Introduction

Foucault and Political Philosophy

> With his critique of ideology applied to the bourgeois constitutional
> state and with his sociological dissolution of the theoretical basis
> for natural rights, Marx so enduringly discredited . . . both the idea
> of legality and the intention of natural law, that the link between
> natural law and revolution has been broken ever since. The parties
> of an internationalized civil war have divided this heritage between
> themselves with fateful clarity: the one side has taken up the heritage
> of revolution, the other the ideology of natural law.
>
> —Habermas 1978, 117[1]

This book is for, and not about, Michel Foucault. I will refer to him
often in what follows, and occasionally (particularly in the final chapter,
and in this introduction) will slip into Foucault scholarship, but I have
already written several books on Foucault, so this one will deal primarily
with other figures. Similarly but conversely, this book is against, and not
about, normative political theory. This object too will heave into view, but
for the most part the book deals with terrain in between Foucault and
normative political theory, with a series of political thinkers who contest
in various ways the normative stakes of political thought, but retain a
normative political-theoretic dimension that Foucault lacks and rejects.
I explore and critique their work from a Foucauldian direction, with a
particular focus where applicable on their commentary on Foucault.

While I think most readers will readily have some understanding
of the term "political theory," the meaning of the term "normative" is
trickier. This latter term is bandied about in academic circles with abandon,

but it is not often encountered outside of academe, and even within it the meaning of the word can be elusive, as I discovered several years ago when I started presenting papers at conferences and seminars proposing that political philosophy be conducted in a "non-normative" way, in material seminal to multiple of the chapters here. These claims were unpopular with my learned audiences—not merely among those who were practitioners of conventional normative political philosophy, but with almost everyone. Even those who reject conventional normative political philosophy turned out to be attached to some notion of normativity. Some seemed to take everything that is not a physical fact to be "normative," by which measure human life is indeed intrinsically normative. I want to reply now, however, that such a notion of "normativity" is hopelessly inflationary, making the normative coextensive with subjectivity and making the term apply to things that have nothing in particular to do with "norms." By contrast, in my opposition to "normativity" here I mean to invoke a much stricter definition of the "normative," the one operative in mainstream philosophical ethics, which takes it as merely a by-word for prescription, which is to say for "oughts" (Korsgaard 2009). Such a definition may seem no less redundant than the one that identifies it with subjectivity: it's a word of art applied to a well-understood notion, for which we had time-honored names before people started bandying the word "normative" about in the twentieth century. However, I will argue that normativity in this sense does exist in more forms than those imagined by its own partisans, specifically in forms of political imagination that constrain political action through ideas about the way things should be.

Contemporary political philosophy remains in the shadow of an "ethical turn" that happened in political thought in the 1970s, almost simultaneously affecting the main languages of Western philosophical discussion. Raymond Geuss (2016, ix–x) has recently characterized this as a "normativist counterrevolution" that "has been an unmitigated catastrophe." In English, John Rawls revitalized the very marginal field of political philosophy by re-envisioning Kantianism in his 1971 *Theory of Justice*, breathing new life into normative approaches to politics, and refounding political philosophy as a distinctive normative enterprise, linked to—but no longer entirely subordinated to—normative ethics. In German, Jürgen Habermas emerged in the 1960s as the leader of a new generation of Frankfurt School Critical Theory, into which he increasingly injected ethics, and which has become increasingly concerned with normativity ever since. In French, an explosion of Marxist political thought after 1968

petered out by the mid–1970s, and saw thinkers, including many former Marxists, turn to ethics. Foucault might be taken to be a case in point, though his Marxism was thin and youthful, and his late interest in ethics historical: he never straightforwardly advocates a return to ethics, rather treating ethics as an artefact of ancient history, which he, in any case, doesn't understand in a way that is "normative" in the conventional sense.

Rather, against this context of the ethicization of political thought, I will attempt to argue that Foucault pushes in the opposite direction, for a political thought that stands against normativity, while also eschewing the high theoreticism of systems theory. Foucault does not pointedly reject normativity as such, but I think this is in large part because his core political writings—by which I mean *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*—were composed before the ethical turn in French thought began, and without any evident contact with the emerging American or German normative political philosophy. Rather, he was working in a context where non-normativity was already quite firmly established as the standard mode for political thought. In what follows—particularly in the first and third chapters—I will give some indication of how this had come to pass, specifically through the inheritance of Marxism's rejection of morality.

Foucault's attitude toward political philosophy, and his ignorance of the formative subdiscipline by this name in the Anglophone world, is indicated in a 1978 paper of his, as yet untranslated into English, that bears the title "La philosophie analytique de la politique" ("The Analytical Philosophy of Politics") (Foucault 1994c, 534–551). Here Foucault imagines what it would be like to think about politics in the style of Anglophone analytical philosophy, which he understands primarily through his familiarity with the speech act theory of John Searle and J. L. Austin. Foucault thus conceives an "analytical philosophy of politics" as an attempt to do with politics what speech act theory does with language. It does not seem to occur to him that there might already be a distinctive form of analytical political philosophy—he (not entirely incorrectly) estimates that English philosophy is essentially apolitical—nor does he anticipate the kind of social philosophy Searle would go on to develop, the analysis of the social and political operation of speech acts, but rather proposes an analysis of politics that begins like speech act theory with an analysis of everyday situations, but with power relations in the place of locution.

Foucault (1994c, 537) situates his proposal for an "analytico-political philosophy" in a long history of the political role of philosophy in the

West since the Greeks. He observes that we have never in the West seen philosophical ideas applied as political practice, however, even though the ideas of philosophers have been politically influential, contrasting this to the situation in the Orient, where Confucianism qua philosophy actually has been the basis of the state form as well as individual conduct. He argues that, since the nineteenth century, we have seen the emergence for the first time of a new "organic connection" of the state to philosophy (Foucault 1994c, 540). The earliest example of this he gives is the relation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's thought to the state produced by the French Revolution; he goes on to note the links between Karl Marx's thought and the Soviet state, and Friedrich Nietzsche's thought and the Nazi state. The point here is precisely not that the Soviet state represents the fulfillment of Marx's thought any more than the Nazi state represents the fulfilment of Nietzsche's. Rather, the point is simply that a reference to philosophy is part of these states' functioning: the Soviet state, while not representing the inevitable outcome of Marx's thought, nevertheless incorporates Marx as an essential reference point for its operation. In the cases of Marx and Nietzsche, neither thinker had sought any such connection for their work, but were rather anti-state thinkers. They refuse to legislate for the future or to offer advice to power, yet this does not immunize them: indeed, it means there is a lacuna in their thought into which one can insert any reality whatever.

Foucault (1994c, 539) is disturbed by the fact that "philosophies of freedom," as he calls them, have thus given rise to their exact opposite. He declares that philosophy has strayed beyond the area of its vocation, that it should not get mixed up with politics. Instead, he suggests:

> There is still a certain possibility of playing a role in relation to power left for philosophy, which would not be a role of foundation or of renewal of power. Perhaps philosophy can still play a role on the side of counter-power, on condition that this role no longer consist in emphasising, in the face of power, the same law of philosophy, on condition that philosophy stops thinking of itself as prophecy, on condition that philosophy stops thinking of itself either as pedagogy, or as legislation, and that it gives itself the task of analysing, of elucidating, of making visible, and thus of intensifying the struggles that unfold around power, the strategies of the adversaries inside power relations, the tactics utilized, the sites of resistance, on condition in short that

> philosophy stops posing the question of power in terms of good
> or bad, but rather in does so in terms of existence. Don't ask,
> is power good or is it evil, legitimate or illegitimate, a question
> of right of morality? Rather, simply, try to rid the question of
> power of all the moral and juridical overtones which we have
> previously given it, and ask this question naïvely, which hasn't
> been posed that often, even if effectively a number of people
> have been posing it for a long time: what do power relations
> essentially consist of? (Foucault 1994c, 540)

It is not made entirely clear by Foucault here why this new method he proposes would avoid the fate that befell Marx's and Nietzsche's thoughts. Although this is contentious, I would argue—and I think Foucault would accept—that they already both eschewed any juridical or moral prescription, and indeed I will argue this at length in relation to Marx in Chapter 1. I think, however, that both thinkers in their own way fall short of non-normativity, and I think it is in the end thoroughgoing methodological non-normativity that Foucault is proposing when he talks of a political philosophy that is purely "analytical." That he does not speak in terms of "normativity" as such is unsurprising given that the term had limited currency in French at that time, and that he was not yet faced with a *soi-disant* normative political philosophy.

In Marx's case, I will argue that he fails to be thoroughly non-normative, despite this being his effective intention, because he engages in a prophetic philosophy of history. As for Nietzsche, I will not deal with him in this book, on the basis that he is not a political thinker (Leiter 2011). Indeed, he is precursor to Foucault in this respect, in being a specifically *anti*-political thinker. It is from Nietzsche that Foucault gets the notion of "genealogy" that defines his own political thought (from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality*, no less), and even the very theme of "power" that is central to Foucault's political thought is Nietzschean in complexion, even if taking these concepts in a political rather than personal direction is a signal departure from Nietzsche. Foucault (1988, 251) indeed cast Nietzsche as the main single influence on his own thought. But unlike Foucault, Nietzsche criticizes politics from a distance, in the end advocating a kind of individualistic withdrawal, and proposing a form of personal ethics as an antidote to politics. This leaves Nietzsche vulnerable to being enlisted, against his will, by political ideologies that claim an affinity with his critique of existing political notions and personal values.

Nietzsche (2002) enjoins us to go "beyond good and evil." I read this as an attempt to refuse what we today call "normativity," before that term acquired currency, in favor of a new set of values, which are variable and relative. The fact that Nietzsche does, however, sketch an image of a desirable "new man" is seen by some readers as simply a new normative stance counterposed to the Christian morality that Nietzsche rejects. It also gives Nietzsche's thought a prophetic dimension in relation to the future, a dimension Marx also has, but which Foucault refuses (see Kelly 2014a).

Foucault tells us that Nietzsche started to make an impact on him only once he'd read Heidegger (Foucault 1988a, 250). One interpretation of this comment is that it means that Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche was decisive for the development of Foucault's Nietzscheanism (Elden 2001, 2). Certainly it seems to me that in relation to normativity, Foucault follows the trajectory of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche, which criticizes Nietzsche precisely for being too normative, instead rejecting all "thinking in terms of values" (Heidegger 1977, 108).

Heidegger's own alternative, thinking of "being," however, is one Foucault is perhaps even less sympathetic to. Neither Nietzsche's "will to power" as fundamental motivation of all life nor Heidegger's "being" appeal to Foucault. Despite the deliberately anti-metaphysical cast of both German thinkers, they retain more than a whiff of metaphysics in their schemata. As I will argue repeatedly in what follows, any ontological commitments of this type can serve to ground a normative perspective, even against the author's intention. I would suggest that Heidegger's "being" ended up, through the search for authentic connections to it, supplying much more of a normative orientation than he expected, making it possible for him to couch his support for Nazism in terms of his philosophical project (cf. Bourdieu 1991). Having said that, Foucault (2008, 374) himself opines that there is no strong link between Heidegger's philosophy and his political commitments, and instead suggests that the essential problem here is one of a philosopher who fails to attend to the practical effects of his thought, of the relation between thought and practice. This failing is indeed why I will not focus on Heidegger in this book, either: he is essentially apolitical, insofar as he refuses in his work to engage directly in detail with politics.

Along with Heidegger, I am also bracketing an entire branch emanating from him. In particular, I will not in what follows look at Jacques Derrida's thought, a notable omission, especially since I spend so much time here on his fellow canonical French poststructuralists, Deleuze and

Foucault. One reason for this omission is that I have dealt with Derrida elsewhere (Kelly 2009, 23–25; 2014b, 40–44). Another is that although I do think Derrida makes moves in the direction of a normative political thought, and which have been increasingly taken up as the basis of a normative political thought by other scholars, I do not think he propounds a normative political theory much more than Heidegger does, even if, to a greater extent than Heidegger, I think Derrida is a fundamentally normative thinker. I however acknowledge that scholars are beginning to articulate a normative political theory on the basis of a certain interpretation of Derrida's thought, particularly in Mathias Fritsch's emerging body of work.

Against Normativity

I think readers will likely already have two questions about opposing normativity. First, I suspect many will simply not understand why it should be necessary or desirable to do so. Second, I expect many will not understand how it could be possible.

Foucault's answer to the "why" question is not entirely clear, though I think he provides several reasons. Foucault in the above long quotation from "The Analytical Philosophy of Politics" seems to base his case against normativity on the possible negative consequences of normative thinking. However, an empirical, consequentialist argument against normativity would itself need to have recourse to a normative standard by which consequences can be judged, so this would be self-contradictory. Rather, I think the case against normativity in political thought must be based on caution and intellectual parsimony. That is to say, it is to be eschewed because there are dangers inherent in pursuing it, no positive reason to engage in it, and also perhaps a pragmatic argument in favor of non-normativity, namely, that normative commitments restrict the possible audience for political thought to those who share them, since those who advocate normativity in political thought have never in any case agreed on what form this normativity is supposed to take.

I suspect it might be objected that, while there are dangers in normative thought, there are dangers in anything, and there may well be dangers in non-normative thought. Indeed, it might be argued that Marx's and Nietzsche's thought was not available for appropriation because of their normativity, but precisely because of their non-normativity—that

is, the absence of a clear description of their utopian vision that would make clear that neither the Soviet Union nor Nazi Germany, respectively, bore any resemblance to what they advocated. However, this seems to me mistaken. Some Marxists, for example, have propounded utopian visions of communism (see Chapters 1 and 2), but these have served as justifications for their opposite because the Soviet Union was held to be a stepping-stone to the utopia. As Foucault (1977, 230) has it, "to imagine another system is to extend our participation in the present system." Only a normative utopian vision that condemned absolutely any deviation from it, such as the anarchists', could decisively avoid such a fate, but in such a case utopianism seems to me to have an opposite problem of failing to offer a basis for a nuanced understanding of the present situation, and thus ultimately extends participation in the current system by failing to constitute a serious opposition to it.

By contrast, Foucault's critical analyses of power relations cannot easily be made into a tool of power themselves; rather, they are intended as a tool for those who fight power. This is not to say there is no way it can be co-opted, however. One might use a critical analysis of one problem to distract from another, or as a discursive element of a formation of power that opposes that problem. For example, one might use a scathing analysis of a dictatorship to justify invading a country to depose that regime. Foucault's own critiques of insane asylums served in small part to justify closing those asylums, which was the intended outcome, but in the event formed part of a pattern of cutting funding to mental health services that left former inmates bereft. Although critiques can be targeted in accordance with an analysis of strategies of power tactically toward particular problems, any shift in the situation can change the political valence of these critiques, allowing them to be utilized by power. For Foucault, this simply requires us to continue criticizing as the situation changes. Foucault's name has also been enlisted by power through the false imputation of normative positions to him. I will deal with some instances of this in Chapter 8 in particular.

My final argument against normativity in political thought, elaborated in Chapter 7, is that normative stances have unintended consequences. It seems to me to be a suppressed premise of normative political thought that propounding a normative theory is *eo ipso* a contribution to realizing its normative vision. However, there is simply no reason to believe that that is true; on the contrary, the social effects of propounding a normative view-

point are radically unforeseeable given the complexity of the social world. Normative approaches are more or less bound to fail to produce what they aim at, and if they can't posit a regular relationship between speaking about their goals and achieving them, I am not convinced there can be any justification for including normative statements in political writing. By contrast, since non-normative approaches do not aim at any determinate result, their inability to foresee their consequences is not a problem for them.

The burden should be on the normativist to explain why normativity is necessary or useful in political thought. It seems to me that no one has ever convincingly managed to do so; rather, normativists simply presume that normativity is required. I will consider various attempts to explain the necessity of normativity in the chapters that follow, particularly in Chapters 5 and 6.

What is the alternative? Simply to analyze things in order to undermine them. I see Foucault's essential, general technique as a kind of partial transcendence of the intellectual conditions in which he lived, through objective analysis, which served political purposes immanent in his life. That is, Foucault investigated specific phenomena, such as the prison, sexuality, or madness, that interested him personally by asking what forces were involved objectively in constituting these phenomena historically, in order to shift outside the usual perspective we have on these things in our culture. Here, we may see Foucault as inheriting Lenin's distrust of "spontaneous ideology," which is to say of the prejudices inherent in our culture. In this sense, one might indeed say that normativity is the default mode of political thought.

Is there not a normativity implicit in the choice Foucault makes of targets for his analysis? Not necessarily: for one thing, the choice of target can be tactical, based on a preliminary assessment of what the crucial points of the accretion of power are in our society. Foucault clearly opposed the institutions he "problematized," which might be taken to imply a normative stance, though I will argue that it does not; in any case, however, even if there is normativity at work in the selection of the object of investigation, the investigations themselves can be more or less objective and historical, aimed at undermining the object by showing its contingency and hidden links to power, rather than applying a normative framework by which any of them could be condemned.

Non-normativity is thus a methodological precept for Foucault. It does not imply that he is personally amoral, nor that he thinks that

normative beliefs are not a real social force, nor, least of all, that we should behave directly contrary to the dictates of morality as ordinarily conceived—as Allen Wood (1990, 565) points out, even "to reject morality . . . is not necessarily to reject all the behaviour that morality enjoins and advocate the behaviour that it prohibits." Foucault (2002, 328; 2005, 252) does in point of fact make comments casting doubt on the possibility of any moral or ethical stance today, but I will not explore these claims here, since I am deliberately limiting the scope of my investigation to normativity in *political* thought.

One might argue that to refuse normativity is itself a kind of normative stance. I would argue if this were true that Foucault would be minimally normative, since he would have only one norm in his political thought, which rules out the adoption of any others. And indeed, Foucault (2004, 6) does say "I only propose therefore this single imperative, but this will be categorical and unconditional: never do politics." As I will explain below, I read this comment as a condemnation specifically of normative politics.

I do not believe, however (and nor do I believe that Foucault believed), that it is strictly necessary for us to adopt even a single normative principle. This is because I do not accept that to issue normative prescriptions is the natural mode of political thought, and we must deliberately stop ourselves to prevent us engaging in prescription. That said, inasmuch as the reigning culture in political thought does indeed seem to me to be firmly normativist, today one does need such a heuristic principle to avoid falling back into the spontaneous ideology of normativity. Not being prescriptive only appears to be a stringent limiting condition because of a background culture of prescription. By this token, I think we can say that it is not so much a case that we need normatively to foreswear normativity, as that contemporary political theorists are in the grip of a largely unstated normative metaprinciple that they should be normative. By dint of this unconscious principle, the idea of a non-normative political philosophy simply does not occur to most specialists today, and when they see it, it looks to them like nonsense. When confronted with Foucault's work, most commentators either describe him as incoherent for his opposition to normativity, or attempt to ascribe a deep normativity to him.

In what follows, I will thus use the terms "non-normative" and "anti-normative" interchangeably, since I am simultaneously advocating a non-normative political thought and opposing normative political thought.

Against Political Theory

Opposing normativity in political thought by my lights has far-going implications. It does not mean simply emptying political theory of normative presupposition, but rather rejecting political theory itself as such, since I believe the normative, political, and theoretic aspects are closely interconnected. I will argue, on what I take to be a Foucauldian basis, that thinking about politics should not only be non-normative but should also avoid the temptations of either theoreticism or what Foucault calls "politics" itself.

Regarding theory, it seems to me that Foucault's political thought is atheoretical, eschewing systematization. Foucault (1977, 231) on one occasion declared in response to a Marxist interviewer's assertion of the need for theory that "This need for theory is still part of the system we reject." This does not mean that he resiles cognitive coherence or consistency, only that he refuses to try to produce a totalizing explanation of everything, of "the social" or "the political." Instead, he merely formulates hypotheses. Even his conception of power—in my estimation, his most important contribution to political thought—a very general concept, which is apparently transhistorical in its applicability, is nonetheless not for Foucault (2000, 327) an attempt to produce a "theory of power," but a particular intellectual contribution: "since a theory assumes a prior objectification, it cannot be asserted as a basis for analytical work. But this analytical work cannot proceed without an ongoing conceptualization. And this conceptualization implies critical thought—a constant checking."

Admittedly, Foucault (2000, 327) says immediately prior to this that it "seemed to [him] that economic history and theory provided a good instrument." Foucault's opposition to theory does not imply that he cannot find valuable insights in theoretical work. Foucault (1994b, 523) pointedly provides only a "toolbox," which as such may be used with other ideas, even though these might in themselves both be attempts to produce a totalizing theory, and I believe he approaches others' work in the same light, as a resource.

Foucault (1984, 375) sets himself against "politics" as such because, like theory, it seems to be a matter of "totalization." He indeed suggests for this reason that his work should not even be considered "political"; he questions politics, rather than considering himself part of it. Here,

however, "political" and "politics" are invoked by Foucault in a relatively narrow sense. This sense is that of "party politics" and statecraft. Foucault (Foucault 2004, 5–6) expresses his anti-political stance particularly stridently at the beginning of his 1978 Collège de France lectures, *Security, Territory, Population*:

> I think this serious and fundamental relation between struggle and truth, the dimension in which philosophy has developed for centuries and centuries, only dramatizes itself, becomes emaciated, and loses its meaning and effectiveness in polemics within theoretical discourse. So in all of this I will therefore propose only one imperative, but it will be categorical and unconditional: Never do politics.

It is necessary to point out a mistranslation in the English version of this text, where the final word, "politics," is rendered as "polemics" (Foucault 2007a, 4–5). However, the French text indeed says "politics," *politique*, and his enunciation of *politique* is deliberate in the recording of the lecture, 10 minutes and 20 seconds in, an emphatic flourish met with a smattering of laughter from the audience. Foucault (1997, 113) does elsewhere declaim polemics, but here he is targeting politics because of its connection to other things he eschews, such as polemics and theory. His categorical imperative here is in essence synonymous with the minimal normative principle not to be normative, referred to above.

Still, I will copiously refer to Foucault's thought as political in this book in a way that I will never allow it is theoretical or normative. This is because the word "political" has a sense distinct from "doing politics" in the sense that Foucault forbids. Indeed, some use the word "politics" itself to mean more or less the opposite of what Foucault means by it, in particular Jacques Rancière (1999), who in effect uses the name "politics" precisely for resisting what Foucault calls "politics," for which Rancière instead idiosyncratically reserves the term "police."

Although Foucault is against normative political theory, in all three of its dimensions, which is to say, is against almost everyone else within the broad tradition of modern Western social and political thought, he nevertheless remains within that discourse. Similarly, this book pertains only to that discourse, and does not take any position on normativity and theoreticism in other areas, for example in the natural sciences.

This Book

This book is something of an anthology. Each chapter is organized around the thought of a single political thinker, and engages to various degrees in three functions: explaining how a given thinker diverges from normative political theory; criticizing the thinker for remaining somehow normative, political, and theoretical, relative to Foucault's model of non-normativity; and defending Foucault's positions from their criticisms and misinterpretations in the cases where they engage with Foucault. Though a common thematic runs through the chapters, namely, a recurrent and concatenating argument about the superiority of a Foucauldian non-normative perspective in relation to all, each chapter was originally drafted as an individual essay, and a couple of them have previously been published in a different form as such. Readers should therefore feel free to pick and choose which chapters to read.

My title, *For Foucault*, of course apes Louis Althusser's *For Marx*. The reference to *For Marx*, replacing Marx with Foucault, points to a certain rejection or replacement of Marx with Foucault, referring to my engagement in this book with Marx and Marxists, including Althusser himself. There is considerable irony in this reference, however, inasmuch as my relationship to Foucault is not Althusser's to Marx. Being "for Foucault" must mean something very different from what being "for Marx" meant for Althusser. For Althusser, the reference to Marx is a fixed point, around which he nonetheless proposes to articulate a reading of Marx that diverges deliberately from Marx's own position, to construct a kind of "true Marx." To think of Foucault in such a way would be no small irony, given his own critique of the concern with the author principle, and indeed it is a paradoxical position I find myself in, upholding what I do indeed take to be an accurate interpretation of Foucault (more accurate I believe than Althusser's interpretation of Marx—a point I elaborate in Chapter 3), while at the same time disregarding aspects of Foucault's method in doing so: this book is more polemical, with little of the patient archival research that characterized Foucault's work. In these regards, I actually find myself going *against* Foucault in my method.

The book is organized broadly in chronological order of the texts under discussion. It describes something like a kind of progression toward Foucauldian non-normativity, though this is hardly linear. For one thing,

half the thinkers discussed are in fact younger than Foucault, and influenced by him, though I will argue they remain theoretically sub-Foucauldian. The chronological order of figures is not particularly clear: Axel Honneth is younger than Raymond Geuss, but I have put the chapter on him before that on Geuss because the texts by Geuss I discuss are on average much more recent than those by Honneth. Indeed, the most significant text by Honneth for my discussion is older than those I discuss by Richard Rorty, who is much older than Honneth, and indeed deceased, but I place Rorty first, in part because Rorty's death means that some of the texts I mention by Honneth are more recent than those by Rorty. Ending with Foucault may also seem grossly out of order from this point of view, but the chapter on Foucault really focuses on recent commentary on Foucault based on lectures of Foucault's that have only been published recently.

The first chapter deals with Marx, whose thought is clearly much older than that of any other thinker dealt with here. However, this chapter is primarily a critique of the attempt in the late 1970s and 1980s in Anglophone political philosophy to rehabilitate Marx as a normative political philosopher. The material for this debate is provided by Marx's own work, though, so it might nonetheless seem that I am, by starting with Marx, following Althusser in positing Marx as a kind of "epistemic break." I, however, follow Foucault in taking an ambivalent attitude toward Marx. I do see Marx as having resiled the kind of normative perspective proper to his German idealist predecessors, which he himself held in his youth, but I also see him as inheriting an ultimately normative theory of history from Hegel. I do think Marx is a supremely significant figure, which is one reason I begin by discussing him, though I think this significance is—to an indiscernible extent—due to accidents of history that have made him a touchstone of twentieth-century politics and thought.

The second chapter deals with Lenin. The case of Lenin, for me, as I think for Foucault, primarily serves to demonstrate the problems with applying to politics the normativity and theoreticism that Marx failed to rid himself of entirely. This leads Lenin to fail to see what he does in practice, namely, I argue, to produce a new form of government that will go on to be used by regimes of various ideological casts over the next century. The focus of the chapter is on a comparative study of Lenin's *State and Revolution* and the historical experience of the Russian Revolution.

The third chapter is on Althusser. I read him as tending toward Foucault's position but held back by a commitment to Marxism and

Leninism that is itself only explicable by a series of incorrect political calculations, ultimately attributable to Althusser's mentality.

The fourth chapter deals with the thought of Gilles Deleuze. I criticize what I see as Deleuze's normative theoreticism. Most of the chapter is dedicated to an extremely close reading of a short but very influential essay of his, the "Postscript on Control Societies," wherein he purports to extend and update Foucault's analysis of modern society. Deleuze was close to Foucault biographically and intellectually, and here tries effectively to addend Foucault's thought seamlessly. I, however, seek to thwart this attempt by Deleuze, arguing that in the end his thought is normative theory rather than a genuine critical analysis of a Foucauldian type.

The fifth chapter is on Richard Rorty and his reading of Foucault. I argue that Rorty badly misunderstands Foucault, and as such fails to see the challenge that Foucault's thought poses for Rorty's "ethnocentric" pragmatist liberalism. I further argue that Rorty's ethnocentric relativism is an incoherent argument for restraining critique.

The sixth chapter is on the contemporary critical theorist Axel Honneth. As with Rorty, I primarily address Honneth's own reading of Foucault, arguing that Honneth fails to understand Foucault's true position, and thus fails to understand how Foucault offers a challenge to Honneth's brand of normative critical theory.

The seventh chapter focuses on Raymond Geuss's recent political thought, which is extremely close to Foucault's, in my estimation. The difference between my position and Geuss's is not so much that Geuss actively propounds a normative political theory, as that he still considers it acceptable for thought to be normative, political, and theoretical, even if unlike almost all other political thinkers today he considers each of these aspects to be optional extras. Against Geuss, I argue that normativity, politics, and theory need to be stamped out, primarily on the basis of their failure to account for social complexity.

The eighth and final chapter focuses on the Foucault scholarship of the Australian philosopher Paul Patton. Patton is a focus because he is the effective originator of the non-normative reading of Foucault that guides this book, while also in more recent scholarship exemplifying the contemporary reassessment of Foucault's stance toward normativity, in particular in relation to Foucault's reading of neoliberalism. Patton is a relatively subtle reader of Foucault as having a certain sympathy for neoliberalism—which would, by my lights, mean that Foucault had, the year

after telling us not to do politics, changed his mind and embraced politics and normativity. In this chapter I also repudiate the related claims that Foucault in his later life embraced a form of normativity in his flirtation with the language of human rights.