

RESPONSE

Transcendental Philosophy and Critical Philosophy in Kant and Foucault: Response to Colin Koopman

Colin McQuillan, Emory University

1. Introduction

Colin Koopman raises an important question regarding the nature of Kantian critique and its relation to what he calls transcendental inquiry in his recent article "Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique in Foucault: Two Kantian Lineages."¹ By analyzing Foucault's rejection of transcendental inquiry, while at the same time reclaiming Foucault for the Kantian tradition, Koopman attempts to situate Foucault within an overlooked and under-emphasized part of the Kantian legacy. Unlike phenomenology, which takes up Kant's transcendental idealism, Koopman argues that Foucault separates what is critical from what is transcendental in Kant's philosophy, retaining the former and jettisoning the latter.

Kevin Thompson has contributed a fine response to Koopman's discussion of Foucault and the phenomenological tradition. I would like to respond to a different issue and raise a series of questions concerning Koopman's account of Foucault's Kantianism. While I am in agreement with those scholars who take seriously Foucault's reflections on the Kantian enigma (*l'énigme kantienne*) and see Foucault as a critical philosopher of a certain kind, I am not certain that Koopman provides sufficient evidence that Foucault's thought is critical in a sense which is particularly Kantian.²

I develop these concerns in two sections in the pages which follow. The first section addresses Koopman's understanding of transcendental philosophy and his account of Foucault's reasons for rejecting transcendental inquiry. The second section considers the conception of critique that Koopman attributes to Kant and extends to Foucault. By examining

¹ Colin Koopman, "Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique in Foucault: Two Kantian Lineages," *Foucault Studies* 8, (2010), 100-121.

² Foucault refers to "the Kantian enigma" in a review of the French translation of Ernst Cassirer's *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* in 1966 and suggests that this enigma was responsible for "stupefying" and "blinding" western thought. See Michel Foucault, "Une histoire resté muette," included in *Michel Foucault: Dits et Écrits (I. 1954-1975)*, edited by Daniel Defert et al. (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 574.

these matters in greater detail, I hope to determine whether Foucault can be said to belong to a tradition of Kantianism which is critical but not transcendental, as Koopman suggests.

2. Transcendental Philosophy

Transcendental philosophy is often mistaken for the philosophy of the subject. This is a confusion with a long history in European philosophy, but it is a confusion nonetheless. It dates back to Fichte, who is perhaps the first philosopher to equate Descartes' *res cogitans* with the first person singular pronoun, and who radicalized Kant's more modest idealism.³ It was Fichte, not Kant, who made transcendental philosophy the philosophy of the absolute I, which constitutes the world through the infinite explicitations of itself.⁴ For Kant, the word transcendental referred to cognition "which is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our *a priori* concepts of objects in general."⁵ "The system of such concepts," Kant continues, "would be called transcendental philosophy."⁶ Readers will note that neither the definition Kant provides of the transcendental nor his definition of transcendental philosophy refers to the transcendental subject. This suggests that transcendental inquiry is not, for Kant, the philosophical anthropology it is often said to be. Kant's transcendental philosophy addresses itself, instead, to those concepts which serve as the conditions of the possibility of the cognition of objects.⁷ Whether or not those concepts are

³ See Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, edited and translated by Peter Heath and John Lachs (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 94-101. See also Karl Ameriks, "Kant, Fichte, and Short Arguments to Idealism," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 72 (1990), 63-85. See also Günter Zöllner, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy: The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 11-24.

⁴ The definition of the transcendental that Husserl provides in the *Cartesian Meditations* ("the Ego himself, who bears within him the world as an accepted sense and who, in turn, is necessarily presupposed by this sense, is legitimately called *transcendental*, in the phenomenological sense") states very succinctly what Fichte labored through many different iterations of his *Wissenschaftslehre* to explain. See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, translated by Dorion Cairns (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 26. The connection between Husserl and Fichte, rather than Kant, is also made in Don Welton, "The Systematicity of Husserl's Transcendental Philosophy: From Static to Genetic Method," included in *Edmund Husserl, Critical Assessments (Volume II: The Cutting Edge: Phenomenological Method, Philosophical Logic, Ontology, and Philosophy of Science)*, edited by Rudolf Bernet, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2005), 158-161. The phrase "infinite explicitation" (*explicitations infinies*) is to be found in Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 248. Foucault uses the term in the context of a discussion of Husserl's transcendental idealism, but the similarities between the conceptions of transcendental idealism which are to be found in Fichte and Husserl are so pronounced, and the phrase is so appropriate, that I have taken the liberty of applying it to Fichte.

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 133 (A11-12/B25).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 133 (A11-12/B25).

⁷ For an example of an "anthropological" reading of Kant, see Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics (Fifth Edition, enlarged)*, translated by Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 144-153 (§36-§38).

ours, as Kant indicates in the passage I have quoted, is incidental.⁸ Even if the Kantian event that Foucault describes in *The Order of Things* “topples over, willy-nilly, into an anthropology,” it is by no means clear that it does so because it is transcendental.⁹

While it is a confusion to identify the term transcendental with the philosophy of the subject, Koopman is right to associate transcendental inquiry with the investigation of the universal and necessary conditions of the possibility of experience. Kant does indeed think the concepts which serve as the conditions of the possibility of an object of experience possess true universality (*wahre Allgemeinheit*) and strict necessity (*strenge Nothwendigkeit*), “the likes of which merely empirical cognition can never afford.”¹⁰ The most important difference between Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* and his inaugural dissertation *On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World*, in fact, has to do with the recognition that the pure concepts of the understanding are the conditions of the possibility of all experience, and not just representations of objects which cannot be given by means of the senses.¹¹ While Kant saw his inaugural dissertation as a propaedeutic science teaching that “the concepts met with in metaphysics are not to be sought in the senses,” the *Critique of Pure Reason* maintains that “even among our experiences cognitions are mixed in that must have their origin *a priori*...”¹² Kant’s critical philosophy follows from this insight, declaring that empirical cognition is only possible on the basis of the pure forms of intuition (space and time) and the pure concepts of the understanding (the categories).

The universality and necessity of the pure concepts of the understanding are demonstrated in the Transcendental Deduction of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. While Kant saw the deduction as the heart of his *Critique*, his reasons for emphasizing the deduction have little to do with his brief discussion of the transcendental subject. Kant intended his deduction to prove that the pure concepts of the understanding may be applied to objects in a way that is objectively valid. By showing that the categories are the universal and necessary conditions of the possibility of any and all objects of possible experience, Kant thought he could demonstrate the validity with which those concepts are applied to intuitions in judgment.

⁸ Kant’s emphasis on the *concepts* which render cognition of objects possible, rather than psychological conditions which shape our experience, marks an important difference between Kant’s epistemology and what has come to be known as “psychologism.” For a more thoroughgoing account of the relation between epistemology and psychology in Kant, which also rejects charges of psychologism, see Patricia Kitcher, *Kant’s Transcendental Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 3-29.

⁹ Foucault maintains the contrary when he claims that “it is probably impossible to give empirical contents transcendental value... without giving rise, at least silently, to an anthropology...” See Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 248.

¹⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 128 (A2/B5).

¹¹ Immanuel Kant, *On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World*, included in *Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770*, edited and translated by David Walford with Ralf Meerbote (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 386-388 (AA II, pg. 394-395).

¹² *Ibid.*, 387 (AA II, pg. 395). See also Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 128 (A2/B5).

Kant thought he could prove the validity of the categories, in other words, by demonstrating their necessity. In order to prove that the categories are necessary, however, Kant thought he had to prove that they were universal. If any object could be cognized without reference to the pure concepts of the understanding, then those concepts would not possess strict necessity. If the pure concepts of the understanding are universal, however, they must also be *a priori*, because the conditions of all possible experience must be prior to the objects and experiences they condition. Hence the *Critique of Pure Reason* concerns itself with “all the cognition after which reason might strive independently of all experience...”¹³

There can be no doubt that Foucault rejected this approach. Yet the reasons Koopman cites in his discussion of the philosophical shortcomings of transcendental inquiry are not sufficient to explain the differences between Foucault’s historical analytics and Kant’s transcendental philosophy. Koopman offers no arguments which call the legitimacy of transcendental inquiry into question. And while he suggests that transcendental inquiry is a “vexing” and “narcissistic,” the incommensurability of transcendental inquiry and historical analytics is never demonstrated.¹⁴ It may, in fact, be the case that Foucault felt relieved at the “exhaustion” of transcendental inquiry, as Koopman claims, but that is not a philosophical reason for dismissing a certain mode of inquiry.¹⁵ Still less is it a refutation of that inquiry’s claims to universality and necessity.

Instead of making the philosophical case against transcendental philosophy directly, Koopman argues that Foucault developed a different mode of inquiry based on problematizations.¹⁶ Koopman maintains that this mode of inquiry was a response to the “distinctive philosophical shortcomings” of Foucault’s archaeological method, which had to be supplemented with a more genealogical approach, in order to surpass “the blockages in his work which Foucault sought to overcome in revising his historical-philosophical analytic.”¹⁷ While this new mode of inquiry retained many aspects of Foucault’s earlier historical analytics, Koopman argues that it dispensed with the last vestiges of transcendental inquiry. These are all interesting claims, considered in themselves, but they do not explain why we should attribute whatever difficulties Foucault might have faced to “hints of a transcendental analytic” in his archaeology.¹⁸

Koopman provides a more detailed account of the difficulties the archaeological vestiges of transcendental inquiry posed for Foucault in his response to Thompson. According to Koopman, Foucault had “theorized conditions as Kant had done, namely as trans-

¹³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 101 (Axii).

¹⁴ Koopman, *Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique*, 101, 103, 109.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

cidental” in his archaeological works, so that archaeology was incapable of addressing the dynamics of freedom and constraint that constitute historical change. This, according to Koopman, led Foucault to rethink transcendental conditions as contingent historical constraints.¹⁹ I think Koopman is mistaken on the first point, regarding the universality and necessity of the conditions of possibility and existence that Foucault addressed in his archaeological works. The differences between the epistemological configurations of the renaissance, the classical age, and modernity that Foucault identifies in *The Order of Things* already indicate that the historical conditions he considers are not universal. Foucault’s refusal of the questions of the history of ideas (causality, influence, etc.) likewise makes it impossible to determine the necessity or contingency with which epistemic conditions produce their effects.²⁰ Because Foucault is simply concerned to show that epistemic conditions do, in fact, produce ordered knowledge effects in his archaeology, I see no reason to think he invoked either universal or necessary conditions in describing them.

Finally, while I agree that Foucault was particularly concerned with the dynamics of freedom and constraint, I think it extremely unlikely that he felt it necessary to supplement his archaeological inquiries with genealogies and problematizations in response to Sartre’s claim that he had transformed the moving picture of history into an unchanging “magic lantern” show.²¹ Thomas Flynn has shown that Foucault’s archaeology accounts for change through the analysis of transformation and displacement, which Foucault opposes to the mythology of narrative continuity in the history of ideas.²² Sartre’s defense of narrative continuity made him “a man of the nineteenth century trying to think the twentieth” in Foucault’s eyes, so it is implausible to suggest that Foucault felt it necessary to reformulate his methodology in response to a problem his archaeological works had already shown to be riddled with untenable assumptions.²³ It is unclear why Koopman thinks the problem of change was so important for Foucault, but I am inclined to think Foucault had other reasons for supplementing his archaeological investigations with genealogies and problematizations.

¹⁹ Colin Koopman, “Historical Conditions or Transcendental Conditions: Response to Kevin Thompson’s Response,” *Foucault Studies* 8 (2010), 132.

²⁰ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xii. See also Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 135-140.

²¹ Koopman, *Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique*, 113-114. On the difference between Sartre’s and Foucault’s approaches to history, see Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason (Volume 2: A Poststructuralist Mapping of History)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 48-80. See also Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason (Volume 1: Toward an Existentialist Theory of History)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 237-261.

²² Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason (Volume 2: A Poststructuralist Mapping of History)*, 6-13.

²³ Michel Foucault, “L’homme est-il mort?” included in *Michel Foucault: Dits et écrits I: 1954-1975*, edited by Daniel Defert et al. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2001), 569-570. See also Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason (Volume 1: Toward an Existentialist Theory of History)*, 237.

3. Critical Philosophy

The words “critique” and “critical” have been popular since the enlightenment, but they remain lexically imprecise and philosophically vague.²⁴ It is not entirely clear what someone means when they use a word like “critique.” The same is true of critique “in the Kantian sense,” which has been invoked by many different thinkers and appropriated for many different projects in the last two hundred years. Everyone wants to claim that their critique derives from Kant, it seems, but only a handful of scholars have taken the time to ask what Kant meant when he called the *Critique of Pure Reason* a critique.²⁵

Koopman is to be praised for attempting to locate a conception of critique in Kant that does not belong to his transcendental inquiry into the universal and necessary conditions of the possibility of experience. The discovery of this conception of critique in Kant would be an exciting addition to the growing literature on the impure parts of Kant’s philosophy and would improve our understanding of critique “in the Kantian sense.”²⁶ The question remains, however, to what extent a critique which is not transcendental can still be considered Kantian.

Koopman is right to note that Kant never claims that “critique must *always* be transcendental in orientation.”²⁷ It is possible, however, that every conception of critique that can be meaningfully said to be Kantian is dependent upon his transcendental philosophy. In the *Prolegomena to any future metaphysics that will be able to come forward as a science*, for example, Kant considers dispensing with the word transcendental because of the confusions it has occasioned regarding the nature of his idealism. One might reach a better understanding of his position, Kant suggests, if one were to substitute the word critical for the word transcendental, noting that “if it is in fact reprehensible idealism to transform actual things (not appearances) into mere representations, with what name shall we christen that idealism which, conversely, makes mere representations into things? I think it could be named dreaming idealism, to distinguish it from the preceding, which may be

²⁴ For an interesting, if rather eccentric, take on history of the word “critique” and the role it has played in medicine, philology, literary criticism, aesthetics, logic, and a number of other disciplines, see Giorgio Tonelli, “Critique and Related Terms Prior to Kant: A Historical Survey,” *Kant-Studien*, 69 (2) (1978), 119-148.

²⁵ I wrote my dissertation on Kant’s conception of a “critique” of pure reason and am currently preparing a manuscript on the subject, tentatively titled *On the Very Idea of a Critique of Pure Reason*. One of the very few published works on the subject is Kurt Röttgers, *Kritik und Praxis: Zur Geschichte des Kritikbegriffs von Kant bis Marx* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974). Although Röttgers devotes a mere thirty pages to the development of the Kantian conception of critique, and his account is not without its problems, there is evidence of primary research in his work, which goes beyond many of the clichés that are to be found in discussions of Kantian critique.

²⁶ A good example of a work emphasizing the “impure” parts of Kant’s philosophy is Robert B. Loudon, *Kant’s Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁷ Koopman, *Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique*, 115-116.

called visionary idealism, both of which were to have been held off by my formerly so-called transcendental, or better, critical idealism.”²⁸ This passage is significant for the distinctions it draws between different kinds of idealism and the light it sheds on the controversies surrounding Kant’s transcendental idealism. Yet it raises serious questions about Koopman’s attempt to define a form of critique which is Kantian but not transcendental. The fact that Kant treats transcendental and critical as synonymous terms suggests that they are, for Kant, as closely related as two non-identical terms can be.

The works which lie outside the canon of Kant’s critical philosophy have little more to offer Koopman’s undertaking. Koopman is mistaken when he suggests that Kant’s writings on history and anthropology “make sense only on the assumption that there are viable forms of critique that are not transcendental in orientation.”²⁹ Kant’s writings on anthropology are empirical, in keeping with the classification Kant describes at the beginning of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. “All philosophy insofar as it is based on grounds of experience can be called *empirical*,” Kant writes, “but insofar as it sets forth its teachings imply from *a priori* principles it can be called *pure* philosophy. When the latter is merely formal it is called *logic*; but if it is limited to determinate objects of the understanding it is called *metaphysics*. In this way there arises the idea of a twofold metaphysics, a *metaphysics of nature* and a *metaphysics of morals*. *Physics* will therefore have its empirical part, but it will also have a rational part; so too will ethics, though here the empirical part might be given the special name *practical anthropology*, while the rational part might properly be called *morals*.”³⁰ History is likewise said to be a form of empirical knowledge in Kant’s lectures on metaphysics, where Kant claims that “all human cognitions are, according to form, of a twofold kind: (1) historical, which are from things given, taken merely from experience, and (2) rational cognitions which are from principles taken from certain principles.”³¹ To the

²⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will be Able to Come Forward as a Science*, translated by Gary Hatfield, included in *Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy After 1781*, edited by Henry Allison and Peter Heath (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 88 (AA IV, pg. 293-294).

²⁹ Koopman, *Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique*, 116.

³⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, included in *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, edited and translated by Mary J. Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 43-44 (AA IV, pg. 388). The definition of a “pragmatic” anthropology that Kant offers in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* differs slightly from the definition of “practical anthropology” that Kant provides in the *Groundwork*, but Kant explains that the “pragmatic” (*pragmatisch*) is based on knowledge of the world (*Welt-erkenntnis*), and is therefore empirical, in Immanuel Kant, “On the Different Races of Human Beings,” translated by Holly Wilson and Günter Zöller, included in *Immanuel Kant: Anthropology, History, and Education*, edited by Robert B. Loudon and Günter Zöller (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 97 (AA II, pg. 443).

³¹ Immanuel Kant, “Metaphysik L, 1790-1791?” included in *Immanuel Kant: Lectures on Metaphysics*, edited and translated by Karl Ameriks and Steve Narragon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 299 (AA XXVIII, pg. 531). The possibility of a “rational” and “philosophical” history, which Kant calls “philosophical archaeology” (*philosophische Archäologie*) is discussed in Kant’s “jottings” (*löse Blätter*) for his late essay on the progress of metaphysics. See Immanuel Kant, “What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made

extent that Kant thinks *a priori* cognition is “mixed into” empirical cognition as its universal and necessary condition, the conditions of the possibility of anthropology and history can only be confirmed by transcendental philosophy according to Kant.³²

Kant’s writings on subjects like anthropology and history are no doubt addressed to more contemporary concerns than his writings on metaphysics, but there is little evidence that these works are critical in any sense which is peculiar to Kant. It is telling that when Foucault extols the virtues of critique, he often cites Kant’s conception of enlightenment as an example of the critical attitude he finds so intriguing, rather than Kant’s conception of critique.³³ It is also telling that Foucault explicitly contrasts the critical attitude of the enlightenment with Kant’s conception of critique in both *What is Critique?* and *What is Enlightenment?*, arguing, in effect, that Kant’s conception of critique remains beholden to the analytic of finitude.³⁴ “If the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge must renounce exceeding,” Foucault says, “it seems to me that the critical question today must be turned back into a positive one: In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints?” “The point,” he continues, “is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible crossing over.”³⁵ It is by no means clear that either the critical attitude that Foucault

in Germany Since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?” translated by Henry Allison, included in *Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy After 1781*, edited by Henry Allison and Peter Heath (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 417 (AA XX, pg. 341). Foucault refers to this reference to “archaeology” in Kant in Michel Foucault, “Monstrosities in Criticism,” translated by Robert J. Matthews, *Diacritics* 1 (1971), 60. See also Michel Foucault, “Les Monstrosités de la critique,” included in *Michel Foucault: Dits et Écrits I (1954-1975)*, edited by Daniel Defert, et al. (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 1089-1090.

³²Heidegger, Foucault, and many others have suggested that Kant’s transcendental philosophy was based on an empirical conception of man, which was articulated in Kant’s anthropology. Heidegger, for example, claims that Kant’s philosophical anthropology presupposes a view of man which is “empirical and not pure,” through which “the manner of questioning regarding human beings becomes questionable.” See *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 150 (§38). Foucault seems to follow this line in his ‘Introduction’ to Kant’s Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, when he asks whether there is not “a certain concrete image of man which no subsequent philosophical elaboration would substantially alter” subsisting “in the very depths of the Critique.” See Michel Foucault, *Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology*, translated by Roberto Nigro and Kate Briggs (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008), 19. More modest claims about the significance of Kant’s anthropology for his critical philosophy, especially its relation to his moral philosophy, are to be found in the works of Robert Louden and Holly Wilson. See *Kant’s Impure Ethics*, 71-74. See also Holly Wilson, *Kant’s Pragmatic Anthropology: Its Origin, Meaning, and Critical Significance* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 93-108.

³³Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?” included in *The Essential Foucault*, edited by Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (New York: The New Press, 2003), 264-268.

³⁴Foucault, *What is Critique?*, 268. See also Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” translated by Catherine Porter, included in *The Essential Foucault*, edited by Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (New York: The New Press, 2003), 53-54.

³⁵Foucault, *What is Enlightenment?*, 53.

describes in *What is Critique?* or “the form of a possible crossing over” that he recommends in *What is Enlightenment?* are critical in any sense which is particularly Kantian.

The context of these discussions also seems to distance the conception of critique that Foucault seems to be developing from Kant. Foucault first discusses the critical attitude in the context of a general discussion of resistance to governmentality since the sixteenth century in *What is Critique?* He then discusses the concept of enlightenment that Kant develops in *An answer to the question: What is enlightenment?* While Kant’s conception of enlightenment is certainly a privileged example of the critical attitude for Foucault, it is not critical in a sense which is unique to Kant.³⁶ The critical attitude Foucault describes belongs to the enlightenment, not Kant, whose conception of critique Foucault continues to criticize. When Foucault insists that “criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value but, rather, as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying” in *What is Enlightenment?*, I take him to be announcing his departure from the Kantian tradition, at least as far as Kant’s conception of critique is concerned.³⁷

Koopman attempts to return Foucault to the Kantian fold by arguing that Foucault’s historical analytic is “Kantian in its emphasis on critique without being uncritically Kantian in accepting Kant’s own conception of what a critique ought to be.” There is, however, nothing particularly Kantian about emphasizing critique.³⁸ Many disciplines and discourses emphasize critique in ways that have nothing to do with Kant. Unless Koopman can point to something in Foucault’s conception of critique which is particularly and specifically Kantian, it would appear that Foucault’s conception of “what a critique ought to be” is one that leaves Kant behind. Unfortunately, the conception of critique that Koopman attributes to Foucault seems to fail on this account, as it has little to do with either Kant or Foucault.

Koopman argues that we should regard transcendental conditions as a subset of critical conditions.³⁹ Transcendental conditions are for Koopman “explicated as universal and necessary conditions of aprioricity,” while critical conditions assume different scopes, modalities, and objects.⁴⁰ This, Koopman argues, allows a critical historical analytics to avoid

³⁶ Foucault, *What is Critique?*, 264. Foucault finds a similar attitude in Baudelaire in *What is Enlightenment?*, 49-51. Foucault says, however, that Kant’s essay on enlightenment had become for him “a small coat of arms, a small fetish” (*un peu blason, un peu fétice*) in Michel Foucault, *Le gouvernement de soi et des autres: Cours au Collège de France, 1983*, edited by François Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, and Frédéric Gros (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2008), 8.

³⁷ Foucault, *What is Enlightenment?*, 53.

³⁸ Koopman, *Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique*, 117.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 116.

the shortcomings of transcendental inquiry while remaining critical. “Employing the distinction between the genus of critique and transcendental critique as one species therein,” Koopman suggests, “enables a view about how Foucault’s project is Kantian without being Kantian all the way down,” because it allows us to recognize a Kantian emphasis on the critical in Foucault’s historical analytics.⁴¹

However interesting it may be to distinguish transcendental conditions and critical conditions in the manner Koopman recommends, there is very little evidence that either Kant or Foucault held the view of the relation between the critical and the transcendental that Koopman ascribes to them. While Koopman assures us that his distinction is not of his own invention, a distinction between transcendental conditions and critical conditions is not explicitly defended in any of the works listed in the long footnote he appends to his claim.⁴² Nor am I familiar with any passages in Foucault or in Kant’s published works, lectures, or notes which would support such a distinction. Koopman provides us with no textual references on this point, so the Kantianism of the distinction he proposes remains very much in question.

Before concluding, I would like to point out that Koopman’s emphasis on critical conditions as “bounds and limits” is also questionable.⁴³ To say that critical conditions concern bounds and limits, whether transcendental or historical, seems to make critique into the “analysis and reflection upon limits” that Foucault rejects in *What is Enlightenment?* Instead of the “the form of a possible crossing over” that he so forcefully affirmed, Koopman provides us with a conception of critique that tells us what we cannot do, say, or think.⁴⁴ Conceiving of critique as an “analysis and reflection upon limits” may have the virtue of being Kantian, at least from Foucault’s perspective, but it is difficult to apply this conception of critique to Foucault, who was determined to transgress the limits that Kant thought knowledge “must renounce exceeding.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ Ibid., 117.

⁴² Ibid., 116. While Koopman lists a number of important works which are critical of Kant’s “transcendental metaphysics” (Strawson) in his footnote, none of them employ the distinction between critical conditions and transcendental conditions that Koopman describes, as far as I am aware. Koopman does not provide page numbers in his footnote, so it difficult to discern which passage he is referring to and how the works he cites support his claims.

⁴³ Koopman, *Historical Critique or Transcendental Critique*, 115-116.

⁴⁴ Foucault, *What is Enlightenment?*, 53.

⁴⁵ Foucault, *What is Enlightenment?*, 53. Foucault is, I think, overly reductive when he says Kantian critique is the “analysis and reflection upon limits.” When one examines the passage in the ‘Preface’ to the first (A) edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in which Kant introduces his critique, it becomes clear that there is a great deal more at stake for Kant’s critique than the limits of knowledge. Kant says his critique is “a critique of the faculty of reason in general, in respect of all the cognitions after which reason might strive independently of all experience, and hence the decision about the possibility or impossibility of a metaphysics in general, and the determination of its sources, as well as its extent and boundaries, all,

4. Conclusion

The conception of critique that Koopman uses to inscribe Foucault within a tradition of Kantianism that is critical but not transcendental seems to have several basic problems. Because Koopman fails to establish the philosophical inadequacy of transcendental inquiry, against which Foucault's historical analytics is supposed to have been defined, it remains unclear why it is necessary to jettison the transcendental while retaining the critical aspects of the Kantian tradition. The reasons Foucault rejected transcendental inquiry have been described by other scholars in other contexts, but Koopman also has difficulty establishing the reasons why Foucault's historical analytics should be considered critical in the Kantian sense. The fact that Koopman presents us with a conception of critique that does not seem to have been held by either Kant or Foucault adds to this difficulty. Kant's texts suggest that his conception of critique was very much bound up with his transcendental philosophy. Foucault seems to have conceded this point, since his valorization of the critical attitude opposes itself explicitly to the "analysis and reflection upon limits" that he found in Kant's conception of critique. For this reason, it is not certain in what sense the critical attitude that Foucault describes and which played such an important role in his later thought may still be said to be Kantian.

Colin McQuillan
Emory University
N205A Callaway
537 Kilgo Circle
Atlanta, GA 30322
USA
cmcquil@emory.edu

however, from principles." This passage makes it clear that Kant's critique is also concerned with the possibility of metaphysics and its sources, the extent of *a priori* cognition and the faculty of reason, none of which are reducible to "analysis and reflection upon limits." See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 101 (Axii).