

# Situating Foucault: Outline

## I. Post 1968 French philosophy:

- A. post-phenomenological: Levinas, Derrida, Irigaray
- B. post-structuralist: Foucault, Deleuze/Guattari

## II. Phenomenology

- A. Predecessors:
  - 1. Kant: transcendental field: categorial conditions of possibility of experience
  - 2. Hegel: totalized and historicized transcendental field
- B. German phenomenology
  - 1. Husserl [early]: intellectualized; intentionality
  - 2. Heidegger [early]: personal and practical existence
  - 3. Heidegger [middle]: epochal "history of Being": basic words of philosophy
- C. French phenomenology
  - 1. Sartre: intellectual
  - 2. Merleau-Ponty: embodied and practical
  - 3. Beauvoir: gendered embodiment

## III. Post-Phenomenology

- A. Levinas: ethical infinite alterity: face of the other
- B. Derrida: *différance*: differing and deferring; remainder, cinders
- C. Irigaray: feminine imaginary: duality, fluidity; ethics of sexual difference

## IV. Structuralism

- A. major figures: Saussure, Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Barthes
- B. hallmarks: wholeness, transformation, self-regulation; reduction of history
- C. Levi-Strauss: unconscious conceptual structure of societies; "Kant w/o TUA"

## V. Post-structuralism

- A. Historical-libidinal materialism: the study of bodies politic
- B. 19th and 20th C German Predecessors:
  - 1. Marx
  - 2. Nietzsche
  - 3. Freud
- C. 20th C French Predecessors
  - 1. Kojève
  - 2. Hyppolite
  - 3. Bataille
- D. The birth of post-structuralism in the 1960s
  - 1. Deleuze: *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962)
  - 2. The events of May 1968
  - 3. The MLF born of 1968: *Questions féministes; Psych et po*
  - 4. *Anti-Oedipus* (1972)
  - 5. The wonder years 1974-76
  - 6. *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980)

## Brief Comments on Situating Foucault

**RE: phenomenology.** Foucault is resolutely anti-phenomenological. His early work explicitly turns from the study of subjectivity to the study of cultural systems. He never bothers with studying how a constituted subject comes to know something, but concentrates on the conceptual structures that allow subjects to know. His later work on subjectivizing practices is an outside-in study of material (discursive and non-discursive) practices that produce different forms of subjectivity in different historical circumstances, rather than an inside-out study of the allegedly self-constituting history of a concrete subjectivity (what Husserl would call genetic phenomenology).

**RE: structuralism.** There is some truth in seeing Foucault's pre-1970 archaeologies as quasi-structuralist. It's true he never used mathematical models of a network of binary differences, but his notion of a "historical a priori" that governs the discourses of a period, the "positive unconscious" forming the condition of possibility of the experience of an age, seems very close to the general thrust of structuralist anthropology.

**RE: post-structuralism.** The two major works of the mid-70s, *DP* and *HS 1*, are clearly historical-libidinal materialist, by my definition of the study of the production of bodies politic. There's a way in which, though I won't be able to show it in this course, Deleuze/Guattari and Foucault are something like the theory and practice of historical libidinal materialism. I don't mean to say by this that Foucault merely applied the insights of D/G: the mutual influence is much more complicated than that. Nonetheless, the vast sweep of *ATP* and the excruciating detail of *DP* do seem to suggest something like the following: D/G provide the concepts, and Foucault the examples, for future hist-lib-mat work.