



SPECIAL ISSUE INTRODUCTION

Foucault, Our Contemporary

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One of the reasons that the Enlightenment so fascinated Foucault is because, he claims, it was the first time European thinkers reflected on the present by asking “What difference does today make?” In other words, one of the basic questions Enlightenment thinkers asked was how their present related to their past. The Enlightenment is thus the condition for the possibility of Foucault’s history of the present.

Foucault understood the Enlightenment as a reflection on the present. If he is right about this, then we must understand his work both in terms of its interrogation of the Enlightenment and its interrogation of a particular conception of the Enlightenment as a reflection on today and its difference from yesterday.

Foucault scholars and critical theorists alike have been reconsidering Foucault’s relationship with the Enlightenment for a long while. The two essays in this issue propose to reconsider Foucault’s question anew: what difference do Foucault’s various reflections on the Enlightenment make for understanding today? They thus take up the question of Foucault’s contemporary relevance in fascinating ways.

Patrick Gamez focuses on how we can use Foucault’s work to better understand the role of data in contemporary society, while Selin Iskekel looks at Foucault as a theorist of what goes unsaid by archival sources as a way to begin to think the omissions and lacunae that haunt the archive.

Gamez’s paper examines recent work on Foucault and data in order to show that Foucault’s work can help us to better understand what he terms “digital capitalism” as a hallmark of our present. Contrary to Colin Koopman’s claim that infopower amounts to a new *episteme*, Gamez argues that data capitalism is instead continuous with biopower.

Iskekel’s essay grapples with the traces left in the archive by those who have been disappeared. Focusing on Chile in the years following Pinochet’s 1973 coup, her paper employs necropolitics and genealogy as critical tools to make the dead speak through their very absence.

Both of these innovative essays help us to think through the significance of Foucault's provocations, not only as a "historian of the present" but also as a diagnostician of our present.

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Bradley Kaye is currently Lecturer in Sociocultural and Justice Sciences at the State University of New York at Fredonia. He has published several book length studies on the cusp of continental philosophy, Asian thought, and sociology, and he is interested in the ways that epistememes and first principles can be undermined by comparative philosophy. Most recently, he has published *Marx after the Kyoto School: Utopia and the Pure Land* (Rowman and Littlefield). He is currently finishing a book on Slavoj Žižek, *Freedom and the Parallax View*, forthcoming with Palgrave and MacMillan. He has been published in *The Agonist: A Nietzsche Circle Journal*, *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies*, and *Fast Capitalism*, and he humbly received a gracious invitation to speak at Kyoto University last December.

Corey McCall taught philosophy and related courses at Elmira College in Upstate New York from 2006 until his tenured position was cut in 2021. He now teaches for the Cornell Prison Education Program and works for Legal Assistance of Western New York.