his distinction between the monument and the document. Foucault attempts such a clarification in the early pages of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, where he declares "it would be quite wrong to see discourse as a place where previously established objects are laid out one after another like words on a page" (42-43). Discourse is not for Foucault the neutral space or process in which self-evident objects of knowledge are put in relation to one another. It is not the transparent medium in which the communication between different theories builds a consensus on the traits of the physical world. Foucault mentions three senses in which he had meant 'discourse' in the early chapters of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

In the most general, and vaguest way, it denoted a group of verbal performances; and by discourse then, I meant that which was produced (perhaps all that was produced) by the groups of signs. But I also meant a group of acts of formulation, as series of sentences or

propositions. Lastly – and it is this meaning that was finally used, discourse is constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far as they can be assigned a particular modality of existence. (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 107)

Schematically, the archaeologist sees a set of related and connected statements which together make a discourse. Thus, “the term discourse can be defined as the group of statements that belong to the single system of formation” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 107). Archaeology is the examination of discourses, as collections of related statements and as the mechanisms that allow knowledge objects to appear.

Foucault gives psychiatric discourse as an example. The relations between juridical interrogation, police information, the medical questionnaire, clinical examinations, biographical accounts (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 44) and many more practices allow for certain types of objects to appear or foreclose the appearance of other objects. “These are the relations that, operating in psychiatric discourse, have made possible the formation of a whole group of various objects” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 44). Discourse works this way in general, as the interaction of relations that condition the appearance of objects of knowledge. Foucault continues that he wants “to substitute for the enigmatic treasure of ‘things’ anterior to discourse, the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 47). The objects that discourse makes appear are not the result or evidence of a prediscursive force such as Spirit or a transcendental subject, but only the result of the interactions of relations within discourse. The result of this attempt, put simply, is that “there is no sub-text” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 119). Each statement that archaeology examines articulates exactly what it says and nothing less or more. Describing the statement is therefore not an attempt to rediscover the plenitude of speech that the statement only hints at, nor the reduction of the

statement to a singular common-text, but is instead the examination of the particular place the statement in question occupies in the discourse and hence in the relevant relations. Archaeology examines individual statements, seeing their connections to one another and the different relations they indicate. It therefore demonstrates the way the discursive formation structures the appearance of these objects. The goal of archaeology, according to Foucault, is that it examines not the thoughts indicated in a specific discourse, or what it represents, but the discourse itself: “It does not treat discourse as a *document*, as a sign of something else, as an element that ought to be transparent... it [archaeology] is concerned with discourse in its own volume, as a *monument*” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 139 emphasis in original). Discourse is examined in its own right, not simply as indicative of something greater than or prior to the level of the discursive.

Foucault in Traditional History

Also of preliminary note is the influence that Foucault’s archaeological method had on subsequent historical methodology. One example of this is the work of Simon Schama, whose work might at first appear to be closer to the traditional history that Foucault criticizes. However, in the preface to Schama’s 1989 *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* one can see Foucault’s influence on this more mainstream type of academic history. In the preface Schama articulates an understanding of traditional history similar to Foucault, in which the French revolution was conceptualized in the narrative of Marxist progress (xiii - xiv). Schama then notes the deterioration of this approach, in which the radical difference between pre- and post-revolutionary France is questioned and “continuities seem as marked as discontinuities” (xiv). The revolution, which stood as the absolute rupture between the Ancien Régime and modernity shifted from a historical necessity to “a thing of contingencies and unforeseen consequences”

(xiv). Schama's account embraces Foucault's archaeology to the extent that it rejects the teleology of traditional history, which saw the French Revolution as a necessary step in history. It posits neither historical necessity nor absolute rupture between past and present. However, Schama's work is not an example of the complete adoption of history-as-archaeology. He notes that the structure of his account "returns to the form of the nineteenth-century chronicle" (xv), with the result that he "runs the risk of being seen as mischievously old-fashioned piece of storytelling" (xvi), as if Schama were guilty of smuggling the values of traditional history into an ostensibly post-Foucauldian account. However, his description of the cacophony of historical voices Schama "opts for chaotic authenticity over the commanding neatness of historical convention" (xvi). Schama is aware that his methodological intentions, influenced by Foucault's critique of traditional history, nonetheless retain the form of traditional history and therefore may appear old-fashioned to the casual observer.

Foucault's influence is more keenly felt in Schama's title of his examination of the 2008 American presidential election, *The American Future: A History*. In this television program and then later text, Schama reflects on various pieces of American history in order to contemplate what the future of America could be. This project and its premise that examination of the past can help us understand the present, or even the future, seems to resonate with Foucault's own project of writing 'the history of the present.' I do not want to overstate this point and the potential connections between Schama and Foucault. One might say that the goal of almost all historical work is to better understand the present through the past. The point of this excursion into Schama's texts is simply to note the influence Foucault's methodology and many of his key themes have had through dissemination from the narrow domain of debates on historiography into the broader arenas of both academic history and public history.

The Fate of Archaeology

Turning to my examination of history-as-archaeology, I first want to note an interesting, but unexplored implication of Foucault's account of the epistemological mutation of history. As we saw, Foucault claims that where history and archaeology used to be interested in the document and monument respectively, history now aspires "to the intrinsic description of the monument itself" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 7). What is unclear in Foucault's history of history is whether archaeology has changed because of the mutation of history. He claims that prior to the epistemological mutation of history archaeology was only important for historians to the extent that it related monuments back to the historical narrative; in other words, it aspired to the condition of history and therefore failed to examine monuments in themselves. Perhaps the mutation of history means that archaeology is now free to examine monuments in themselves, without the imperative to relate them back to a traditional narrative. If archaeology does gain this freedom, the freedom to examine monuments without the imperative to restore them to a historical narrative, as it should have had all along for Foucault, one wonders what would then distinguish traditional archaeology from new archaeology. This hope that archaeology can be the inherent description of the monument is the basis for Foucault naming his own method 'archaeology'. Implied in that term is Foucault's claim that his method of historical method is the same as archaeology in the crucial respect that its object of study is the monument. One might be hesitant at this point and question Foucault on the basis of this claim. Is the focus on the monument the key epistemological trait that would indeed make traditional archaeology and Foucault's archaeology kindred? Simply put, does traditional archaeology become the genuine study of the monument in itself, or does its mutation into something else leave Foucault's archaeology as the only way of studying the monument?

In addition to the ambiguity around his understanding of archaeology as a discipline in its own right, it is also notable that Foucault's dichotomy of the monument/document is under-examined in the secondary literature. While many writers comment on Foucault's understanding of the document, few examine the role of the monument for him. In "Trapped in Our Own Discursive Formations: Towards an Archaeology of Library and Information Sciences," Gary Radford goes so far as to couple the document with the statement but not with the monument. (13) Given the centrality of the monument/document pair this seems a major misreading of Foucault's text.

Ontology or Hermeneutic?

The key question raised by my reading of the introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is the extent to which Foucault's monument/document distinction is epistemological/hermeneutic or ontological. The simpler of these two claims is that the monument/document distinction is an ontological difference. As I attempted to show in the first chapter, Foucault does to a certain extent give definitions that demarcate the monument and the document. An overly simplistic reading is that Foucault is making a strong claim for the ontological difference between the monument and the document. If Foucault were making this claim, that a historical statement is a monument *or* a document due to its belonging to one ontological category or the other, then he would be open to questions about the metaphysical basis for this claim. Upon what categories does this ontology rest and on what basis does Foucault make this ontological distinction? However, this does not seem to be Foucault's claim. Against traditional accounts of history (and traditional archaeology too), Foucault is asserting that the categories of monument/document are epistemological/hermeneutic. The statements that any type of historian looks at are not in themselves a monument or a document, but rather appear

as such according to how the historian reads them. Prior to the epistemological mutation of history, history was a way of looking and reading that necessarily saw statements as documents. Foucault's archaeological method articulates the necessity of reading statements as monuments, given the epistemological mutation of history.

It is important that we note that what Foucault describes is not simply his normative claim about how one should do history. He understands the epistemological mutation of history as the result of a long process of the waning of humanism in the philosophy of ideas. In Foucault's perspective, he is not introducing this new mode of reading in history so much as making it explicit. Archaeology is a method of reading statements. History as a discipline – and the history-of-ideas in particular – must pivot to the method of archaeology to suit the new epistemic conditions in the wake of the epistemological mutation of history. With understanding archaeology as a hermeneutic comes a whole new suite of questions.

Understanding the monument/document distinction made by Foucault as epistemological/hermeneutic rather than as ontological raises questions about the role of the historian that an ontological view of this distinction does not. If, as in an ontological distinction of monument/document, historical sources are either documents or monuments, then the historian only has the task of identifying the ontological nature of the object under examination and treating it as such. The golden rule of history might have been to treat monuments as monuments and documents as documents and leave the monuments to the archaeologists. Foucault's description of the epistemological mutation of history is crucial because it shifts the responsibility of historical interpretation from the nature of the object (statement) in question, to the practices of the historian. Foucault does give the sense of an inevitability to the shift to history-as-archaeology given the intellectual climate. The epistemological mutation has made

traditional history now untenable; for the historian to read the statements of history as documents is thus somehow in bad faith. If we understand this shift as hermeneutic, Foucault is offering an articulation of a new method of reading the statements of history, rather than claiming that these statements have a radically different ontology. Foucault is clearly not saying that the statements of history are actually monuments rather than documents and that traditional history have simply made an ontological mistake. Instead, he claims that the epistemological mutation was both a shift from the documental way of reading statements of the past, to the monumental way, and has also made the continued reading of the past as documents unsuitable to the epistemic conditions of the time. The archaeological historian must learn to read statements of the past as archaeology has, as the monuments that do not communicate a transcendental narrative. None of this precludes the possibility that future historical discourses might shift back to a hermeneutic of the document, or perhaps to a third term. The development of the discourse of archaeology and the monumental view of historical statements might also come to be obsolete or insufficient; indeed, one could argue this happens in Foucault's own work, in his shift to the language of genealogy and problematizations in later texts.

The concern in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that Foucault is aware of but does not explicitly address is around the role of the historian in the writing of archaeological history. The traditional method of writing history claimed that there were only documents and that the historian must therefore write history based on those documents. The historian therefore had to attempt to communicate objective history as clearly as possible; and if they let their personal biases influence what they wrote, that was a failing on their part. Foucault's archaeological history abandons the hope of any such object as "objective history" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 9). Foucault's distinction between the monument/document as hermeneutic modes

means that the historian, after the fissure that this mutation opened up, now has the ability to read history in either of these ways. The historian now sees an alternative to the hegemony of the traditional documental hermeneutic. Whatever type of history they produce, whether documental or monumental, the historian is now obliged to justify their methodology against the other possibility. The historian is now responsible for their hermeneutic method.

From the vantage point of the traditional historians that Foucault addresses this shift is concerning because it positions the historian within the power relations that Foucault would come to write about in his later works. The historian is not a disinterested observer, but their very method of reading the statements of the past determines the history they produce. The historian as an individual is caught within multi-layered power relations, which press upon them in many - sometimes contrasting - ways. These power relations and epistemic conditions determine what type of historical discourse the historian can produce. The possibility of objective history has disappeared and we are left with varying historical discourses that are influenced by power relations. If no statement is inherently a document or a monument, then how it is read is determined by the hermeneutic method of the historian, which is in turn determined by the power relations in which the historian is situated. Not only is the historian responsible for the hermeneutic choice, but without a transcendent truth to history, there is nothing ensuring cohesion between different written histories. The certainty of total history grounded in a singular narrative gives way to a plurality of general histories marked by contingency and chance (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 9).

In Foucault's theorization of power relations, power is not something that one has, but instead something that circulates. It is therefore not quite right to say that the historian is able to exert power through historical discourse; though there is something like that at work. In "The

Foucault Phenomena and Contemporary French Historiography,” Patrick Hutton points out the ability for history to be subversive. He writes, “The writing of history is itself a political act; it does not represent the past, but rather moulds it” (99), and then a little later adds “[B]ut Foucault has shown that the past is a rhetorical construct for the present” (101). For Foucault, history does not give a perfect representation of the past and indeed does not *represent* the past at all. History is the past as it is created in the present, by the power relations of the present, for the needs of the power relations of the present. These claims apply to Foucault’s own histories written throughout his career, and if one makes such an application, one gets a sense of the limited role of individual agency to exert power. No doubt, Foucault’s histories were written with subversive, or at least meditative intentions and one might read them as his intervention into the contemporary historical discourse, demonstrated in his idea of the history of the present. However, one should bear in mind that they are not his accomplishment alone, but the result of a particular relations, of the influence of Jean Hyppolite, of Georges Canguilhem, of the power relations of the university, of professional historical writings and countless other discourses.

Prior to Foucault’s clarifications of his theory of discourse, one might have asked what level archaeology operates on. If discourse is composed of a series of statements, are the statements read as monuments or the whole discourse? However, I have demonstrated how these two are both levels of discourse and therefore not separate for Foucault. Archaeology reads the individual statement as a monument and therefore also sees the multiple discourses of which it is part as such. In comments such as “great discursive monuments” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 137) the reader can therefore see two meanings: both “the great monuments within and of discourse that compose discourse” and “discourse as a great monument”. The former seems the more straightforward reading of individual statements as monuments rather than

documents and thereby seeing their connections to other monuments and the conditions that create that individual statement. The later, reading an entire discourse as a monument, seems less obvious. It is demonstrated in the way that archaeology allows the historian to read a discourse, especially a scientific discourse, as not simply the ignorant precursor to the enlightened modern manifestation of that same topic, but as itself a discourse that has its own unique rules by which it determines epistemic objects. Such a reading refuses to reduce a pre-modern discourse to a one-dimensional mistake in understanding reality. Instead, according to the monumental reading, it examines all the complexities of that discourse without assuming any connections to present discourses. Archaeology is therefore able to see both particular statements and particular discourses as monuments, as worthy of being understood in terms of their own logic.

The Episteme

Another important concept to clarify is Foucault's idea of the episteme. The episteme is for Foucault the macro-level unity that dictates the conditions of possibility of discourse. Foucault forcefully articulates this concept in the preface to *The Order of Things* when he states,

What I am attempting to bring to light is the epistemological field, the episteme in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of growing perfection but rather that of its conditions of possibility... Such an enterprise is not so much a history, in the traditional meaning of the word, as an 'archaeology'. (xxii)

Foucault is attempting to examine the historical development of specific fields of knowledge or discourses without recourse to claims that the rationality or objectivity of a specific theory necessitates a certain change of that discourse. He asks: if one suspends the belief that objectivity

and rationality are the only conditions by which knowledge is created, what other mechanisms does one find shaping the creation of knowledge? The episteme is Foucault's term for that unity that does indeed condition the production of knowledge. There are several key characteristics to the episteme for my following investigation.

One key trait of the episteme is that at any one time there is only ever a single episteme that conditions knowledge within a specific society: "In any given culture and at any given moment, there is always only one episteme that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in practice" (*The Order of Things* 168). Foucault's arguments in *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* include his perspective of the historical shifts in epistemes, from the Renaissance, into the Classical age, up to the Modern episteme. A lynchpin of Foucault's argument in *The Order of Things* is that it was the Classical episteme that required knowledge to be representational and that at a certain point in history this shifted to the modern episteme, which required knowledge to be historical (*The Order of Things* 209, 220). This change in epistemes meant a shift from organizing knowledge in tables and taxonomies to series and development instead (*The Order of Things* 262).

One result of the hegemony of a particular episteme in a particular era is that there is greater similarity between discourses within the same episteme than between discourses on the same topic, but from different epistemes. The common epistemic conditions of two discourses within a shared episteme result in shared assumptions about how the universe is knowable. In "On Power" Foucault gives the following example: "a book of medicine dating from 1750 is, for us, a hilarious object of folklore, of which we understand practically nothing; on the other hand, seventy years later, around 1820, there appear books of medicine that, even if they contain a lot

of things that we regard as erroneous, inadequate or approximate, are nevertheless part of the same type of knowledge as our own” (100). This cleavage is because, while both are texts about medicine and therefore treat the same problems, they belong to different epistemes. While there is a great deal in the text from 1820 that a contemporary medical text demonstrates to be false, the fact that we continue to operate under the same episteme as in 1820 (*The Order of Things* xxiv) means that the contemporary doctor still sees the 1820 text as a medical text and not pseudo-science. It may be mistaken medicine, but it is still medicine, whereas the text from 1750, belonging to a different episteme, appears to the contemporary doctor as not meeting the threshold to be considered medical knowledge.

One final trait to note about the episteme for Foucault is that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to understand the episteme in which one is situated: “It is true that the Classical age was no more able than any other culture to circumscribe or name its own general system of knowledge” (*The Order of Things* 75). This implies that not only was the Classical age unable to understand its episteme of representation, gaining glimpses of this only through exceptional works such as Diego Velázquez’s *Las Meninas*, but that subsequent epistemes, including Foucault’s own, also struggle with this level of self-awareness. Foucault cites examples of works, including *Las Meninas* and *Don Quixote* as articulating the episteme at the moment that the society in question is moving into a new episteme. It is as if one can only see the episteme as it comes to a close. This is one question that I will carry forward in this thesis: how exactly can one not only describe discourse from within discourse; how can one understand the condition of one’s thought from within those very conditions?

A further point to make about Foucault’s understanding of the new role of the historian is that, despite the collapse of any transcendent History, the categories in which the archaeological

historian thinks are not subjective or arbitrary (Gracia 11). History as archaeology does not result in each individual historian simply writing whatever they please about history, thereby creating a multitude of conflicting accounts in which the significance of historical events become muddled. The impossibility of objective history and Foucault's proposed history of the present does not mean there is a complete reduction to subjective history. Instead, the categories in which the historian thinks/reads/writes are produced by the discourse in which they are situated. The historian's location within a discourse provides the categories in which that historian works and conditions the possibilities of their productions. By way of example, we might think of Foucault's famous citation of Borges' tale of "A Certain Chinese Encyclopedia", which divides animals into "(a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c)tame... (f) fabulous... (j) innumerable," etc. (Order of Things xv). Foucault's point is that such a taxonomy, once established as the axiom of a discourse (and Foucault is not clear about how it is established as such [Gracia 11]), along with the power relations at work, conditions the possibility of subsequent discourse. The historian who writes a history of "innumerable" animals is not writing that account based on their subjective category, but within the established discourse, according to material power relations. The historian as archaeologist therefore does not invent their own categories, but instead works within the established discourse.

None of the above descriptions of the archaeological historian as situated within material power relations invalidates Foucault's account of the historian. He himself does not claim to be objective or above the level of power. Instead, in Foucault's account, the historian is always within and conditioned by power relations, and any history they write also circulates on the level of discourse and power. My interest is with the specific role that the hermeneutic methods of the document and the monument play in this dynamic and if they indeed operate in the way that

Foucault describes. What happens to Foucault's system if these methods function differently from his description? I will interrogate the hermeneutic of the monument/document through the comments of the art critic Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968). Panofsky makes several comments regarding the document and the monument that will aid me in my analysis of Foucault.

Panofsky

While the context and intentions of Panofsky differ greatly from those of Foucault, it seems that his analysis of the monument and document in art history can nonetheless be illuminating in my consideration of Foucault's work. My goal is not to propose a direct equivalency or opposition between the two but to instead use Panofsky's theory of the historian to generate an alternative reading to Foucault's understanding of the monument/document distinction. My interest is in comments that Panofsky makes in the introduction to his seminal text *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (1940), entitled "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline." In this introduction Panofsky adopts Kant's understanding of *humanitas* and elaborates its connection with the visual arts. He also explicates his understandings of semiotics and historical theory. In Panofsky's view, man is distinct in the animal kingdom because he is the animal that understands signification (5). In applying this claim to the discipline of art history, Panofsky at first uses the terms 'monument' and 'document' rather loosely, without clear definition of what he means exactly. He gives the example of finding a contract, dated 1471, that refers to an altarpiece in a specific church (8). The contract, which he deems a document, must be checked against the material art object, the monument. For Panofsky, these two terms seem to align quite closely with their common usage, where a document is a written record of a past event and a monument is a non-written material record of that same event, such as a statue or painting. The work of the historian consists in "checking" (8) the monument against the document to verify its

validity. Panofsky then makes a more interesting claim. Just as the historian is unsure about the legitimacy of the monument, so too in the reverse situation is he unsure of the document. The document is not simply the basis for validating the monument; rather, monuments and documents mutually reinforce each other, neither being more primary.

At this point, Panofsky admits that we are faced with “a hopelessly vicious circle” (9), where the ambiguity of the document or the monument make historical work baseless because neither can establish the authenticity of the other. Panofsky escapes this deadlock by positing a direct equivalence between the operation of history and the operation of science. Just as science relies on a theory that particular empirical data fits, so too does the ‘data’ of history, monuments and documents, require a “general historical concept” (9) in which they fit. This has the result of displacing the circularity to a different level, now between the data of history (monument/document) and the general historical concept. As in science the theory is impossible without the data, and it is impossible to synthesize empirical events without a general theory. The result for Panofsky is not another vicious circle, but instead an elastic and adaptable system, in which new data can either be incorporated into or cause the refinement or critique of the general historical concept.

As I have shown, Panofsky’s use of monument and document up to this point are under-theorized and at first appear as simplistic ontological categories of historical objects. From this vantage point, it seems that an object is either a monument or a document, neither with a special claim to primacy, but instead mutually reinforcing each other within a larger historical theory. Panofsky then augments this view by considering disciplines outside of art history. In the realm of art history Panofsky assigns a primary role to the monument, while the documents that support the authenticity of those monuments of art are more secondary (10). This privileging of the

physical object is understandable in this discipline. We might say that art history is first and foremost concerned with the art object and documents serve to support the study of the monuments of art. Rather than assume the priority given to the monument in art history and establish it as the structure for all types of history, Panofsky instead claims that “everyone’s ‘monuments’ are everyone else’s ‘documents’ and vice versa” (10). What he means by this is that the object of historical study that is given that primary position, which is taken as the concern of the particular history in question, need not necessarily be the physical object. The monument may be a physical object in art history, but is not necessarily so in other historical disciplines. The historical discipline determines what is primary and what is secondary: “Many a work of art has been interpreted by a philologist or historian of medicine; and many a text have been or could have been interpreted by an historian of art” (10). The type of history determines what is considered a monument and what is considered a document, and which is more primary than the other.

Panofsky clearly adds nuance to his view of the monument and document, moving from ontological categories to hermeneutic modes of reading the objects of history. The ‘monument’ for Panofsky is not simply the physical object of the past, but the object that a particular mode of history takes as its primary interest, while documents are the historical statements that support that inquiry. *The monument and document are positions in the hermeneutic*, rather than having set ontological characteristics of their own. The altarpiece that is a monument for the art historian might for the economic historian be a document.

This shift in Panofsky’s view, from the ontological to the hermeneutic brings him much closer to Foucault’s understanding. However, one interesting difference between these two views is that Panofsky’s seems to offer more fluidity, allowing the monument and document to coexist,

whereas for Foucault the monument and document seem separated by a gulf. For Foucault, historians once saw everything as a document and only saw documents. The mutation of history has meant that the historian-as-archaeologist sees everything as a monument. For Panofsky, there is a relation of support between the two terms. The historian sees both documents and monuments, just with the investigative emphasis placed on the monument.

One can imagine the nuance and complexity that two complementary histories could tell in Panofsky's model. For example, an art history examination of 18th-century medicine could take medical diagrams, the primary focus of that history, as its monuments and the accompanying medical texts as its documents. A medical history of the eighteenth century would do the opposite, treating the medical texts as representations of the theories prevalent in the discourse, and therefore as monuments, while treating the illustrations as secondary to those theories and therefore as documents. The result would be that different types of historical accounts would have different strengths, be able to speak about different elements of a discourse. Reading two such accounts together might give a more complete sense of the discourses of that era and how they overlapped and influenced each other in real time.

However, one might argue that there is a similar dual structure to historical investigation in Foucault's later work. There, Foucault's turns toward writing histories of the non-discursive, material manifestations of power, such as the history of penal practices. Perhaps the relation between the discursive and non-discourse, with one in the foreground as the object of historical investigation and the other in the background, is analogous to Panofsky's understanding of the monument and the document. But such a claim would seem to misunderstand Foucault's intention. While he does indeed express the connection between the discursive and non-discursive and change his focus depending on the text, it would be incorrect to call his analysis

of one of these terms ‘documental.’ His examination of either is always archaeological, or in his later work, genealogical. Whether looking at written texts or non-discursive practices of history, both are for Foucault historical statements and can therefore be read either as documents or as monuments. His attempt is to consistently read them as monuments and thereby understand their internal logic. His description of the shift from a documental reading of history to a monumental one leaves no room for support between these two terms. The historian either reads the statements of the past as documents or as monuments, but not as both. The monument and document are not two complementary positions within a hermeneutic for Foucault, but rather two separate hermeneutics.

Furthermore, drawing a direct parallel between Panofsky’s method and Foucault’s seems dangerous because of Panofsky’s understanding of the ‘content’ of a work of art: “Content, as opposed to subject matter, may be described in the words of Pierce as that which a work betrays but does not parade. It is the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – all this unconsciously qualified by one personality, and condensed into one work” (14). In light of Foucault’s definition of monument and document, Panofsky’s description of the content of a work of art seems to continue to treat the work of art as a document in Foucault’s sense of the word, as an object that has something hidden that the historian must uncover, against the document’s will. This view would seem to persist whether the object in question is treated as the primary object of the historian’s investigation, the ‘monument,’ or a supporting document.

Also of note is that Panofsky uses Foucault’s very term, *archaeology*, to describe the work of the historian. However, for the reason just mentioned, this is not the archaeology that Foucault advocates. Furthermore, Panofsky provides a defense of the subjective approach to

history, through the mobilization of the historian's "intuitive aesthetic recreation" (15), which he elaborates at length. As we saw, Foucault defends his own methodology against the claim that it is subjectively produced by the historian. He instead counters that, while it does forsake any possibility of objectivity and is therefore not objective, it is produced by discourse and therefore also not subjective. This is because the historian-as-archaeologist examines historical statements and those statements are always within a network with other statements: "To analyse a discursive formation therefore is to deal with a group of verbal performances at the level of the statements and of the form of positivity that characterizes them; or, more briefly, it is to define the type of positivity of a discourse" (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 125). Such analysis relies not on the historian's individual interests and prejudices, but instead on what Foucault calls the positivity of the discursive formation, its potential to be seen as a positive object of examination and the epistemic conditions of the discourse in which this examination is situated. Panofsky's lauding of the potential of the subjective creation of history further distances him from Foucault. The archaeology of Panofsky's intuitive art historian therefore seems quite far removed from Foucault's history-as-archaeology.

Foucault as a Nominalist

Another question that Panofsky's version of the monument and document poses for Foucault is to what extent Foucault is, as many commentators describe him, a 'historical nominalist.' We should first clarify what is meant by this, as the term seems to vary in its meaning. I will use the definition given by Michael Flynn in *Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason: Volume Two*, where he states, "It [nominalism] treats collectives such as socioeconomic class and the State or abstractions like 'man' and 'power' as reducible, for purposes of explanation, to the individuals that comprise them" (32). For Foucault, this manifests in his claim

that there is no such thing as Power, but only particular instances of power relations and no such object as Reason, but instead particular rationalities, historically created by the episteme which condition their creation (*Genealogy as Critique* 45). Calling a historian a nominalist means that, similar to many social constructivist positions, the historian sees only particular historical statements, rather than a statement as a single instance of a historical type.

One can see how this characterization fits with Foucault's archaeological method as I described it in chapter one. Archaeology, in seeing monuments rather than documents, seeks to examine only the particular monument, rather than seeing a singular monument as demonstrative of an entire category beyond it. In response to Platonic versions of history, which find some type of transcendental, transhistorical form in historical particulars, Foucault wants to remain on the level of discourse and its interaction with non-discursive practices. According to Flynn, this methodology is required so as "[t]o lay bare these practices in their plurality and their contingency in order to reveal the fields that make an otherwise heterogeneous collection of objects and events intelligible" (*Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason* 35). The historian as archaeologist remains a nominalist and so sees practices, both discursive and non-discursive, thereby revealing the historical fields that determine the rules of intelligibility. Through the particular historical statement, the more general episteme is made visible, but this itself is not transcendental or ahistorical but instead remains historical.

The extent to which Foucault's archaeological method is nominalistic is of particular interest to my investigation. Some commentators (Flynn, Peltonen) do well to question more radical readings of Foucault as a severe and complete nominalist. Against claims that the subjects of Foucault's historical studies, such as those of madness and sexuality, are creations of discourse, Peltonen claims that "this view, widely spread in the 1980's and 1990's ignores the

non-symbolic part of reality, and would be untruthful even if we considered Foucault only as a discourse theorist” (209). Madness, sexuality and criminality do indeed exist independent of discourse, but it is the case that we only ever know them through discourse. Peltonen reminds his readers of the importance that the non-discursive practices had for Foucault throughout his career. To claim that for Foucault everything is discourse ignores the attention he paid to the physical instantiations of power. This element of Foucault’s thought is present throughout his work, with many reminders that discourse is itself material, that is, has material consequences (“On the Order of Discourse” 69).

My examination of Panofsky helps to clarify the question of nominalism in Foucault’s hermeneutic. As we saw above, Panofsky claims that there is in every aesthetic object some ‘content’ that gives the historian insight into “the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – all this unconsciously qualified by one personality, and condensed into one work” (14). One wonders whether this content betrays a belief in a larger metaphysical order or structure. This possibility in Panofsky’s thought leads me to ask the same of Foucault. Although he claims to scorn any metaphysics in history, is the content that he finds in the monument actually different from the content of the document in this respect? If one agrees with Flynn’s and Peltonen’s views of Foucault as less than a complete nominalist, then it would seem that madness and criminality, which really exist in the world but are only accessible through discourse, are only accessible through the historian reading the monument or the document.

In his explanation of the monument in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, it seems that Foucault believes there is some authentic content within the statement that is missed in its being read as a document. One of the sins of the documental reading of historical statements for

Foucault is that it ignores what the statement actually says. This is due to the historian-as-documentarian reading metaphysical assumptions into the document, rather than approaching the document without any predetermined expectations. Instead, the historian-as-archaeologist would let the monument say whatever it has to tell. Foucault's point seems to avoid our concern of establishing new metaphysics. If the monument speaks to the historian in a way that is more genuine, that is not because the historian accesses the correct meaning of the monument by using the correct hermeneutic. Rather, the historian-as-archaeologist accesses what the monument *has meant*, in a particular historical discourse, within a historical episteme and in connection to other discourses. If a particular text that was previously understood to demonstrate the coming-to-consciousness of reason is now understood as demonstrating the confinement of unreason (madness), that very same text might again change in meaning when analyzed as a monument in a different episteme.

If the hermeneutics is as crucially important for the historian as Foucault claims, then the content that a monument communicates is also historical. As the episteme of the historian changes, the possibilities of reading the monument can also change. I made the point earlier that Foucault would have to admit that the hermeneutic division between the monument and document must also be historical and that therefore other hermeneutic modes might be available in the future. My current point is more specific. The hermeneutic mode, how the monument is read, and what significance the monument has in the present are also affected by the episteme in which the historian writes. What is not dependent on the historian is what the monument meant in previous discourses. This distinction, between what a particular monument has meant versus what it will mean, is important to understand when thinking about Foucault's project at large. There is no determined content of the monument that archaeology allows us to access but which

the documental approach to the statement missed. Archaeology allows access to the monument situated in particular discourses, but it does not give access to the definitive meaning of the monument because there is no such meaning. A monument had meanings in various historical discourses and the meaning we see in it depends on both the discourse in which we locate it and the discourse from which the historian writes.

One specific example that Foucault gives of the reading of a particular statement changing with a change in episteme is the work of Gregor Mendel. In “The Order of Discourse” Foucault cites Mendel’s experiments on plant heredity as one example of the importance of a statement depending on the episteme. He states, “[p]eople often wonder how the botanists or biologists of the nineteenth century managed not to see that what Mendel was saying was true. But it was because Mendel was speaking of objects, applying methods, and placing himself on a theoretical horizon that were alien to the biology of his time” (60-61). This example is specifically about how the episteme conditions what can be considered scientific truth. However, the larger point of the role of the episteme extends to the historian’s analysis of monuments. Just as the episteme determines the truth of a scientific claim, or even whether a claim can be considered as within the realm of science, so too does the episteme determine the reading of a monument in the present. The historian’s hermeneutic is shaped by the episteme.

Foucault and Authorship

Any consideration of the individual role of the historian as an author in Foucault’s work must consider Foucault’s own complex thoughts on authorship. Foucault’s reader gets a sense of this complexity in his comments at the end of the introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* when he responds to the critique that he will change his mind or appear differently in his next text. He asks, “do you think that I would keep so persistently to my task if I were not preparing –

with a rather shaky hand – a labyrinth into which I can venture... in which to lose myself and appear at last to eyes that I will never have to meet again. I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 17). This passage, in addition to being very powerful, communicates both Foucault’s own wishes about the mobility of his discourse and his understanding of the possibilities of authorship and by extension subjectivity. The core concept that Foucault articulates is that individual subjectivity need not or perhaps cannot be stable and unified in the way it had been imagined to be. The collapse of transcendental subjectivity as the grounding of history has also meant the collapse, or in Foucault’s emphasis, the *destruction* of stable individual subjectivity. This intention is bolstered in Foucault’s “What is an Author?” when he states that the point of writing now is to create a space into which the writing subject disappears (102), also likening writing to “a voluntary effacement,” “its author’s murderer” (102). Elsewhere he contrasts the contemporary author with past conceptualizations of authorship, stating “In the past, the problem for the person who wrote was to pull himself out of the anonymity of all; in our time, it is to manage to obliterate one’s proper name and to lodge one’s voice in that great din of discourses which are pronounced” (“On the Ways of Writing History” 291). There is some ambiguity in these comments, however. Is authorship a question of obscuring the subjectivity of the author (as is part of the sense in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*), is it a question of a fluid and ever-changing subjectivity, or is it a question of the disappearance of any sense of subjectivity altogether? Attempting to commit Foucault to one singular theory on this topic would seem to belie his point, but these do seem to be tangibly and consequentially different operations. However, addressing these questions is not the goal of this chapter. Rather, one might say that for Foucault, subjectivity too has become historical. Where humanity’s subjectivity was for traditional history the stable ahistorical

principle that conditioned all history, it now has become subject to change, not only on the macroscopic but also on the individual level.

Of concern for my examination of Foucault's archaeological method is whether his theory of the fluid subjectivity of the author avoids the criticism of subjectivity. If the author is a constantly shifting subjectivity or has no subjectivity, can they avoid the subjective writing of history that traditional historians might accuse them of? It seems that my previous defense against the critique of archaeology producing subjective history would continue to obtain in light of Foucault's idea of authorship. Even if the historian-as-archaeologist has the type of mobile subjectivity that Foucault describes, their examination of discourse would still be an examination of historical statements and therefore an examination of the past. The power relations of the archaeologist's present would condition the types of histories that they could write and indeed the very conditions of what is considered historical, but the historian-as-archaeologist is far from inventing fanciful accounts of the past. Instead, their work continues to examine what particular historical statements meant in the discourses in which they were part. The archaeological historian is interested in what statements and discourses meant in the past, in their connections to other statements and discourses, and in these very real past meanings that archaeology attempts to access. If the historian-as-archaeologist does their work in good faith, the discourses of the past prevent them from writing subjective accounts of history. Their account is subjective to the extent that it is created by a subjectivity and is the interpretation of statements by that subjectivity, but it is not subjective in the sense that it is not false or mistaken for being such and account.

One of the interesting questions that Panofsky's account asks of Foucault's hermeneutic is contained within Panofsky's comments on the practical object versus the artistic object. For

Panofsky, all objects can be experienced aesthetically. However, he distinguishes between the artistic object “demanding to be experienced aesthetically” (14) and the practical object which does not make this demand. The practical object does not demand that its viewer see it aesthetically, although seeing it as such is certainly possible. This leads one to ask whether the same is true of Foucault’s hermeneutics. Foucault’s point is precisely that those things that have always been read as documents are not inherently so, but only appear as such through our reading of them. Historical statements do not inherently demand to be read as documents any more than they demand to be read as monuments. The demand is issued at the level of the discourse in which the history is written. We might say that the discourse of 19th-century history demanded that it read the statements of the past as documents, rather than the statements themselves inherently being documents. But the more difficult question that this line of thought provokes, is whether, as opposed to Panofsky’s claim, there is anything for Foucault that resists his hermeneutics. Is there anything that resists being read as either a document or a monument? Is there anything that can be read as neither of these hermeneutic categories, or can every aspect of discourse necessarily be read in one of these two ways?

The concern, if this last question is answered in the affirmative and there is nothing that escapes Foucault’s hermeneutic, is that his hermeneutic simply becomes another way that power relations are reinforced. If there is nothing that escapes the hermeneutic, then the power relations of the discourse in which the historian writes are consistently reiterated. Everything falls within reach of the hermeneutic, which is manifested by the historian, who is always situated within power relations. This would lead one to wonder what the point of Foucault’s histories are, if there is no subversive potential. There is a tension between the claim that writing history can be a political act and Foucault’s analysis of the historian’s position in power relations. Any hope of

writing history to subvert the power relations within which one finds oneself becomes vanishingly unlikely and the history one writes is only another instantiation of power.

To pre-empt my third chapter slightly, this problem is summed up by Gary Radford, who claims that the problem for Foucault is how to talk about discursive formations without himself being within one. (9) A better formulation might be that Foucault's question is how to talk about discourse while acknowledging the ways that the discourse one is within conditions the possibilities of the sayable. Foucault does not believe that he can somehow escape the realm of the discursive; in fact, a major point of his early work is precisely to say that this is impossible. While non-discursive practices are certainly not *within* discourse, they are also not independent of the discourse. Rather, the two are intimately connected. A more accurate question might be; How can Foucault subvert or undermine the hegemony of discourse from within that very discourse? How can one write a history that subverts the power relations that condition that very historical account? Could such subversion take place through something that can undermine or resist the distinction between the monument and the document? Is there anything that resists being read as either of these hermeneutic categories? This something would likely be more radical than Panofsky's category of the non-aesthetic practical object, which can be but does not demand to be read aesthetically. The object I search for would more conclusively resist being read as a discursive object, whether document or monument.

Foucault's Kaleidoscope

I want to end this chapter with a consideration of Michael Flynn's image of Foucault's understanding of truth. Flynn uses Paul Veyne's metaphor ("Foucault Revolutionizes History" 167) and proposes we think of Foucault's histories as kaleidoscopic:

Each particle-event, though discrete, is identified by a differential relation to every other. The pattern is aleatory but coherent nonetheless. Whatever permanence a pattern may assume is limited by a spatial, 'before' and 'after' the turn of the instrument (like the 'here' and 'there' of a trajectory). Each transformation is a new creation. No theme of subtext perdures. There is sequence but not causal influence among the patterns. Even the unity of the question posed in a Foucauldian 'history' is merely apparent, since its meaning adjusts with each transformation. (*Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason* 79-80)

In this image of Foucault looking through his kaleidoscope, the distinct shapes and colours that he sees are the distinct historical statements that his hermeneutic sees as monuments. Turning the kaleidoscope is analogous to asking a new question about discourses of the past or looking at a different era which results in seeing different monuments and different relations between monuments. The overall pattern of the kaleidoscopic image is the discourse unities that Foucault's archaeological method sees. To extend this metaphor for my own purposes, the question that I have asked previously and which is my main interest in the next chapter is how to see the kaleidoscope through the kaleidoscope. By this I mean, how does Foucault describe discourse from within discourse and power from within power? How can one understand his methodology while also locating his own position in discourse(s), especially in relation to the monument? Gary Radford's formulation of the question would amount to Foucault seeing all discourse through his kaleidoscopic methodology, from some objective or ahistorical position. The more precise and difficult question is how to think about Foucault in the same ways that he examines discourses in his histories. One gets a sense of Foucault moving in this direction when he asks, "Is the task ahead of us to advance towards a mode of thought, unknown hitherto in our

culture, that would make it possible to reflect at the same time, without discontinuity or contradiction, upon man's being and the being of language?" (*The Order of Things* 338). To turn Foucault's kaleidoscope against itself is my task in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

This thesis began by interrogating the nature and significance of the distinction that Foucault draws between the monument and the document in his archaeological method. In the second chapter I asked several questions about this methodology such as whether this dichotomy is stable, and detailed Panofsky's alternative model of the monument/document hermeneutic. I then used Panofsky's model to further examine Foucault's hermeneutic. My third chapter will turn Foucault's kaleidoscope upon itself, that is, I will examine Foucault's own position within discourse, and posit his works as themselves monuments. What would mean it to do an archaeological reading of Foucault? Working through some of the concepts and claims made by Foucault detailed in the first two chapters, I will extend my questions about the monument/document distinction to extend beyond Foucault's work and propose a reading of the contemporary episteme.

Foucault's Place in Discourse

I want to start this chapter by examining Foucault's comments about his own place in discourse in "The Order of Discourse." In this lecture delivered to the Collège de France in 1970, Foucault begins by voicing his feelings about how his own discourse is organized and received in relation to others. The lecture begins with Foucault stating, "I wish I could have slipped surreptitiously into this discourse which I must present today" (51). Shortly thereafter he elaborates, "I think a good many people have a similar desire to be freed from the obligation to begin, a similar desire to be on the other side of discourse from the outset" (51). Given my first two chapters these comments seem rather curious, as if one might possibly be outside of discourse. Foucault makes these statements in an attempt to voice his particular anxiety, which he also claims is widespread. The worry, at least in part, is that the author has no hope of

controlling the discourse that they begin, and that they will be held accountable for the negative consequences of that discourse. The author feels the risk inherent to discourse, the risk of subverting or destroying existing structures and feels the anxiety that this risk induces. Foucault introduces this type of anxiety in order to explain that the author who feels this risk is actually mistaken and need not worry. Taking up the voice of the cultural institutions in response to the author's anxiety he states,

“You should not be afraid of beginnings; we are all here in order to show you that discourse belongs to the order of laws, that we have long been looking after its appearances; that a place has been made ready for it, a place which honours it but disarms it; and that if discourse may sometimes have some power, nevertheless it is from us and us alone that it gets it”. (“The Order of Discourse” 51-52)

The assemblage of cultural institutions, the “we” in this quotation, responds to the philosopher's concern when beginning a new discourse by reassuring him that, while discourse might escape the control of its originator, it can never escape the episteme in which it began. Specific historical mechanisms by which the cultural institutions control power and allow or block its circulation are detailed throughout Foucault's work and are perhaps most evident in his accounts of particular historical discourses. Discourse can only appear within the boundaries and conditions set by cultural institutions. However, the shifting of responsibility, from the author to cultural institutions, is no cause for relief for Foucault. The author cannot simply relax “freed from the obligation to begin” (“The Order of Discourse” 51) and in the knowledge that they are not actually responsible for the discourse they begin.

For the author to be the sole originator of a particular discourse would be a great responsibility and Foucault implies that this is the traditional understanding of authorship. To be

the one who begins a specific discourse entails a certain amount of responsibility for the effects of that discourse. Foucault's goal is instead to reveal the hegemony that cultural institutions have over power and therefore his tone throughout the text is descriptive rather than reassuring. Foucault's description of how discourse is controlled is the source of a second form of anxiety, the concern that discourse is too controlled.

The very thing that mitigates the author's anxiety over beginning and controlling discourse, the hegemony of cultural institutions, is the source of the second type of anxiety. This is a concern for Foucault because, as the above quote mentions, cultural institutions defang discourse by only allowing discourse to operate within determined boundaries and by specific rules. Included within this opening dialogue is the idea of the origin, specifically the idea of the author as the origin of discourse. Cultural institutions assuage the author's concern that "Oh, if only I might begin this discourse unnoticed, to not be responsible for signifying the Origin of this discourse." Part of the reassurance offered is that the author was never the Origin of discourse to begin with. Foucault is not suggesting a new origin of discourse but instead showing how cultural institutions have always been the originators of discourse. Even if the author shares none of Foucault's concerns, does not have the first form of anxiety and does indeed see themselves as the singular and authoritative origin of a discourse, they too are subject to the operations of the cultural institutions. They are actually only the origin in the sense that they temporally began a discourse. The conditions of the possibility of the discourse are larger cultural institutions, the episteme. Foucault's goal is to formulate the costs if cultural institutions, rather than the author, are the origin of discourse.

The result is two conflicting orders. The author, in this case Foucault, is both absolved of the demand to begin new discourse and perpetually compelled to it. The author is freed from the

imperative to begin discourse because Foucault's observation is precisely that the author is never the singular and total beginning of discourse. The author never begins discourse *ex nihilo* nor do they begin a new discourse with the cultural materials at hand. Instead, cultural institutions and the extant episteme condition which discourses are possible. The author therefore has much less agency over what discourses begin or end than was previously thought. Yet the author is still impelled to begin and to function as the symbolic beginning discourse. The author stands in for the collection of institutions that actually condition the beginning of a discourse. In Foucault's theorization, the author's concern is assuaged by cultural institutions and by the author's wishes both to be standing "outside of discourse" and to be "on the other side of discourse," both of which are always impossible. The author is always within the discourses conditioned by the cultural institutions and is never "on the other side of discourse" in the sense of having begun and completed a discourse, as if the author could have the final authoritative word on a discourse that they ostensibly began. Consoling the author, the cultural institutions might reply; "Do not worry about the risks and responsibilities of being the origin of a discourse, because you do not actually begin it. You are merely the figurehead for the discourse that we have manifested. Do not worry about the discourse you began slipping from your control and causing unpredicted change, because it was never under your control in the first place, and we only allow it to begin and exist within the parameters we have set." Foucault's wish, and the wish that he extrapolates as a general wish (to enmesh himself seamlessly into a pre-existing speech, or to begin discourse unnoticed and unrecognized as its beginning) is therefore doubly impossible. The functioning of discourse continues to portray the author as ostensible beginning and at the same time never allows the author to begin new discourse in a way that is genuinely free from existing institutions.

What, then, of Foucault's own position? His point in "The Order of Discourse" is the larger one about the conditions of the beginning of discourse, but he begins this critique by discussing his own position. He too is caught within the matrix of the existing cultural institutions. Against his wish to imperceptibly begin or join speech, he is held up as the originator of 'Foucauldian discourse.' But his point is also that his discourse too, is not actually "his." The discourse that Foucault begins is only begun because of the fertile preconditions established by cultural institutions. Foucault, as the perfunctory figurehead of this discourse, is allowed to begin it. The coming-into-being of his discourse is only possible because cultural institutions have made it thus. Implied in this is that Foucault's discourse is already disarmed before it begins. It is allowed to come into being because it poses no existential threat to cultural institutions. Any power it has was anticipated and sanctioned by existing institutions. Foucault is therefore in the position of describing the control that cultural institutions have over discourse while he himself is limited by that very power.

Herbert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow read Foucault's awareness of the limitations of his own discourse as the function of a shift in Foucault's thought after publishing *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Before and within *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Dreyfus and Rabinow claim that "unlike the theories he [Foucault] studies, his theory slips free of institutional, theoretical and even epistemic bonds" (102). They see Foucault's archaeological hermeneutic as positing itself as exterior to discourse and therefore claiming to provide objective critique of it. According to Dreyfus and Rabinow this is the methodological failure of archaeology. Seeing this failure subsequently occasions their claim that "any enterprise which hopes to describe modern thought will itself have to avoid introducing yet another discourse that posits the world as a picture and itself as not involved in what it posits" (99). Dreyfus and Rabinow's critique is that Foucault

claimed a power for his archaeological method that is actually impossible. They claim that Foucault believed the historian-as-archaeologist could stand outside of their own discourse, which is impossible for anyone. According to this critique, Foucault posits his archaeology, his kaleidoscope, as existing in a void through which he examines the past. If, as Dreyfus and Rabinow claim, Foucault does formulate yet another objective position from which to examine history, this critique attributes a great lack of self-awareness on Foucault's part. In light of this critique one should consider Foucault's motivations in creating such a methodology.

One way of doing this is to consider Foucault's use of the metaphor of *archaeology* in the first place. Foucault is far from the first to use archaeology as a metaphor for the examination of hidden or underlying conditions. Of particular note is Sigmund Freud's use of this metaphor in his development of psychoanalysis. In "The Aetiology of Hysteria" he mobilizes the metaphor of archaeology to explain his own understanding of psychoanalysis:

Imagine that an explorer arrives in a little-known region where his interest is aroused by an expanse of ruins, with remains of walls, fragments of columns, and tablets with half-effaced and unreadable inscriptions. He may content himself with inspecting what lies exposed to view...But he may act differently... Together with them [the inhabitants] he may start upon the ruins, clear away the rubbish, and, beginning from the visible remains, uncover what is buried. (97-98)

If the archaeologist is successful their work might lead to discovery of a new alphabet and language, "yield[ing] undreamed-of information" (98). Freud claims that just as the archaeologist uncovers the hidden mysteries of the past by digging beneath the visible ruins, so too can the psychoanalyst uncover the individual psyche by excavating visible behaviours. In her critique of Freud's use of the archaeological metaphor Sabine Hawk argues that for Freud; "The

archaeological metaphor makes visible the invisible, structures the seemingly unstructured, and conveys an overall sense of purpose and direction in a world of complexity and contradiction” (150). But despite their common use of the archaeological metaphor there are several distinctions between Freud’s use of it and Foucault’s.

While there are affinities between Freud’s and Foucault’s metaphors of archaeology, such as the making visible previously invisible structures, the differences are greater than the similarities. Freud’s use of the metaphor continues the sense of hierarchy between appearance and reality, where the behaviours of the individual are explicable by a deeper level of causes. In contrast, Foucault’s archaeology strives to be strictly positivist in that it examines the statements of discourse and sees the structures of discourse through that examination. While it does “uncover” discursive unities, for Foucault these are not located at a deeper, non-discursive level. One might even say that Foucault’s archaeology is rather opposite to Freud’s. Freud makes the conscious choice to dig into deeper levels while Foucault refuses to see discursive statements as existing on any level other than the discursive. “It [archaeology] is not an interpretative discipline, it does not seek another, better-hidden discourse. It refuses to be ‘allegorical’” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 139). The difference between Freud’s use of the archaeological metaphor and Foucault’s is further clarified by Foucault’s reflection on his use of that metaphor. In a 1983 interview Foucault explains that:

I meant this word ‘archaeology,’ which I no longer use, to suggest that the kind of analysis I was using was out-of-phase, not in terms of time but by virtue of the level at which it was situated. Studying the history of ideas, as they evolve, is not my problem so much as trying to discern beneath them how one or another object could take shape as a possible object of knowledge... By using the word ‘archaeology’ rather than ‘history,’ I

tried to designate this desynchronisation between ideas of madness and the constitution of madness as an object. (“Critical Theory/Intellectual History” 31)

The archaeological metaphor relies on the existence of two levels, one at which the investigation begins, and a secondary level. Where Freud’s archaeology aims at uncovering hidden, unitary meaning beneath the surface level, leading him to make claims such as to have found “the missing piece” (Hake 152), the second level that Foucault’s archaeology uncovers is only more discourse. The discursive unities that Foucault finds are indeed more discourse, but they are not hidden. Instead, it is the shift from the documental to the monumental hermeneutic that allows the historian-as-archaeologist to see this second level of discourse. The key point is that this new level of discourse that Foucault illuminates is not antecedent to discursive statements. Foucault’s distinction between “ideas of madness and the constitution of madness as an object” (“Critical Theory/ Intellectual History” 31) is the distinction between two levels, both of which are discursive. As he demonstrates in texts objects such as madness, delinquency and ‘man’ are both constituted as objects of knowledge though discourse, and spread as ideas through discourse.

The comparison between Freud’s use and Foucault’s use of the archaeological metaphor is informative to the extent that it demonstrates, in response to Dreyfus and Rabinow’s critique, Foucault is not the first thinker to propose an objective examination of human knowledge. But this does little to negate Dreyfus and Rabinow’s critique. One of Foucault’s key points in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is that an investigation styling itself as objective is impossible in the wake of the mutation of history. Accordingly, any examination of an “archaeological” reading of history should acknowledge the historicity of that term, so as to not itself lapse into the register of an objective examination of archaeology.

By way of a more direct response to Dreyfus and Rabinow's criticism, "The Order of Discourse" shows that, directly after the publication of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault is as aware of the historicity of his own work as he is of the historicity of the discourses he examines. If Dreyfus and Rabinow are correct and Foucault does position archaeology as objective and exterior to discourse, "The Order of Discourse" demonstrates his shift to positioning his own work within discourse follows immediately. The subsequent question is how powerful a critique of discourse can be when it has itself been conditioned by pre-existing institutions.

Foucauldian discourse might therefore be either more powerful or less powerful than previous discourses. It might be more powerful because Foucault articulates the way that discourse is neutered of its danger by prevailing cultural institutions. Acknowledging the conditions and mechanisms of the formation of discourse might allow, if not a critique of those epistemic conditions, a level of self-awareness and therefore clarity absent in previous discourses. As I will show, Foucault does indeed articulate such a possibility. His discourse may be less powerful than previous discourses because Foucault must admit that it is also within those restraints, and therefore can only ever describe discourse from within discourse. If Foucault's anxiety in "The Order of Discourse" is well-founded, then his novel articulation of disarmed discourse applies to his own discourse. It is not necessarily the case that by realized this one can suddenly unlock the radical power of discourse, because Foucault's own discourse would also be disarmed by prevailing cultural institutions. His discourse would have come about only if it were not a threat.

Foucault therefore appears to be caught in a double-bind. His discourse must be subject to the neutralizing power of cultural institutions even as he attempts to escape or subvert that

power to critique those very institutions. His task is, in a sense, is to bend the modicum of potency his discourse has been allowed back against the institutions that have distributed that very power. How, then, can Foucault escape or subvert the conditions by which his work came to be? That is, how might discourse, Foucauldian discourse, become dangerous again, and what place does the archaeology hermeneutic play in this danger?

By way of answering some of these questions, I turn to Foucault's idea of "counter-discourse" (*The Order of Things* 44), which articulates that discourse is both the site and the object of struggle. The possibility for changing, rather than simply continuing existing cultural institutions lies in part within counter-discourse. In this instance Foucault mentions counter-discourse when articulating the relation between modern literature and representation. John Johnstone collects other elements of this concept in his paper "Discourse as Event: Foucault, Writing and Discourse" when he states, "At one and the same time then, modern literature both reveals conceptual and discursive limits and 'leaps' towards an entirely new mode of thought" (802). Counter-discourse has for Foucault, a mechanism by which to resist the discursive tide of prevailing cultural institutions. For Foucault, this ability to bridge, or at least begin to bridge, two epistemes is only characteristic of particular works, such as *Don Quixote* and Sade's *Juliette* and *Justine*, hence his focus on such works. (*The Order of Things* 48, 211) These works are deserving of particular attention in *The Order of Things* and *History of Madness* precisely because they somehow leap ahead of their episteme or foreshadow its end in ways that allow them to escape the discursive stranglehold. Through this process they again became dangerous to the monopoly of cultural institutions over discourse.

My question is whether Foucault's own work might be read in this light. Does his work resist the epistemic boundaries set by cultural institutions by gesturing toward a soon-to-be

episteme? Roberto Esposito seems to think Foucault falters at that threshold when he includes a quotation from Donna Haraway in his argument, stating that Foucault “named a form of power at its moment of implosion” (*Immunitas* 146-147). Esposito elaborates that “precisely because he [Foucault] is able to describe the genealogical mechanisms of modern society so thoroughly and extensively, he runs the risk of remaining hermetically imprisoned in its dynamics, and thus losing or not grasping the limit point at which modernity comes face to face with its outside” (*Immunitas* 147). Esposito portrays Foucault’s methodology and description of the intricacies of modernity as the conclusion of that very modernity. Despite his accurate description of modernity Foucault is unable to see past the episteme of modernity, the episteme he himself is in. He is on the edge of a new, post-modern episteme but not himself within it. Foucault is himself aware of this when he comments that the modern episteme still conditions thought in his time (*The Order of Things* 205). One expression of the way that Foucault conceives of his work making this ‘leap’ to the contemporary episteme is in his claim that “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. My position leads not to apathy, but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism” (“On the Genealogy of Ethics” 343). Discourse can become dangerous to the existing power structures again and challenge existing power relations by revealing how they too are dangerous. But discourse only has this potential if existing cultural institutions have not always anticipated and foreclosed its disruptive potential. Despite the way that cultural institutions and the prevailing episteme condition the appearance of discourse, for Foucault, discourse does somehow retain some danger. Not all discourse, but counter-discourse specifically retains this potential.

Foucault's theory of the hegemony of institutions over discourse also leads me to ask, regarding Foucault's hermeneutic, whether the discourse in which one is situated determines one's ability to read a statement as a monument or a document. The archaeological methodology, as with Foucault's discourse more generally, would seem to lack the capacity for radical change because the episteme has allowed its very appearance. That is, does the discourse determine the hermeneutic or vice versa? It would seem that the answer is that causation goes in both directions. The episteme and cultural institutions do indeed determine one's ability to see monuments or documents. Prior to the particular conditions in which Foucault wrote *The Archaeology of Knowledge* it might have been impossible, within the given episteme, to think of and read documents as monuments. The episteme determined that the documental hermeneutic was the only one available to historians. We might say, following Foucault's above claims, that the cultural institutions, discourse and episteme that surrounded Foucault while he worked allowed the archaeological hermeneutic to come about.

Does the hermeneutic determine the discourse? It certainly determines the discourse(s) that are visible in the past. Foucault's point is in part that the discourses surrounding madness, criminality, sexuality and 'man' were not visible through traditional history. As he claims throughout his corpus, he identifies and examines positivities that were previously ignored or invisible (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 159). But does the hermeneutic determine present discourses? Foucault maintains hope that the monumental hermeneutic can have some type of affect in the present. While direct prescriptions for the present are largely absent from his work, his objective is in part to have an effect in the present. To address this, I want to return to his idea of a 'history of the present.'

The History of the Present

As we saw in my first chapter, Foucault states, “I would like to write the history of this prison... Why? Simply because I have an interest in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present” (*Discipline and Punish* 30-31). Having positioned Foucault as himself within discourse, I want to return to what this idea of the history of the present might mean in relation to the monument and the document. Colin Koopman argues that “Foucault was so concerned about the present precisely because he understood the present to be the site of the temporal and historical processes through and in which we constitute ourselves as subjects” (*Genealogy as Critique* 28-29). What is the purpose of the archaeological hermeneutic in relation to this objective? Archaeology looks at monuments and sees in them previously invisible discourses. These discourses are not interesting for Foucault merely by their existence, as he implies would be the case for some traditional historians. He is not merely interested in the objects of the past in an academic sense, because such a historical interest has difficulty in justifying itself. Instead, the discourses of the past are interesting only to the extent that they demonstrate processes of self-constitution as subjects. By uncovering and studying discourses surrounding madness, delinquency and sexuality, Foucault’s goal is to understand how similar discourses constitute subjects in the present. The historical work of describing these discourses disproves the idea that the madman, the criminal and the hysteric are natural (ahistorical) types; instead, they are created and shaped by discourse through time. Writing a history of the present in this way relies on his nominalism, that is, his suspension of the question of whether or not there is a trans-historical truth to the past. The concern is not with the ‘truth’ of the past, whether that exists or not, but with the affect the

past has in the present. Why is the archaeological approach necessary for this history of the present?

Foucault's nominalism is expressed in his examination of statements as monuments rather than documents. Seeing a document as a monument entails a rejection of assumed categories in favour of approaching each monument without assumption of its style or what it communicates. The journal of a classical era sexual deviant is examined without the assumption that the author is a member of the natural category of sexual deviant. Monuments are listened to not as examples of natural categories, but rather in all their singular fluctuations and interruptions. The monument, once it is situated in connection to many other monuments, reveals the discourse that occasions subject formation. Such an examination sees each monument as a singular discursive statement rather than as a manifestation of a natural type. Its goal is to see the position of the individual monument within discourse. If a monument is an example of 'madness' it is only because it is situated within a network of other monuments that together amount to a particular discourse. Therefore, "What I am trying to do is grasp the implicit systems which determine our own most familiar behavior without our knowing it. I am trying to find their origin, to show their formation, the constraint they impose upon us; I am therefore trying to place myself at a distance from them and to show how one could escape" ("A Conversation with Michel Foucault" 201). The archaeological hermeneutic attempts to examine monuments in order to understand the discourses that have shaped subjectivities in the present.

Foucault saw the origin of this ontology of the present in Kant's question, "What is Enlightenment?" While it is true there is a certain gulf between these two thinkers considering their commitments to historicity and transcendentalism respectively, they converge on their interest in the present which Foucault inherits from his reading of Kant. ("Two Kantian

Lineages” 118). Foucault goes so far as to say, “maybe the most certain of all philosophical problems is the problem of the present time and of what we are in this very moment” (“Truth and Power” 785). Foucault draws on the Kantian notion of enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) in distinction to other modes of interrogating the present that he describes. According to Foucault, Kant “is not seeking to understand the present on the basis of a totality or of a future achievement. He is looking for a difference: What difference does today introduce with respect to yesterday?” (“What is Enlightenment” 34). It is this attempt to see the present not as a fulfillment of, but a difference from the past that Foucault finds innovative (“What is Enlightenment?” 38). This reading of Kant leads Foucault to redefine the intentions of critique.

In that sense, criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making a metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method.

Archaeological – and not transcendental – in the sense that it will not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge or of all moral action, but will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events. (“What is Enlightenment” 46)

Foucault uses his reading of Kant as the basis of his own style of critique and as the basis for his history of the present (“Critical Theory/Intellectual History” 36). He positions his own work as a descendant of Kant’s in that they both attempt to see the present not as the fulfillment of the past, not indicative of something antecedent to it, but in itself. The history of the present is an attempt to read the present as itself a monument, and thereby see its inherent complexity and contradictions.

Particularly interesting in Foucault’s comments about his methodology is his claim about placing himself at a distance and thereby escaping the structures of formation. Given Foucault’s

awareness of his own position in discourse these seem rather odd. What exactly is Foucault placing himself at a distance from? It might be the case that he is placing himself at a distance from the traditional interpretations of the discourses he examines. He is at a distance because he refuses to take the canonical understandings of these discourses at face value, instead questioning them anew. An example of this is his reinterpretation of the narrative of the liberation of madness by Tuke and Pinel (*History of Madness* 358). However, it would seem impossible for Foucault to put himself at a distance from the immediate discourses of the present. It is impossible to look through the kaleidoscope and see one's own face. Instead, distance from the object of examination is necessary. Foucault is, for example, as implicated in the institution of the French educational system as other academics. The limit of what he is able to do is to question anew the historical forms of these discourses in order to arrive at the discourses of the present with the same sense of strangeness. Foucault leads his reader to the realization that the discourses of the past were actually very different than they thought, and the natural types are actually historically formed by these past discourses. If the subjectivities of the past were formed by discourse, then the subjectivities of the present are being formed by discourses right now. What is impossible for Foucault is to place himself outside of the discourses that formed *his* subjectivity and conditioned the possibility of *his* discourse. Archaeology can provoke a radical questioning of the discourses of the present, but only through the examination of the discourses of the past. By examining the discourses of the past that seek to understand those discourses by their own logic, the archaeological historian gains the feeling that those past discourses which one once thought so familiar are actually very different. The historian has a sense of uneasiness over this newfound unfamiliarity and begins to wonder if the discourses of the present are as familiar as assumed.

The point is both continuity and discontinuity between discourses of the past and those of the present, as well as revealing the mechanisms by which discourse forms subjectivities in the present. We are left with an odd type of “history” that attends to the complexities of past discourses in a way that Foucault claims traditional history, with its documental hermeneutic, could not, but which is also only concerned with the past for the sake of the present. This type of history is odd because it is forthright in not desiring to examine the past based on an academic curiosity. It is only through the archaeological examination of the discourses of the past that one gains this understanding of the present. One might say that Foucault is both more respectful of the monuments of the past by listening to what they themselves say, but also less respectful because he is only interested in them to the extent they allow him to write the history of the present.

A refrain throughout this thesis is the question whether there is anything that resists being seen as either a monument or a document. Is there anything that resists his archaeological hermeneutic? I have already demonstrated Foucault’s intention to write against any type of a Platonic pre-discursive foundation, so there be no recourse to some type of pre-discursive object as the origin of the discursive. This movement is in part a rejection of levels either below (prior to) or above (transcending) discourse. Foucault’s suspension of any domain other than discourse and all its complexities means that his hermeneutic can work throughout that domain. However, in response to my question about the possibility of something falling outside of archaeology, we might wonder whether Foucault’s overriding concern with writing the history of the present positions that present as the very thing that is outside of his hermeneutic.

To the extent that Foucault is writing an ontology of the present, is the present the very object that escapes his hermeneutic? At first this appears to be a rather trite conclusion. Even

Foucault's own claim that it is impossible to see the episteme that one is within seems to voice the common claim by historians that writing about the present or recent past is most difficult. Often the claim is that the historian is "too close" to the events to achieve the distance necessary for good historical work. This idea of distance is interesting for my consideration of Foucault's work. One wonders whether this distance amounts to the familiar theme of objectivity, which would not necessarily be a concern for Foucault. Or perhaps the distance amounts to the claim that a certain passage of time is necessary before the significance of any particular historical event is clear.

The present seems to be the thing that resists the archaeological method because it is necessary for Foucault to look to past discourses, see their statements as monuments, and thereby come to a new understanding of how the present has been formed. It would seem that the barrage of criticism that Foucault received for not being a "real" historian might have been avoided if he could have looked directly at the statements of the present through his hermeneutic (and thereby not be a historian at all), but such an operation is impossible. Foucault's formulation of the archaeological method indicates that he believes it is only through the examination of the monuments of the past that one can come to critique the present. However, the inability to directly examine the present also indicates that we never achieve something like the complete view of the present. There is a tension between the archaeologist's ability to learn about the discourses of the present through the discourses of the past and the impossibility of seeing the full interconnected complexity of the present. The archaeologist is able to trace particular discourses through the past and into the present, but this is only feasible if the focus remains on a particular discourse. Therefore, writing a comprehensive history of the present is impossible.

There is also a tension in Foucault's ontology of the present between continuity and difference. The archaeologist writes the history of the present to the extent that discourses in the present have connections to past discourses. And yet, "to diagnose the present is to say what the present is, and how our present is absolutely different from all that is not it, that is to say, from our past. Perhaps this is the task of philosophy now" ("Foucault Responds to Sartre" 53). Just as within the past discourses it examines, archaeology shows both the continuities and ruptures between the discourses of the past and the present. Discontinuity is a property of both historical discourses themselves, and of their connections with the present. However, the dynamic between continuity and difference is not necessarily a tension. Instead, while they are indeed opposites, they do not counteract or negate each other. The examination of both continuity and difference in particular discourses works towards the same goal of understanding the present. Whether an archaeological history finds discursive continuity or rupture, both results tell the historian about the present.

The result of this methodology is that the present is the object that the hermeneutic cannot examine. The hermeneutic examines past discourses, and connections or discontinuities are uncovered between those discourses and present ones. But the hermeneutic cannot look directly at the monuments of the present. The present therefore remains rather enigmatic for archaeology. What Foucault's methodology does learn – and this contrasts it to traditional history - is that it is in this precise relation. It knows that it is both indebted to and distinct from the past. Rather than formulating a historical meta-narrative that charts continuity through history directly into the present, the historian-as-archaeologist sees that it is always in an ambiguous relation to the present. Archaeology takes the perspective that perhaps one day, when the present is itself history, the archaeologist will be able to look back and see the complexity of

the relations between the past and present happening right now, but in the present, such a view is impossible. The ontology of the present is therefore the impossible objective of Foucauldian archaeology, but its goal nonetheless. Hence Foucault's claim that his work leads to "a hyper- and pessimistic activism" (*On the Genealogy of Ethics* 343). The archaeologist's work is never done because of their understanding of the present. The history of the present always requires a new chapter.

The Historical *A Priori*

The structure that bounds the limits of Foucault's methodology is his idea of the historical *a priori*. As Kevin Thompson explains, Foucault sought the principles of the set of requirements that knowledge had to fulfill in order to be considered knowledge. ("Historicity and Transcendentalism" 2); that is, he sought the *a priori* conditions of knowledge. The object in question is *a priori* for Foucault because it sets the conditions for the creation of new knowledge by determining what can be considered knowledge and what cannot. Foucault's use of this term includes a broadening of *a priori* to mean simply the conditions of knowledge *tout court*, and not necessarily the *ahistorical* conditions of knowledge, as it had previously meant (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 127). This is precisely the innovation in this concept. Unlike traditional philosophical accounts, for Foucault, these conditions of knowledge are themselves historical. The *a priori* conditions of new knowledge are subject to historical change. The result is that the pre-existing conditions that any discourse must fulfill to be considered knowledge are themselves historical. As Tomas Khurana puts it; "transcendental conditions cannot be specific once and for all, independent of the particular contexts and varying empirical experiences that need to be accounted for. We don't have any timeless knowledge of the ideal; it can only be actualized and known from within our historical, contingent, factual experience" ("The Common

Root of Meaning and Nonmeaning” 89). What might have been considered knowledge in the 13th century might no longer meet the conditions of being considered knowledge in the 19th century. This structure is clearly at work in Foucault’s analysis of the three thresholds that knowledge must pass in order to be considered science (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 186-187).

Despite the novelty of this structure, it too might be resistant to analysis by Foucault’s hermeneutic. He applies the idea of the historical *a priori* as an explanation of the historical changes in the sciences and the way that a body of knowledge can come to be considered a science. My question is whether the structure of the historical *a priori* can itself be historical, or does Foucault establish it as something akin to a new pre-discursive? Once one makes a particular object historical, there seems little possibility of establishing that object as the principle of all other change. That is to say that Foucault’s formulation of the historical *a priori* seems to lead to two possibilities. Either it too is historical and the proliferation of history spreads to the meta-level of the conditions of knowledge and then one level of abstraction further, to the level of the historical *a priori*, the level of the conditions of knowledge. If the historical *a priori* is itself historical, then one can imagine a shift, either back to a non-historical *a priori* or to a new type of the conditions of knowledge. The alternative is that the historical *a priori* is itself the pre-discursive structure that conditions all subsequent discourse and perhaps the only type of pre-discursive object that Foucault might accept, because it remains historical. Thompson does indeed claim that Foucault is constrained by his idea of the historical *a priori* (17). Foucault therefore must choose the path of admitting that the historical *a priori* is itself historical.

Historical Epistemes

In *The Order of Things* Foucault argues that the modern episteme of history replaced the classical episteme of representation (262). In the modern episteme of history, everything became historical. For example, where the objective of natural science in the classical age had been to represent all of life in taxonomic organization, the goal in the modern age became to describe the history of a particular species. The shift in the episteme from representation to history led to the focus on theories of evolution (Darwinian or otherwise) and of development. This shift to the history of the object being the locus of its truth was a general shift in the conditions of knowledge according to Foucault. In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault channels Nietzsche to subvert this episteme of history and push against its overzealous use of history. He points out that even history is not itself supra-historical (*The Order of Things* 93). That is, the condition of historicity is an historical *a priori*. The episteme that posits everything as historical is itself historical and not pre-discursive or ahistorical.

However, we then come to something of a paradox. Foucault resists the modern episteme of history and yet his methodology is ensconced in it. On one hand Foucault establishes the historical *a priori* as the condition of knowledge, meaning that all knowledge is subject to conditions that are historical. However, the historical *a priori*, as the structure of the conditions of knowledge, only seems possible as such within the episteme of history, which is itself historical. As demonstrated in his concept of the history of the present, the characteristics of the present are reduced to the history of discourses. The only way that we can know about the present is to look at history, rather than directly at the present. There is no essence or pre-discursive basis to the present, access to which would provide the philosopher with the ontology of the present. There are simply discourses that to some extent connect to the past or are ruptures

from it. The only “essence” of the present are the new discourses that emerge in it, in distinction from the past. There is a kind of reduction to history in Foucault’s method in which nothing, not even the conditions of knowledge, or the condition of the conditions of knowledge, the historical *a priori* remain ahistorical. This understanding of history seems to be completely within the modern episteme of history. One difference between Foucault’s use of history and its traditional writing is that Foucault rejects any claims of determinism. The reduction to the plane of history does not entail that contemporary society, with whatever connections it has to the past, had only one possible path of development *because* of those connections. Instead, the connections or ruptures between past and present discourses are a function of many intermingled and overlapping factors.

The hegemony of the episteme of history is therefore both reaffirmed and subverted. Or perhaps it is subverted through its reduction *ad absurdum*. Foucault’s methodology in a sense subverts the historical episteme by being yet more historical. Yet more historical, but also a redefinition of what “historical” means. Where “historical” had previously included the sense of determinism based on a pre-discursive or meta-historical narrative, for Foucault it can simply mean the series of events of the past, devoid of any sense of determinacy. If the historical *a priori* is itself historical in the way that Foucault does not address, then the emergence of a new episteme is possible, which might include the “end of history” in the sense that we would no longer be within the episteme of history, and therefore history would not be the condition by which we see all things. Foucault’s own methodology gives itself an expiration date because of his reduction to history. If the present is only knowable through the past, and the hegemonic episteme no longer ensures that we see everything as historical, then Foucault’s hermeneutic quickly becomes obsolete.

The sense of Foucault's attempt to use history to undermine its episteme is even greater if we consider his comments in 1975, only a few years after *The Archaeology of Knowledge* was published: "Writing interests me only insofar as it enlists itself into the reality of a contest, as an instrument of tactics, of illumination. I would like my books to be, as it were, lancets, or Molotov cocktails, or minefields; I would like them to self-destruct after use, like fireworks" ("An Interview with Michel Foucault" 3). This specific quote reinforces not only the sense of Foucault's history of the present, but also the larger position of the archaeological hermeneutic in the present. His goal is to write history that creates an explosion in the present. He wants archaeology to be an explosion that changes our understanding of both the past and, more crucially, the present. This is one sense in which Foucault called archaeology not a method, but "a dispersion" (*The Order of Things* 16). Even further, archaeology is meant to be a dispersion of our understanding of self-subjectivization through discourse in the present, and to explode the episteme in which Foucault himself is writing. We might say that Foucault's most general goal is the exact opposite of the conventional historian. He seeks not to preserve either past discourses or the current episteme, but instead to disperse the unities that are too often taken for granted. Hayden White taps into this intention in Foucault's work when he declares that "Foucault writes 'history' in order to destroy it, as a discipline, as a mode of consciousness, and as a mode of (social) existence" ("Foucault Decoded" 26). Foucault writes against the traditional form of history, but also against the episteme of history informed by that very episteme, so as to destroy its hegemony. He does so without a particular goal in mind other than exposing the monopolies at work and opening up new possibilities.

The Quantum Episteme

At several points in his early work, especially near the end of *The Order of Things*, Foucault suggests that another shift between epistemes is imminent (384). He also comments that that contemporaneous thought was somewhat stuck in the modern episteme, stating; “It is a matter of pulling oneself free of that modern age which begins around 1790 to 1810 and goes up to about 1950” (“On the Ways of Writing History” 295). Implied in this is that one needs to do something to pull oneself out of the modern episteme because it still has some power or gravity that leads one to continue to think in its terms. Foucault characterizes his own work as one such attempt to escape the modern episteme by illustrating the differences between modernity and contemporary society (“On the Ways of Writing History” 295). These comments which raise several interesting questions for my account of his hermeneutic. First, if I am today situated in a different episteme from Foucault’s, that would seem to heighten the possibility of critiquing his work, given his comments on how one cannot fully understand an episteme from within it. The distance necessary to see Foucault through his own method might be the distance of another episteme. This also raises the question of whether the archaeological hermeneutic, with its examination of the monument instead of the document is still possible or desirable. If we are indeed in a new episteme, do we or should we still read the statements of the past as monuments or are Foucault’s analysis and methodology in some sense obsolete?

We might see Foucault’s archaeological method as now in a position similar to traditional history. If traditional history once understood itself as a kaleidoscope, it did so in the sense that it was the objective method of seeing the true picture of the past. Traditional history was perhaps not a kaleidoscope, but a spyglass looking into the past. The image it rendered was the singular, unified meaning of the past. Foucault’s archaeology is different both because it allows the

kaleidoscope to provide different arrangements of the monuments it sees, and because it sees that it too is historical and is situated within discourse. If the turning of the kaleidoscope is analogous to examining different discourses in history or a different era, the shift to a new episteme would seem to require a new method, a new tool with which to examine history. Spyglass and kaleidoscope are both now obsolete. But what might a new method mean for the archaeological examination of the monument? In his critique of traditional history, Foucault insists that the monument must be the new way in which history sees the past. Earlier, I suggested that the binary Foucault draws between monument and document is itself historical, leading me to ask whether an epistemological shift occasions a third—or more—new terms in which to see statements. The shift to a new episteme could take us in one of two likely directions. A new episteme might require new hermeneutic perspectives supplementary to or supplanting the monument and document. Or, if the monument and document are the only two possible hermeneutic modes, it might occasion a relation between the monument and document as flexible positions within a hermeneutic, as my reading of Panofsky suggested.

In considering the epistemic threshold that Foucault was on when writing, Pamela Major-Poetzl states,

Consequently, Classical thought was spatial and visual, and everything could be represented. In the Modern period, space functioned as the background and time moved to the foreground. The new sciences of life, labor and language were no longer representational; they were interpretive. In the Contemporary period, time and space emerged together into the foreground of knowledge and there is no background for thought. There are only fragmented moments and local configurations. (Major-Poetzl 204)

This is both an outline of the previous epistemes posited by Foucault and a claim about the contemporary one. The classical age was the episteme of space (representation), while the modern episteme was the episteme of time (history). The contemporary episteme is the quantum episteme because it is episteme of both time *and* space. Major-Poetzl almost reaches this conclusion based on her comparison between Foucault's work and the development of physics in the twentieth century. Despite the importance of mathematics as preparing the ground for Foucault's work (Webb 22-28, 42), Major-Poetzl's claim of necessity based on the comparison between Foucault's work and the development of mathematics is logically dubious, therefore one should not necessarily accept this claim without doubting her comparison. Furthermore, Major-Poetzl's firm characterizations of each episteme are somewhat questionable, especially if one considers David Webb's point that Foucault's characterization of this work as a dispersion requires one to think of it as a dispersion not only in space, but both in time *and* space (Webb 45). I therefore want to posit that Major-Poetzl's distinction is mostly correct, and that Foucault's work exists on the verge of the contemporary episteme, taking up its characteristic of examining both space and time, but not fully within the quantum episteme because of Foucault's commitment to only a monumental reading of history. If our contemporary episteme is indeed the quantum episteme, what does this mean for monument and document?

I want to suggest that the contemporary episteme might indeed be this quantum episteme, and that such an episteme would both bring Foucault's hermeneutic closer to Panofsky's but would also be a distinctly new episteme. The quantum episteme, while it examines both time and space rather than favoring one to the exclusion of the other, cannot examine both simultaneously. One can examine either space or time, but not concurrently. This structure seems to allow the monument/document distinction that Panofsky proposed and Foucault rejected, where each has a

place in the same hermeneutic. Major-Poetzl claims that the new episteme entails a shift where the episteme places time and space together in the foreground of knowledge, with neither placed in the background of the other (204). The consequences of flattening foreground and background together are unclear, as is whether such a shift might produce knowledge that is somehow one-dimensional.

As I articulated earlier, Panofsky posited the monument and document as positions within the hermeneutic rather than distinct ontological categories. Different genres of history place different types of statements in the foreground, as a monument, or background, as a document, according to their focus. This approach allowed for flexibility and support between different types of historical statements. Panofsky's hermeneutic allowed the monument to confirm the document or vice versa. It also admitted the differences of focus both between genres of history and individual authors. Different genres of historical study would be able to elaborate the blind-spots of other genres. Contrary to this, Foucault posited a macroscopic epistemic shift from a documental reading of history to a monumental one. For him, there is no relation of support between the two; instead, they are rival and mutually exclusive modes of reading the statements of history.

The quantum episteme is one possibility of the contemporary episteme that Foucault suggests was impending when he was writing (*Order of Things* 384). This is an epistemic shift that, instead of creating new hermeneutic modes that replace the monument and document as hermeneutic terms, would instead put them into a new relation. A quantum reading of history, while it reads a statement as document or monument in any given instance, also includes the possibility of reading it as the other. The statement has the potential to be both a monument and a document, but never both concurrently. Unlike Foucault's distinction between the documental

and monumental hermeneutics, the quantum episteme would be able to see the statement in either mode. This is similar to Panofsky's hermeneutic. Part of Panofsky's intention seems to be to remind historians that monuments and documents always retain the possibility of being read as each other. A document in one account always retains the possibility of being read as a monument in a different account, and vice versa. Since a historical statement has no determined ontological reality, no account of it is ever definitive. Likewise, in the quantum episteme, reading a statement as a monument implies that it could also be read as a document, because no historical statement is solely time or space, but is instead located in each matrix. Just as time and space imply each other, so too do a documental and monumental reading of a statement.

However, this episteme also deserves the name *quantum* because no statement can be read as *both* monument and document in the same instant. Key to quantum theory is the uncertainty principle: "For example, uncertainty relations tell us that if we were able to predict the momentum of a particle with certainty, then, when measuring its position, all measurement outcomes would occur with equal probability. That is, we would be completely uncertain about its location" (Oppenheim and Wehner 1072). The application of this principle to the hermeneutic means that reading a statement in one mode suspends the possibility of reading it otherwise until the statement is examined afresh. Just as one cannot observe with certainty both the position (space) and momentum (time) of a particle simultaneously, neither can one read a statement as a monument and a document simultaneously.

I want to end this thesis by returning to the question of how exactly one might escape existing power relations when one has been conditioned by them. I have asked above how exactly Foucault's archaeological hermeneutic could make its discourse dangerous once again, and whether it is valuable as a tool of resistance if it is an expression of extant power relations. I

have also noted how Foucault wants his works to be fundamentally unstable as a key way that they might subvert the power relations that conditioned them. In response to the claim that such a hope could not really allow Foucault's work to subvert the power structures he details, I want to posit the quantum episteme as a potential solution.

The most important attribute of the quantum episteme is that of uncertainty. It might allow for discourse to once again be dangerous to the extent that there is always something within it that is elusive. This uncertainty is not a supplement that always escapes any single reading, but instead a whole other hermeneutic perspective, equal to the reading at hand. If one reads a text as a monument, then its documental reading evades placement in the epistemological matrix and vice versa. This dual structure might allow one reading of the statement to always evade the power relations at work. Discourse would therefore be, to some extent, uncontrollable by power relations, or at least never completely and definitively controlled. The power of the documental approach to history was that it read every statement as a document, either enfolding the documents into its narrative or ignoring them. In the quantum episteme, any attempt to control discourse by reading statements in a single consistent way would neglect the other way they can be read and the potential of an alternative reading could undermine those very same power relations. The quantum episteme would take Foucault's formulation of history-as-archaeology as significant, but not as decisive as Foucault claims. Foucault positions his hermeneutic as the decisive replacement of traditional history. Within the quantum episteme it would only be one possibility alongside the documental reading of statements. Additionally, I have posited the quantum episteme as allowing both the documental and monumental readings of statements. However, Foucault's articulation of the historicity of epistemes necessitates the possibility of other hermeneutic modes. It might be the case, currently or in the future, that the

uncertainty in the quantum episteme is due to not only the monumental and document readings of statements, but the potential for a third or even more alternative readings of the statement.

One wonders whether the quantum episteme as I have formulated it amounts to simply the historian's choice between the archaeological or documental hermeneutics. Is it simply the case that the quantum episteme destroys the possibility of any hermeneutic monopoly and the historian is left to choose their preferred hermeneutic? While the historian does indeed become responsible for the hermeneutic in the wake of the end of the modern episteme, it is not simply a matter of personal choice. In fact, it is not really a choice at all. What characterizes historical work in the quantum episteme is instead an inability to choose, or rather an inability to choose *definitively*, because of the constant state of uncertainty. The historian may write a history using the archaeological hermeneutic, but the constant possibility of the statements they use being read otherwise precipitates that uncertainty. Any statement may always be read otherwise, as monument, document, or as still another term, in an even newer episteme. It is uncertainty as a condition of existence that allows for resistance against any hegemony. Foucault himself, in his formulation of archaeology, made a definitive choice in his articulation of archaeology, the examination of the monument as the sole form of history. It is this monopoly that occluded consideration of the historicity of the monumental hermeneutic itself.

The quantum episteme would replace the epistemic certainty offered by the classical and modern epistemes with uncertainty. This is because the classical and modern epistemes each claimed they knew the sole mode through which to read statements, whether it be representation or history. Along with this was a monopoly on seeing statements as documents. Foucault's novelty is to propose the monumental view of statements, but as I have indicated, he too claims a definitive historical hermeneutic in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and therefore is only on the

verge of escaping the modern episteme, and not fully within the contemporary episteme. The quantum episteme, by reading statements as monuments or documents, includes a sense of humility about epistemic claims. Just as there is the possibility of reading a particular statement otherwise, so too would the quantum episteme carry forwards Foucault's acknowledgement of humility regarding its objectivity and historicity. Unlike the classical and modern epistemes, it would acknowledge that it too, as an episteme, is historical, and therefore not objective. Instead, it functions as the contemporary conditions of knowledge, which could indeed be replaced by another episteme in the future.

This sense of humility includes acknowledgement that any proposed episteme for one's current time can only ever be tentative and speculative. Just as Foucault is restrained by his claim that one cannot see the episteme one is within, so too am I. The quantum episteme is only one possibility after Foucault's suggestion of a new epistemic era. It is among many of which are difficult or impossible to formulate given one's current position within them. Understanding the episteme one is in requires the difficulty of seeing the ways that one's thought is conditioned, which requires the high level of self-reflection that Foucault attempted. Conversely, thinking of potential new epistemes requires thinking of epistemic modes and processes completely foreign to one's own. The quantum episteme is only an attempt at formulating a contemporary episteme that retains a place for the monument/document hermeneutics. One might imagine possible epistemes in which neither of these terms remain.

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