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REVIEW

Roger Alan Deacon, *Fabricating Foucault: Rationalising the Management of Individuals* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2003). ISBN 0-84762-661-7

While recent Foucauldian scholarship has addressed the implications of governmentality as a way of theorizing modern political rationality, few have sought to incorporate a broader inquiry about the possibility for a continued Enlightenment project. To do so suggests, in part, a return to the debate between Habermas and Foucault, as well as an incorporation of Foucault's later writings on Kant. Roger Deacon has sought to interrogate the continued relevance of the "Enlightenment project" in light of recent scholarship and in combination with a wide-ranging analysis of the work of Foucault. Deacon covers a lot of ground, from *Madness & Civilization* to the later lectures on *parrhesia*, while simultaneously challenging criticisms of Foucault as a relativist, fatalist, and pessimist. Attempting to handle such an array of materials and give it a tight focus is an ambitious project.

Deacon's effort is guided by the following question: "[I]n the light of Foucault's work, and related contemporary debates around the salvageability or otherwise of the Enlightenment project, what kind of future exists for social theory and practice?"[1] In order to answer this question Deacon "fabricates" a Foucault-author. Deacon does so by developing what he calls a "holistic" approach to Foucault, that is, an interpretively constructed unity of Foucault's *oeuvre* that explores "alternative conceptions of theory, politics and the subject, intimated but not always developed in Foucault's work."[2] Deacon claims to be constructing his Foucault as a way of achieving "a consistent Foucault, a useful Foucault, an applied Foucault," but insisting on consistency in order to "follow" Foucault is left unjustified.[3]

Questioning the viability of the Enlightenment project in light of Foucault begins with a description of the Enlightenment's place in determining our present. For Deacon, as for Foucault, that which has come to characterize our present is the problematic nature of the grounds of

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1. Roger Alan Deacon, *Fabricating Foucault: Rationalising the Management of Individuals* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2003), 10.
2. *Ibid*, 13.
3. *Ibid*.

knowledge initiated by Kant in his critiques. The present is caught within an understanding of the possibilities and limits of knowledge that relies on positioning "man" as both the object of knowledge and the subject that knows. Following Foucault's analysis of Kant in *The Order of Things*, Deacon goes on to outline the history of truth as that in which Western rationality is ensnared. "If we are indeed 'trapped' in a history which is ours and which has made us what we are, how is it that we can be aware of, let alone come to understand, this fact?"[4]

In answering, Deacon turns to the notion of a permanent critique of the present developed in Foucault's later reflection on Kant's "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" The notion of a permanent critique of the present emerges from what Foucault describes as:

"philosophy problematiz[ing] its own discursive actuality: an actuality that it questions as an event, as an event whose meaning, value, and philosophical singularity it has to express and in which it has to find both its own reason for being and the foundation for what it says."[5]

Deacon understands the critique of reason to be imperative to understanding *our* present as it has been affected by the Enlightenment. The critique of reason, thus, is continuously activated as a paradox that is unable to "accurately represent the object of critique" and, yet, must attempt to in order to maintain the "illusion of its capacity to know its other" in which Enlightenment reason persists.[6]

Furthering his discussion of critique, Deacon turns to Foucault's genealogical analysis. The capacity of genealogy to "reconfigure the past" lends itself to Deacon's project through a problematizing of the Enlightenment.[7] Deacon, in accordance with his "fabrication" of Foucault, says little on the relationship of archaeology to genealogy, but instead defers to Arnold Davidson's analysis.[8] Fabrication, as Deacon explains, is capable of bringing about specific political effects. Through his problematization of the Enlightenment Deacon points the way to a strategic counter-memory of reason. Genealogy requires that we "exteriorise the present," thus making unfamiliar that which has an "apparent order, necessity and identity."[9] In doing so, a counter-memory is developed that contains within it the possibility for alternative futures. Deacon quickly points out that such alternatives are not present in the work of Foucault, but follow from its

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4.   *Ibid*, 35-36.

5.   Michel Foucault, "What is Revolution?" in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvêre Lotringer and Lisa Hochroth (*n.p.*: *Semiotext(e)*, 1997), 86.

6.   Deacon, *Fabricating Foucault*, 49.

7.   *Ibid*, 68.

8.   See Arnold I. Davidson, "Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics," in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 221-233.

9.   Deacon, *Fabricating Foucault*, 96.

implications. It is through the localized work of intellectuals separating out and de-familiarizing the taken-for-granted knowledges that constitute a given discourse that counter-memories can come to have truth-effects.

The local character of genealogy, Deacon argues, is not to be understood as lacking coherence. Turning again to Foucault's "What is Enlightenment?" Deacon points to the interrelatedness of particular experiences and the "general history" by which each has come to take its present form to demonstrate the coherence of a problematization of Enlightenment reason. Such coherence is further demonstrated through the systematic examination of the three domains of genealogy– knowledge, power, and the subject– in combination with the practical systems by which they operate. It is important that Deacon establish the coherence of genealogical questioning of Enlightenment reason in order to arrive at Foucault's revision of the structure-agency dichotomy, thus paving the way for an analysis of power and the assumption of freedom that accompanies relations of power.

At this point Deacon turns to the history of political rationality as the emergence of disciplinary power alongside and within power as sovereignty. Distinct from a Marxist understanding of power as emanating from the state and operating as repression or domination, Foucault's rendering of Christian pastoral power is simultaneously individualizing and totalizing. It is this simultaneity that characterizes modern Western political rationality. Deacon dwells for some time on the emergence of discipline as outlined in *Discipline and Punish* before discussing the combination of techniques– discipline and bio-politics– that enable modern political rationality to operate. Deacon seeks to clarify the more general historical features of power relations before turning to a more detailed analysis of the positive capacity of power: "Thus not only are power relations not reducible to the disciplines, or the latter to the apparatuses of the state, but it would also be wrong to see the disciplines as replacing or transcending sovereignty […]."[10] Disciplinary relations of power, Deacon reminds us, are local, contingent and unstable; they are the tactical deployment of a particular discourse.

Tracing the reconceptualization of power undertaken by Foucault, Deacon finds in the shift from a theory of power to an analytics of power the opportunity for a "rewriting of [the]historical and theoretical trajectory" of relations of power, an alteration of the discourse of power.[11] Through analysis of the interconnections between local relations of power and the global strategies that they support, transformative negotiations of relations of power are made visible. Avoiding the assumption that power relations *per se* are detrimental, Deacon seeks to maintain the notion of flexible, numerous,

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10. *Ibid*, 158.
11. *Ibid*, 164.

sometimes conflicting, resistances. It is the combination of this understanding of resistances with the positive capacity of power relations to produce subjects that, in turn, leads Deacon to accept Foucault's conception of an ethics of self-experimentation.

Despite Deacon's claim that *Fabricating Foucault* "explores the implications of the work of Michel Foucault for the Enlightenment project," it is not until the reader arrives at the conclusion that any such implications are explored.[12] The book lays out, in vast scope, the groundwork for such an inquiry, but arrives at eleven conclusions that read as a restatement of various arguments made by Foucault himself. Deacon states early on that:

"While I have attempted to reduce to a minimum those moments where, as a result of my intention to use him in order to abuse him, my voice and the voice of Foucault seem imperceptibly to merge, such lapses in critical distance are both partly unavoidable and to some extent desirable since in this book Foucault is pitted against himself."[13]

Although the merging of the two voices is justifiable, doing so lends the book an exegetical air that, while helpful for the new student of Foucault, can be read as uncritical.

The holistic conception of Foucault that Deacon develops, "assuming the unity of his *oeuvre* in order to demonstrate its consistency over time," avoids the aporias that were often most fruitful for Foucault.[14] While Deacon challenges the conclusions drawn by Habermas about Foucault's relativism, he ignores the more helpful questions Habermas raised around the causal relationship of truth and power and the shifting that appears to take place in the development of genealogy out of archaeology. This is not to say that those criticisms of Foucault that Deacon does address are not handled well, but that other criticisms may be better suited to the task of reflecting on the Enlightenment project in light of Foucault.

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12.   *Ibid*, 6.
13.   *Ibid*, 14.
14.   *Ibid*, 13.