

Gadamer and Foucault, Ankersmit vs. Zagorin:

Modernism and Postmodernism,
Historical Texts and Interpretation

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2002-2003

This essay is focused on the methodological issues raised by interpretation in an analysis of historical texts. The interpretation of methods discussed by Gadamer and Foucault will be compared and contrasted, especially those coming close to an understanding of the human sciences, while a closer reading of the logical implications of studying historical texts by way of Gadamer's and Foucault's inquiries will be analyzed with reference to the positions offered by Ankersmit and Zagorin.

Gadamer and Foucault: An Inquiry into Methods of Interpretation

It has come to pass, now, that in *The Order of Things*, first published in France 1966 as *Les Mots et les choses*, Michel Foucault's rejection of the phenomenological method can be questioned on the basis of what, in contrast, is accepted by Foucault as an archaeological method.¹ However, the basis of this inquiry is not questioning what Foucault means by phenomenological method, or what is meant by archaeological method, but how Foucault follows through on a method that is at once more archaeological and less phenomenological. To be sure, Foucault's archaeology can be compared with a phenomenology in order to, I argue, analyze texts and interpretations. In this sense, from my view, I accept that Foucault rejects a basis upon which Hans-Georg Gadamer's phenomenology is argued for in *Truth and Method*, first published in Germany 1960 as

¹ Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Vintage Books: New York, 1994. The information I cite from Foucault primarily comes from the chapter "Human Sciences," pp. 344-387.

Wahrheit und Methode.² So, it is in my view that Foucault's acceptance of archaeology, with its explicit rejection of phenomenology, and Gadamer's acceptance of phenomenology, with its implicit rejection of archaeology, can be analyzed in a comparative sense for the purpose of illuminating their respective stances toward texts and interpretations.

The phenomenological approach, for Foucault, "gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own view at the origin of all historicity—which, in short, leads to transcendental consciousness."³ Whereas, for Gadamer, "'phenomenology'[is defined as]—i.e. bracketing all positing of being and investigating the subjective modes of givenness."⁴ These are tentative quotations about phenomenology, merely the surface definitions of phenomenology for Foucault, and, especially Gadamer. To be sure, phenomenology is to a great degree unlikely, itself, by way of one definition; there are many phenomenologies, and so it is by way of approaching any phenomenology that gives a sense about it such as it is. In this way, Foucault's phenomenology is rejected by Foucault's archaeology as an approach to a more archaeological method and Gadamer's phenomenology is simply accepted for a course for further phenomenological inquiry.

Here, what is important in light of how Foucault and Gadamer differ regards the instance whereby Foucault rejects a phenomenology out-right and Gadamer accepts a phenomenological inquiry. Furthermore, it can be stated that Gadamer simply rejects the very definition Foucault accepts by way of characterizing the rejection of

² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd Revised Edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Continuum: New York, 2003.

³ Ibid. Foucault, p. xiv

⁴ Ibid. Gadamer, p. 244

phenomenology. In this way, such that what is accepted by Foucault is not, for Gadamer, a phenomenology that “gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own view of all historicity,” but rather this is, following Gadamer, one phenomenological possibility since beings are in relation to observing subjects on the same given plane whereby understanding correctly what can be observed (objects, subjects, etc.), or not, and as such, on this plane, there is not an absolute priority as regards what constitutes an act, or possible act, in one’s own view (mere prejudice for Gadamer) as such and such an absolute to be taken as insofar as it is given to being. Gadamer is concerned with overcoming a characterization of phenomenology as that of Foucault’s definition of phenomenology. Moreover, on the contrary, Gadamer approaches a historicity leading to historically effected consciousness of transcendence, not transcendental consciousness as such, and for any more sense to be made out of Gadamer’s phenomenology a more open experience of historicity must be given to that which a being exists as with phenomenological possibilities for inquiry (i.e. “tradition,” or better, traditions, for Gadamer), rather than that instance, for example, of how Foucault rejects phenomenology out-right with out inquiry whatsoever; In this way, Gadamer, in what I think is in contradistinction with Foucault’s definition of phenomenology, writes that “Genuine experience is experience of one’s own view of historicity...As a genuine form of experience it must reflect the general structure of experience.” Nevertheless, the instance whereby Foucault rejects phenomenology without a basis in any genuine experience of inquiry can be put aside, for now, what concerns us, here, is not only Foucault’s degree of a lack of a phenomenological method, but the move toward Foucault’s archaeology and Gadamer’s phenomenology and their particular effects upon texts and interpretations.

Foucault and Gadamer are methodologically different thinkers. Archaeology,

following Foucault, is the study of a culture's knowledge of its structure of its being. Phenomenology, following Gadamer, is the study of a tradition's being of its interpretation of knowledge. After Foucault, the study of a culture's knowledge of its structure of being involves its interpretations (or is relatively defined by its interpretations of analysis, which is always already structured, I suggest). After Gadamer, the study of a tradition's being of its interpretation of knowledge involves its understanding (or is relatively defined by its understanding). Both Foucault and Gadamer, of course, are thinking different thoughts in regard to what I will try to elaborate in this essay, texts and interpretations. However, we can tentatively argue that archaeology and phenomenology, after Foucault and Gadamer, respectively, involve methods similar to that of any logical inquiry.

What is logically effective with respect to the interpretation of texts in both Foucault's and Gadamer's inquiries concerns an approach to human history, on the one hand, and an approach to human science, on the other. The logic of inquiry with respect to the interpretation of texts, for Foucault, assumes that what follows from a culture's epistemology, "a culture's epistemological network," is a space in which an ontology, a knowledge of being, is made possible insofar as an interpretation/condition of the truth and falsehood of a text of a culture is open to questions of its positive knowledge.

Foucault, writes:

Quite obviously, such an analysis does not belong to the history of ideas or of science: it is rather an inquiry whose aim is to rediscover on what basis knowledge and theory became possible; within what space of order knowledge was constituted; on the basis of what historical *a priori*, and in the element of what positivity, ideas could appear, sciences be established, experience be reflected in philosophies, rationalities be formed, only, perhaps, to dissolve and vanish soon afterwards. I am not concerned, therefore, to describe the progress of knowledge towards an objectivity in which today's science can finally be recognized; what I am attempting to bring to light is the epistemological field, the *episteme* in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a

history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility; in this account, what should appear are those configurations within the *space* of knowledge which have given rise to the diverse forms of empirical science.⁵

Thus, for Foucault, archaeology is in a position with respect to the interpretation of texts since archaeological inquiry presupposes, as a course of archaeological method, that it is necessary to question how interpretations of texts came to be known, a “limit-experience,” or can be known, within the very being of a culture’s epistemology.

Whereas, the logic of inquiry, for Gadamer, assumes that what follows from a tradition’s ontology is a language in which an epistemology, a knowledge of knowing, is made possible insofar as an interpretation/condition of the truth and falsehood of a

“traditional text” is open to questions of being correctly understood. In approach, Gadamer emphasizes, after the early Heidegger, “hermeneutics...not in the sense of methodology but as a theory of the real experience that thinking is,”⁶ and inquires:

And what is historical research without historical questions? In the language that I use, justified by investigation into semantic history, this means: application is an element of understanding itself...This means that there is mediation between the past and the present: that is, application...My thesis is that the element of effective history affects all understanding of tradition, even despite the adoption of the methodology of the modern historical sciences, which makes what has grown historically and has been transmitted historically an object to be established like an experimental finding—as if tradition were as alien, and from the human point of view as unintelligible, as an object of physics...And now to the basic question: how far does the province of understanding itself and its linguisticity reach? Can it justify the philosophical universality implied in the proposition, “Being that can be understood is language?”...However much it is the nature of tradition to exist only through being appropriated, it still is part of the nature of man to be able to break with tradition, to criticize and dissolve it, and is not what takes place in remaking the real into an instrument of human purpose something far more basic in our relationship to being? To this extent, does not the ontological universality of understanding result in a certain one-sidedness?...It seems to me, however, that the one-sidedness of hermeneutic universalism has the truth of a corrective.⁷

⁵ Ibid. Foucault, p. xxii

⁶ Ibid. Gadamer, p. xxxvi

⁷ Ibid. Gadamer, pp. xxxii-xxxvii

Thus, for Gadamer, phenomenology is in a position with respect to the interpretation of texts, that is, the theories of the real experiential thinking of texts, since phenomenological inquiry presupposes, as a course of phenomenological method as such, that it is necessary to question how interpretations of texts came to be experienced, or can be experienced, with the very being of a tradition's ontology, "not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing."⁸

As we follow Foucault's methodology the interpretation of texts concerns the space in which human beings interpret texts as if to know how texts are texts. If we follow Gadamer's methodology the interpretation of texts, then, concerns the language in which, by way of the "problem of phenomenological immanence," human beings interpret texts, more or less by way of meaning, as if to understand what texts are texts. Here, our frame of reference for comparative purposes will be that Foucault and Gadamer aim at space and language, respectively, in their interpretation of texts and that there is a difference, in that, space and language as conceived thus far reflect contrasting views of interpretive approaches. Similarly, Foucault and Gadamer follow their logic through to be effective, with a historical emphasis, upon the interpretation of texts; The impact of being effective on Foucault's method of interpretation is that of being positive; The impact of being effective on Gadamer's method is that of being corrective. In my opinion, the common ground against which we can compare Foucault's and Gadamer's effective approach is that of the human sciences since both thinkers seem, or appear, to be in agreement that their inquiries regard the problem of truth/falsehood of sciences, and the very questions of the historicity of the relations in-and-out of science, or sciences which presuppose something to be known to be human about them.

In a turn toward human being and the difficulty of the sciences, Gadamer's

⁸ Ibid. Gadamer, p. xxviii

phenomenological method of studying the human sciences involves an understanding in that interpretation in the sciences opens the possibility of their being scientists, that some-being can be a scientist; meaning that some-being can understand human sciences, as given the primacy of the present, now, in how a hermeneutic circle is understood as an interpretation of a method, here scientific method, but not that method as such is a matter of priority to being, but rather that method is being given insofar as it is given by way of being with lived experience. Here, “Interpretation is not an occasional, post facto supplement to understanding; rather, understanding is always interpretation, and hence interpretation is the explicit form of understanding.”⁹ Meaning, whatever human science’s methods actually are they do involve an interpretation of phenomena that is being understood as part of the human sciences with such and such methods as there are human sciences. For better or worse, to understand this ontological necessity is a correct interpretation for Gadamer, and in that being that is interpretive is the hermeneutic circle becoming understood as formulated by being with tradition, from the inside out. The human sciences, in this way, are open sciences in the sense that claims to what is true and false, and being right and wrong, exist correctly in this very being of the human possibility of being a scientist, and insofar as science is understood as existing in a tradition. “The hermeneutics developed here is not, therefore, a methodology of the human sciences but an attempt to understand what the human sciences truly are, beyond their methodological self-consciousness, and what connects them with the totality of our experience of world.”¹⁰

In this way, “with the totality of our experience of world,” understanding an interpretation involves questioning tradition. Thus, tradition is followed, in a sense, since

⁹ Ibid. Gadamer, p. 307

¹⁰ Ibid. Gadamer, p. xxiii

it is the basis for problematic inquiry for the human sciences, as well as from within: “The essence of the *question* is to open up possibilities and keep them open.”¹¹ To be sure, such a specific humanist tradition as given human science regards “interpretive sciences” and also involves the historical sciences, for Gadamer, “Our need to become conscious of effective history is urgent because it is necessary for scientific consciousness [...] historically effected consciousness [...] is an element in the act of understanding itself and [...] is already effectual in *finding the right questions to ask*.¹² Such a phenomenology as Gadamer’s, therefore, corresponds to the living traditions as experienced by us, if we assume the formalities of being human and have lived through its very individual, yet just as social, historical passage. Who are we to ourselves with, or without such a tradition? What is it about our being that is given as we approach science, or as science approaches us? It is for Gadamer that tradition within and without history, its passage, whereby we can call into question historical points of view, meaning that oneself is historically effected to a degree of being conscious of its effects, historically as such, and interpret these effects based on the varieties of understanding; One such understanding is in the form of a scientific problem if approached with the underlying question as to what a scientific problem is. In light of such a scientific problem (i.e. a problem that is formulated) the question of what limits scientific method arises, the question underlies the problem, thus the historical scientist as a human being takes a position as regards the question and the problem; is given a question and problem by way of tradition, and with these experimental limits, as if to be, for example, modern scientists, we might just as well proceed with a humanist tradition to be ourselves experientially, with our feeling about things before we experiment, with the endless answering of each

¹¹ Ibid. Gadamer, p. 299

¹² Ibid. Gadamer, p. 301

others' inquiries, into what Foucault calls the possibility of "limit-experience," the experience of our limitations of experience.

Foucault is seemingly in agreement with Gadamer's understanding of phenomena with reference to lived experience and breaks with tradition, here, especially in turning toward an archaeological interpretation of the human form of scientific problem:

The first thing to be observed is that the human sciences did not inherit a certain domain, already outlined, perhaps surveyed as a whole, but allowed to lie fallow, which it was then their task to elaborate with positive concepts that had at last become scientific; the eighteenth century did not hand down to them, in the name of man or human nature, a space, circumscribed on the outside but still empty, which it was then their role to cover and analyse"¹³

Thus, in the nineteenth century human beings became scientifically studied. However, let us take the above statement into consideration, for here it is precisely a lack of tradition that is exposed in a human history of science, meaning that Foucault's understanding designates a certain human understanding of space to come about in its own domain, not inherited "traditionally," if you will. This space is of a positively broken tradition, but only insofar as it is a somewhat traditionally questioned by being in an untraditional space and in a Gadamerian sense is open to possibility, thus even continuous with its awkwardly inquired discontinuities. Moreover, this space is of historical importance, it is in this space that we can also understand how Gadamer and Foucault explicitly address myriad historical points of view about history itself and human being. Yet, insofar as we may see this as an agreement between Gadamer and Foucault, it is that given tradition that comes into being questioned as the history of science with the human sciences at the outbreak of its prior absence, that untraditional breakthrough as we may acknowledge that to be human is very different than to be a science, what moves some-being into a matter of positive presence, but not only of space, but rather of language as well, as if a human

¹³ Ibid. Foucault, p. .344

being's language is linguistically present, if we take Gadamer seriously, with what might be called the expansive spatialization of scientific understanding across humanity. Space is to Foucault what language is to Gadamer. Similar to Gadamer's phenomenology, then, Foucault's archaeology approaches interpretation, or a hermeneutic circle of the human sciences within which space is made "down into the area of the endless erosion of time."¹⁴ Here, in contrast to this somewhat parallel agreement, in my view, and toward a method of interpretation of Gadamerian phenomenology and Foucauldian archaeology, though both obviously do differ, though disagreement is not our sole concern, we can see their hermeneutic circles and their break with acknowledged forms of interpretation.

For Gadamer tradition is spatially continuous within all beings with language, prehistoric and classic, or not. Indeed, it is our interpretation, even if only for a moment, of Gadamer: Is our interpretation necessary for a comparative analysis of Gadamer's and Foucault's positions? While we can say, for Foucault, discontinuity is within the spatial break with tradition, separating beings, specific to questions of continuity, this break constitutes an epistemological order through time, or to be more correct through being in space. In light of a contrast, it is that Gadamer, on the one hand, views modern epistemological methods in a position such that an ontological priority corresponds to a phenomenological act toward knowledge; what must be in advance of a scientific method (e.g. a move toward experimental science, to make visible that which was unknown and invisible based on what can be known, etc.) is a being. Specifically, the phenomena that is given to beings is prior to that of scientific method and its unsuccessful break with traditional beings in an appearance of a binarism of subject-object relations. Foucault's archeology, on the other hand, gives interpretations of epistemology (or, the very episteme of the moderns) priority since it is from such a way of knowing to which

¹⁴ Ibid. Foucault, p. 355

ontological possibilities are activated through, down through modern time. The subject-object binarism of Foucault is not on the same plane as Gadamer would interpret it, but rather some-being in space is ordered among such opposites, such reversals of position. We can say that for Foucault and Gadamer that it is as if understandings about knowledge within a modern tradition arises with scientific questions of being, for the most part as interpreting subject-object relations and separations, thus presupposing any given number of beings to be known and proceed accordingly to hypothesize, experiment and test, to know what empirically results from such relations:

Questioned at this archaeological level, the field of the modern *episteme* is not ordered in accordance with the ideal of a perfect mathematicization, nor does it unfold, on the basis of a formal purity, a long, descending sequence of knowledge progressively more burdened with empiricity. The domain of the modern *episteme* should be represented rather as a volume of space open in three dimensions.¹⁵

With this Foucault makes a distinction between epistemology and archeology in that, on the one hand a modern epistemology consists of a “modern episteme” taken to be in question as archaeologically given, if you will, to science insofar as knowledge of the modern episteme is structured with the very being in modern space. The episteme is “a space of dispersion, it is an open and doubtless indefinitely describable field of relationships.”¹⁶ In this sense, Foucault’s archaeological analysis takes issue with the arising structured methodologies of modern knowledge, or a “culture’s epistemological network” in that interpreted knowledge, “represented,” is figurative and positive; As such, Foucault argues that knowledge is outlined, positioned, and functional.¹⁷ In this way, we can question Gadamer as well such that what seems distinct for Foucault

¹⁵ Ibid. Foucault, pp. 346-347

¹⁶ Michel Foucault. “Politics and the study of discourse,” *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds.). University of Chicago Press, 1991. pp. 53-71, p. 55

¹⁷ Ibid. Foucault, *Order of Things*, p.365

between epistemology and archaeological ontology also appears distinct for Gadamer between epistemology and phenomenological ontology, for Gadamer's distinction is an effective mediation between the past and present of the modern tradition¹⁸: We may see an axis arise where there is an epistemological turn toward the very being of archaeology and phenomenology for Foucault and Gadamer, respectively, in a postmodern characterization of their writing, I suggest. Or, can't we say now that writing depends on space for Foucault and writing depends on language for Gadamer? Let's not go that far, now. To further interpret a possible Gadamerian relation to Foucault's interpretation we can consider in what way Gadamer interprets ways of knowing, epistemology, and ways of being, ontology, with the method of the human sciences:

The world of objects that science knows, and from which it derives its own objectivity, is one of the relatives embraced by language's relation to the world. In the concept of "being-in-itself" acquires the character of a *determination of the will*. What exists in itself is independent of one's willing and imagining. But in being known in its being-in-itself, it is put at one's disposal in the sense that one can reckon with it—i.e., use it for one's own purposes.¹⁹

So, what may come to pass is the mediation of the method involved with the "world of objects science knows" and the usage of such a method to the degree of defining what an object is insofar as it is known as being-in-itself: This mediation regards the given question "What is a being as object?" for science, yet in a question of its historicity the modern scientific problem of removing the subject from the object in question regards the hermeneutic of whole and part, of a problematic humanist tradition: "Is the subject human?" the human sciences ask in our way of asking ourselves if we are human, or "What is a human being as an object?" In this way the problem of method in Foucault's interpretation of how the human sciences came to objectify, or to distinguish their object,

¹⁸ Ibid. Gadamer, p. 475

¹⁹ Ibid. Gadamer, p.450

is important as well, for language never truly/falsefully, nor absolutely, but only relatively and partially plays out its role, its part, to an extent that it is not separate from discourse as a whole and the structure of that discourse; indeed, acknowledged human being as a scientific discourse's text; thus the rise of modern episteme, or epistemological space, or ontological relation between modern knowledge of wholes and parts, of Foucault's positing of a culturally specific hermeneutic circle, if you will, and for example, of knowing what modern scientific language is by way of three "faces of knowledge":

1. "...mathematical and physical sciences, for which order is always a deductive and linear linking together of evident and verified propositions. . ."
2. ". . .sciences (such as those of language, life, and the production and distribution of wealth) that proceed by relating discontinuous but analogous elements in such a way that they are then able to establish causal relations and structural constants between them. . ."
3. ". . .that of philosophical reflection, which develops as a thought of the Same; it forms a common plane with the dimension of linguistics, biology, and economics. . .various philosophies of life, of alienated man, of symbolical forms. . .those regional ontologies which attempt to define what life, labour, and language are in their own being. . ."20

And, in reference to the above "epistemological trihedron" is the common plane, what Gadamer might say is the whole, defined across them by way of the "formalization of thought," to which the human sciences, once excluded, came to be solitary as if relatively all alone at the center of the imbalance and equity of things.²¹ It is on this last common plane, and in the first instance experienced, that an understanding of Gadamerian

²⁰ Ibid. Foucault, *Order of Things*, p.347

²¹ Ibid. Foucault, *Order of Things*, p. 347

proportions may be aligned in that it is on the basis of philosophical reflection by way of the tradition of hermeneutics that phenomena appear as questionable parts of the whole of a tradition, and in this sense are interpreted in an epistemological tradition such that a being-correct is a passage into an outer turn toward method as ontological, as if a being then posited a being to be known, not only epistemologically, or being-known, but in a being-positive. Indeed, Foucault presents the field of representation of knowledge by way of its being-positive, thus the interpretation of formally symbolic modern regional ontologies (common, causal, linear). We can therefore agree with Gadamer and Foucault insofar as what (i.e. object) and who (i.e. subject) is ontologically true/false prior to knowledge as if relatively open to the humanly possible dimensions of correct interpretation that change, whether by relation or opposition, with each and every ontological possibility, with more effective histories, with every question of, for Foucault, life, labour and language, for Gadamer, understanding, experience, language. Further, with Foucault's third face of knowledge archaeology turns toward corrective interpretations, or punitive hermeneutic circle, of method by way of what knowledge is possible by way of continuity and discontinuity in a regional ontological positivity; A cultural epistemology of the human sciences therefore orders itself in its being-positive of life, labour, and language in space: And, the scientific correction of how to be human, or what it means to be human and acknowledge that fact. On the other hand, Gadamer, after Husserl and Heidegger (amongst others), overcomes such a scientific epistemology by way of a phenomenology of hermeneutic experience: "Our question," Gadamer writes, ". . . is how hermeneutics, once freed from the ontological obstructions of the scientific concept of objectivity, can do justice to the historicity of understanding."²² With Gadamer, our understanding is ontological correctivity with language, and the impact on

²² Ibid. Gadamer, p. 265

Gadamer's interpretation: "Being that can be understood is language."²³

An analogy, or parallel with a common turning point, can be drawn at this point between Foucault's ontology of epistemology and Gadamer's ontology of epistemology in that both thinkers turn toward historical vantage points, if you will, for the historicity of the problems that have been addressed in the past and present, which to a degree can be asked anew by way of the very being with human history, that history within human beings that comes to involve spatialized subjects-objects, languages, lives: With this we must turn away from an overwhleming of humanity by history, for "According to this point of view, the study of economy, the history of literatures and grammer, and even the evolution of living beings are merely effects of the diffusion, over increasingly more distant areas of knowledge, of a historicity first revealed in man. In reality, it was the opposite that happened."²⁴ Foucault writes, and we may now start to understand how to approach how Gadamer experienced things in a turn toward interpretation and understanding by a historicity: Is it not that we must similarly approach the removal of scientific ontologies in order to understand beings that become more or less scientific through time in different cultures or traditions? With what beings think they, other beings, know...from culture to culture, from tradition to tradition? Or, perhaps better, how is it that we may think we know, now, over and above science? Here, Foucault's archaeological hermeneutic is not wholly different from the traditional hermeneutic of Gadamer's phenomenology insofar as both regard some partially interpretive being as effective; Rather, for Foucault, "The human being no longer has any history: or rather, since he speaks, works, and lives, he finds himself interwoven in his own being with

²³ Ibid. Gadamer, p. 474

²⁴ Ibid. Foucault, *Order of Things*, p.368

histories that are neither subordinate to him nor homogenous with him.”²⁵ Further, as Foucault’s understanding of history is archaeologically understood in a historical, and interpretive, move, and I quote:

By fragmentation of the space over which Classical knowledge extended in its continuity, by the folding over of each separated domain upon its own development, the man who appears at the beginning of the nineteenth century is ‘dehistoricized’.²⁶

In other words, we may say with Gadamer’s inheritance regarding the possibility of Johann Gusav Droysen and Wilhelm Dilthey’s very understanding of being with nineteenth-century history:

It is, on the one hand the experience of limitation, pressure, and resistance, through which the individual becomes aware of his own power. But it is not only the solid walls of actuality that he experiences. Rather, as a historical being he experiences historical realities which support the individual and in which he at once expresses and rediscovers himself. As such they are not “solid walls,” but objecifications of life. (Droysen spoke of “moral forces.”)²⁷

The above could just as easily be Foucault’s notion of a particular “limit-experience” of the “dehistoricized” human being turning out histories into space, and the very reflections upon which to acknowledge itself and continue to be represented as such: Beings come to reveal, or reverse, themselves as historical beings insofar as they dehistoricize themselves into beings. Here, we have a close affinity with Foucault’s and Gadamer’s “effective history” approach. What will pertain to this analysis cannot be placed outside of the hermeneutic circle defined, here, by Foucault’s approach to historicism, which implies a hermeneutics, meaning, in the present as given, “the re-apprehension through the manifest meaning of the discourse of another meaning at once

²⁵ Ibid. Foucault, *Order of Things*, pp. 368-7

²⁶ Ibid. Foucault, *Order of Things*, p. 369

²⁷ Ibid. Gadamer, p. 227

secondary and primary. . . more hidden but also more fundamental.”²⁸ Accordingly, Foucault raises the problem of the meaning in terms of its very interpreted source as discourse, which is secondary, the meaning of what another meaning means, and primary, a meaning prior to another meaning, itself. Moreover, for Gadamer, the present is understood with the past since both are parts to the whole of tradition. However, with historical texts the implicit simultaneity of secondary and primary sources remains too narrowed as a problem if we take Gadamer and Foucault by way of a common hermeneutic, here: At present, we can simply think that we can be correct and positive in stating that with the difference between secondary and primary sources a comparative Gadamerian and Foucauldian generational problem arises from within our hermeneutic circle of inquiry, one that involves a whole of traditional history (in part past and present), while also involving the finitude of effective history by way of traditional problems of causality, and heuristic logic (what I will approach later on) in that we can inquire as to what leads one between cause and effect as a problem of historical texts, of methodological questions about how hermeneutics and heuristics can be compared with different interpretations, and human beings that understand, or over state, experience outside of science, in general. To be sure, Gadamer and Foucault think of such a heuristic ambiguity throughout their understanding of orderly knowledge in a fundamentally limited way, any effect at all, as it were. To be sure, Gadamer and Foucault turn away from each other’s ontology with an axiomatic historical line of reflective thought, thus exposing the flexibility of knowledge at any given time of reflection in the order of a being’s cultural ontology, or being’s traditional ontology, of positive and corrective inquiry. Is it that on one side of the hermeneutic plane of circularity that Foucault comes close to Gadamer with an interpretation of space, and, on the other side of the circle Gadamer comes close

²⁸ Ibid. Foucault, *Order of Things*, p. 373

to Foucault with an interpretation of language? In part, this may be the hermeneutic circle I have been thinking of. In the circle, indeed, the heuristic divide is two fold: On the one hand, a divide between present and past, on the other hand a divide between cause and effect. Here, the hermeneutic circle must be inquired into as regards the flexibility of some-being in space with language if we are to analyze the implications of the Foucault's archaeological effect and Gadamer's phenomenological effect upon interpretations of texts and their interpretive aims toward space and language as being positive and being corrective.

To this degree, the comparative angle of our heuristic divide through our hermeneutic circle can be approached and the differences and similarities between truth and falsehood opened up to our experiences of the appearance of texts. Now, we can turn to historical texts and their interpretations: Here, we may give a tentative response to Frank R. Ankersmit's call for:

...A historiography that explores the historical text in its most hidden corners, that is sensitive to aspects of the text that may have escaped its author, and knows how to find the secret key to the actual past...in its textual organization.²⁹

Ankersmit vs. Zagorin: A Debate about the Interpretation of Methods

In 1989 the journal *History and Theory* published Frank R. Ankersmit's article "Historiography and Postmodernism," to which Perez Zagorin responded with "Historiography and Postmodernism: Reconsiderations" in 1990 in an *History and*

²⁹ F.R. Ankersmit, "Reply to Professor Zagorin," *History and Theory*. Wesleyan University: Middletown, 1990. pp. 275-296, pp. 294-5

Theory issue that included Ankersmit's "Reply to Professor Zagorin."³⁰ In this way, a debate ensued with various interpretive approaches to the theoretical questions of history, writ large, and the representative aims, if you will, of modernism and postmodernism as regards historical considerations of the past and the text. Zagorin and Ankersmit argue that the difference between historians' and historiographers' relationship to primary and secondary sources results in a difference in how the subject of history is produced. Zagorin argues that historians must first consider primary sources. In contrast, Ankersmit argues that historians must first consider secondary sources. Primary sources in this debate are referred to as the first facts of an historical event. Secondary sources are the historical materials written after such an event, referred to as historiography, or historical texts.

Historiography, as a product, includes primary and secondary sources. The distinction made by Ankersmit is that the subject of history relies more on interpretations of secondary sources rather than primary sources themselves. Ankersmit's position comes out of a postmodernist perspective. The postmodernist position is defined in reaction to the modernist position. The modernist position, the position advanced by Zagorin, relies on primary sources to study the causes that lead up to an event. The postmodernist critique is that it is the study of secondary sources that forms the events themselves to start with, from our present, if you will, and are therefore primary sources themselves. The postmodernists, therefore, study the event as formed by secondary sources (to use modernist language) as the subject of historical material. The modernist

³⁰ F. R. Ankersmit, "Historiography and Postmodernism," *History and Theory*. Wesleyan University: Middletown, 1989. pp. 137-153
Perez Zagorin, "Historiography and Postmodernism: Reconsiderations," *History and Theory*. Wesleyan University: Middletown, 1990. pp. 263-274

critique is that the subject should not be defined by the effects of the event but by examining the event itself. The postmodernist is concerned with how one has a perspective from the present, of texts about history, a perspective that is more dependent on observing effects in a turn from the present to the past than causes that turn from the past into the present.

Of Primary Source Positions

Ankersmit's postmodernist attempt to absorb historiography into the literary and aesthetics domain ignores features that are central to the very concept of history. One of these is the difference history presumes between fact and fictionality, for which the aesthetic perspective makes no provision. Unlike the work of literature, the historical work does not contain an invented or imaginary world. It presents itself as consisting, to a great degree, of facts and true or probable statements about the past.³¹

—Perez Zagorin

Ankersmit and Zagorin argued against one another in reference to the importance of modernism and postmodernism in terms of historical studies. In general, their debate is a consideration of arguments for and against alternating views of history, historicism, historism, and historiography. Ankersmit's entry point is a topical analysis of history in reference to "the overproduction of historiography".³² Historiography is written history, a historical text. Zagorin questions Ankersmit's argumentation insofar as overproductive forces, as regarding history, are more of a historicist conception, and in this way Zagorin obligingly concedes modern terms of argumentation as a historian with a

³¹ Ibid. Zagorin, "Historiography and Postmodernism: Reconsiderations," p. 272

³² Ibid. Ankersmit, "Historiography and Postmodernism," p. 137

view of historicism rather than only as a historicist.³³ With Gadamer and Foucault we can say that being a historicist and being a historian is a question of how each inquires into the separation of history from historiography. For Zagorin the historicist approach to history is pivotal, as in the example of postmodernist historiography, it is a question of the turn to a problem of history, itself, in that historical material cannot be critically evaluated in advance of history, which has passed. Zagorin claims postmodernists argue, indeed, for a turn away from the past; Thus, the turn to a historicist approach to history appears to be outside of history, but in the present, and, therefore, is an approach that follows from present intentions and determinations, meaning largely that postmodernists appear to be structuring history in their own historicist way rather than history, itself, simply being that which is already passed. Historicism, and the historicist approach for both Ankersmit and Zagorin, regards how one approaches history, for example, as if the past is understood in the context of the past and not the present text. Here, where Zagorin interprets Ankersmit as a historicist, Ankersmit views Zagorin as a particularly modern historicist, a historicist historiographer “aim[ing] at the reconstruction of the essentialist line running through the past or parts of it.”³⁴ History, for Ankersmit, on the contrary, is conceived in postmodernist terms to the extent that with “the overproduction of historiography” there is a corresponding production of history as if to form historical literature from a writer’s point of view of history. Here, Ankersmit turns away from modern historicism, or historicism. What Ankersmit is relating regards the production of history vis-à-vis historicist approaches, as well as approaches that draw out implications regarding historicism insofar as history is a written production, specifically, a literature that appears to be a text about the past. To be sure, for

³³ Ibid. Zagorin, p. 264

³⁴ Ibid. Ankersmit, “Historiography and Postmodernism” p. 149

Ankersmit, history involves the present text since historians are also historiographers, and the past a literary history, of sorts, becomes what history is if we chose to write, or interpret, history. Hence the critical problem of history is interpretive, in its very writing and reading, becoming absorbed, as it were, into a literary criticism of the aesthetics of historicism: “Owing to all interpretations, the text *itself* became vague, a watercolor in which the lines flow into one another.”³⁵ It is, for Ankersmit, through such vague lines of intellectual cultural history, that literary criticism has questioned the meaning of historical fact as fictional literature. On the other hand, Zagorin replies that this overproduction forces modernist concepts into historicist ideals, a rise of fictional literature overcoming factual history itself, and is therefore somewhat arising outside of history, and historical reality as such, such that postmodernists do not examine history per se, but rather interpret the condition of exterior forces, such as present sociological considerations of production, that seemingly surround what can be said to be history written by historians while not evaluating the more inclusive values of a modern ideal of history which, here, is related through the relevance of probable facts as sources that are represented as truth-claims to reality in their own timely past: Following Foucault, in their own space, and following Gadamer, their own language. And, here, we can say that Ankersmit and Zagorin are debating through, and about, the space and language of the future of the discipline of history and historical writing from their perspectives.

The controversy between modernists’ and postmodernists’ perspectives relates to how historians, be they historicist and historicist as well, have had to come to terms that make a coherent view of the past as history, as true/false, and as written to be history. Ankersmit and Zagorin consider this controversy as a critical point in which to debate the various possibilities of studying facts and fictions, because, while history may not change

³⁵ Ibid. Ankersmit, “Historiography and Postmodernism” p. 137

the face of historiography for the modernist the postmodernist must face the historical text in that historiography, if followed under the assumptions of the modern tradition, excludes and produces some problematic ideas about history as a text, a historical text, one through which historiography may be produced further. The texts of history for the modernist and postmodernist, then, are important, yet the context of a turn from the traditionally modern subject of history to historicist, historian, and historiographic methods of analysis are a different matter altogether for modernist historians and their primary objectives. The critical examination of history as a perspective of the past may not only come as the form of a source from which to produce more history, as can be seen with historical reasoning and the making of decisive choices in the name of making history, but also a turning point from which the production of history is becoming, perhaps exceeding itself, of historical importance as more than a textual source, itself, in passing.

To set the stage on which this crucial debate may enter our previously laid out characterizations of Gadamer's and Foucault's methodologically interpretive inquiries I would like to quote from Foucault:

. . . sociology is fundamentally a study of man in terms of rules and conflicts (but these may be interpreted, and one is constantly led to interpret them, in a secondary way, either on the basis of functions, as though they were individuals organically connected to themselves, or on the basis of systems of significations, as though they were written or spoken texts); lastly, the study of literature and myth is essentially the province of an analysis of significations and sign, but we all know that this may be carried out in terms of functional coherence or of conflicts and rules.³⁶

Thus, sociological analysis of historical texts is at play in this debate, Ankersmit and Zagorin, actors, on a hermeneutically circular stage, what Foucault proposed as a "sociological region": In particular, to paraphrase Ankersmit, this debate regards the

³⁶ Ibid. Foucault, *Order of Things*, p. 358

modern center stage of the politics of intellectual history and the cultural literature of critical philosophy of history.

Ankersmit argues that the organization of sources at the level of “narrative substance,” or textual material and elsewhere “picture of the past,” relates to changes that follow from forces that include the production of historical material; an organization of sources, for modernists and postmodernists presumably, depends on the model of material “in history” as a matter “in reality,” that model as being a fact of an event about the past as really true. Ankersmit states, “Complaining about the loss of a direct link with the past does not get us any further. However, what *does* have a point is the defining of a new and different link with the past based on a complete and honest recognition of the position in which we now see ourselves placed as historians”.³⁷ Here, “fact” is simply another modern model to work with on a fictional level in an aesthetic present, for Ankersmit, just as postmodernists consider “texts” in their view. This is where Zagorin opposes Ankersmit’s postmodernism at a more contextual level, for Zagorin is concerned with the hostility to humanism that is implicit of postmodernism, especially with the rise of social history since the mid-twentieth-century such that human history comes into question against social ideology at the level of denying an individual’s (i.e. subject of human history, historical agent) free activity and any possibility of a relative autonomy of past experience in its own right as related to primary causes (especially those causes, I suggest, that relate to what it means to be human).³⁸ Importantly, for Zagorin, as aesthetics is emphasized with the production of a historiography, that is, a text about human history, it undermines previously conceived subjects’ objectives which are to be studied by historians, their actions reconstructed, as

³⁷ Ibid, Ankersmit. “Historiography and Postmodernism,” p. 138

³⁸ Ibid, Zagorin. p. 265

agents, or individual subjects with choices of their own free will; In this view, texts should not be in our view of the past such as it was. Such is the modern canon, “with its discrimination and hierarchization among the creations of culture.”³⁹ In this sense, the modern canon, though full of texts to be studied on their own terms, supposes every text in relation to a cultural order that makes of each text something paramount to all interpretations of that text. To be sure, Zagorin is arguing for the re-integration of the discipline of modern history as a particular human science of the human activities of the past. Indeed, the implications of reducing the subject of history with historiography, or any written text, then, involves the production of writing as a problem for the writing of science which for modernists and postmodernists may be the outcome of their interpretations of writing: Is it not accurate to align this conflictual writing here, in a Foucauldian way: “Writing unfolds like a game [*jeu*] that invariably goes beyond its own rules and transgresses its limits. In writing, the point is not to manifest or exalt the act of writing, nor is it to pin a subject to language, it is rather a question of creating a space into which the writings subject constantly disappears.”⁴⁰ With this one can turn to Zagorin and say that the modern subject is disappearing in the postmodernist interpretation, while one might say to Ankersmit that the postmodern interpretation may never have appeared in modernist interpretations, for the question is open and an interpretation of postmodernisms’ invisibility to some, and yet not others, is still a possibility. Thus, for Zagorin, “In historiography, the attempt by language to draw attention to itself would commonly be regarded as highly inappropriate and an obstrusive breach of rules of historical writing. In history language is very largely subservient to the historian’s effort

³⁹ Ibid, Zagorin. p. 264-5

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, Josue V. Harari (ed.), Ithaca: Cornell University, pp. 141-160 p. 142

to convey in the fullest, clearest, and most sensitive way an understanding or knowledge of something in the past.”⁴¹ Moreover, with Gadamer, modernists and postmodernists appear to be applying different languages, each with their given effect. To be sure, would not a Gadamerian perspective highlight language in this debate, implying that, against Foucault, writing for modernists is definitely meant to “pin a subject to language,” and understand that modern subject of history, to reconstruct what that individual subject of language was and how it may have changed overtime? In this sense, postmodernists may align themselves with Foucault in that the space of writing is given priority to that of the language of writing. On the other hand, Zagorin views postmodernism as a repudiation of the high modernist values and assumptions that, arguably, revolutionized the arts of the twentieth-century, not necessarily written history.⁴² Moreover, Zagorin views postmodernism as a repudiation of logocentrism, defined as “the belief in the referentiality of language and knowledge, in the determinacy of textual meaning, and in the presence of a meaningful world to which language and knowledge are related.”⁴³ In this sense, what is valid about human history is part of a language problem for both Ankersmit and Zagorin, though their concerns regarding human experience is limited to variations of historical reality, with Ankersmit those materials that have come to be referenced, or textualized as if contingently “real” upon the outcome of an event that debatably overwhelms the “truth” of the event (as if modern methods take us through what is real to how what is real is true), and as if having had a language and force all its own at one time, which once may have been behind sources, to which, now, the “narrative

⁴¹ Ibid. Zagorin. p. 271

⁴² Ibid. Zagorin. p. 264

⁴³ Ibid. Zagorin. p. 264

substance,” that logical entity the historian relies on for an interpretation of texts, is the closest thing in postmodernist terms of the presence of a source, its closest outcome, literally now; Thus, with Ankersmit, and I do not think Zagorin disagrees, historians and historiographers represent events that presuppose something about an event that is present with a “link to the past”. Postmodernists highlight the language of the historian across the space of the text in such a way as if to study historian’s interpretations, whereas modernists, in this case, highlight the past insofar as its history is less of a matter of historians’ interpretations. In Foucauldian terms we can view modern history and postmodern history in their approach to “eventualization,” meaning:

A breach of self-evidence. . . Making visible a *singularity* at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness which imposes itself uniformly on all. . . eventualization means rediscovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on which at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal and necessary. In this sense one is indeed effecting a sort of multiplication or pluralization of causes.⁴⁴

Modernists and postmodernists, in this way, eventualize history on the basis of an imbalance between effective forces with interpretations of source material, texts as being historical from our view even if only written, such that with Foucault we may say “...In this mode of questioning, the problem of history is found to have been reversed: for it then becomes a matter of determining, according to the symbolic systems employed, according to the prescribed rules, according to the functional norms chosen and laid down, what sort of historical development each culture is susceptible of; it is seeking to re-apprehend in its very roots, the mode of historicity that may occur within that culture, and the reasons why its history must inevitably be cumulative or circular, progressive or subjected to regulating functions, capable of spontaneous adjustments or subject to

⁴⁴ Foucault, “Questions of Method,” *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, The University of Chicago Press: 1991, p. 76

crises.”⁴⁵ With this “historical flow” of the human sciences the problem of validity attains the question of reversibility of certain cultural changes, thus leading the way for ethnology, in its very historicity, to be a “counter-science.”⁴⁶ But, is such a ethnological reversal historical? Perhaps so, yet eventualized upon what is distinct about modern culture and postmodern culture if there is an opposition to be understood, for then we are given socially ambiguous historical spaces and languages that relate to possible ethnologies in the historical text: Indeed, with the aesthetics of the historical text postmodernism can be said to revolutionize by way of an ascientistic reversal, or “counter-science,” “For postmodernists, both the philosophy of science and science itself form the given, the departure for their reflection.”⁴⁷ Whereas, modernists may find themselves in Foucault’s “epistemological trihedron,” as scientists studying all that is around them, postmodernists study what is counter to what modernists, in their own culture, studied and posit other ways of interpreting the given method of science, especially the history of science, from outside.

What must be recognized at the level of “narrative substance,” an understanding of what is written as a text, is the oversimplification of historical material under the auspices of an oppressive idea of the canon accepted by modernists, but rejected by postmodernists. The being-positive claim by modernists that humanism and modernism are interconnected through the canon of historical literature is crucial to defining that which is modern history and being-correct as possible while relating facts, and the very context of history from a historicist point of view overtime. And, it is the modernists’

⁴⁵ Ibid. Foucault, *Order of Things*, pp. 377-378

⁴⁶ Ibid. Foucault, *Order of Things*, pp. 378-379

⁴⁷ Ibid, Ankersmit. “Historiography and Postmodernism,” p. 141

claim that by decentering the canon of historical literature postmodernists consequentially oversimplify history to the point of an eclecticism and heterogeneity without a critical ordering principle.⁴⁸ It is dually noted by Zagorin and Ankersmit that the scientific method is not how postmodernists approach historical texts and interpretations. To be sure, modern orders and approaches diminish with postmodern insights in view of the historical text, and one could say vice versa. In this way, Ankersmit assumes that the overproduction of historical literature, presently in a critical moment, relates to postmodernist historiography in that traditional (i.e. modern canonized) ideas of historiography further represent problems of self-legitimated meaning, that interpretation of a truth-claim as self-evident.⁴⁹ Ankersmit is saying that modernists only accept what they, themselves, as moderns, meant to be legitimate as a narrative. On the modernists' side, as it were, historical truth is at best reconstructed between orderly movements of a past toward a present, and is, therefore, truth based on continuity, causality, and outcome. What Gadamer emphasizes of this modern methodology, and its continuity between truth and causal reality, of historical science is termed historical objectivism, which "conceals the fact that historical consciousness is itself situated in the web of historical effects," moreover, "In this respect, historical objectivism resembles statistics, which are such excellent means of propaganda because they let the 'facts' speak and hence simulate an objectivity that in reality depends on the legitimacy of the questions asked."⁵⁰ Whereas, we may say, it is precisely what questions remain open for postmodernists from a present questioning of a past with a questionable future which

⁴⁸ Ibid. Zagorin, p. 265

⁴⁹ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Historiography and Postmodernism," p. 139

⁵⁰ Ibid. Gadamer, pp. 300-1

characterizes the uncertainty of historical truth as an ideal that must make itself known, presently, as immanently partial and relative to different perspectives, or in an inquiry of historical texts, historical truth is a modern form of the problem of lying, merely the interpretive propaganda of its temporal passage. For postmodernists, continuity and causality as well as any and all results are open to questions of interpretation, not the past itself, for no historical science ever tests the past. We may say with Gadamer, “In the form of writing, all tradition is contemporaneous with each present time. Moreover, it involves a unique co-existence of past and present, insofar as present consciousness has the possibility of a free access to everything handed down in writing.”⁵¹ Gadamer correctly asks: “Are there really two different horizons here—the horizon in which the person seeking to understand lives and the historical horizon within which he places himself?”⁵² Our understanding, after Gadamer, is that modernist and postmodernist interpret their positions, an opposition perhaps, from within their hermeneutic circle; Each correct move by Ankersmit and Zagorin surely depends on their understanding of their life experience and their feelings about how to question, and be effective with argumentation insofar as the problem of texts produced by others, now and then, are connected to each other somehow, drawn together as significant sources. The implication of Gadamer’s method implies the following impact to our view of the debate, if we are indeed discussing different links with the past, “Where we have a written tradition, we are not just told a particular thing; a past humanity itself becomes present to us in its general

⁵¹ Ibid. Gadamer, p. 390

⁵² Ibid. Gadamer, p. 304

relation to the world.”⁵³ Here, debates regarding historical texts by modernists and postmodernist are of such a written tradition, thus the production of such texts is also historical if interpreted in light of human beings’ connection to their passage of a humanity with history. However, we can say with Foucault that an end of human being is possible, and nearer to our understanding if we presuppose a humanity to be spread out in the space of historical texts, disappearing here and there, for then we presently follow ourselves in writing by our dying light to consider being positively absent in the past before ourselves, or even by way of presenting ourselves to others, and disappearing perhaps further with those beings of a written tradition:

Throughout the nineteenth century, the end of philosophy and the promise of an approaching culture were no doubt one and the same as thought of finitude and the appearance of man in the field of knowledge; in our day, the fact that philosophy is still—and again—in the process of coming to an end, and the fact that in it perhaps, though even more outside and against it, in literature as well as formal reflection, the question of language is being posed, prove no doubt that man is in the process of disappearing.⁵⁴

Thus, with the organization of the historical text in its nascent stages having begun some time ago, the disappearance of beings became a text about the history of being, texts were opened to make way for the question of language to be asked anew across the written text, or historiography.

Ankersmit’s intentions are not simply didactic, instructional, so as to not replace the traditional canon of historical literature that is commonly referred to as history in order to instruct students, or critical subjects, of history. This contest of self-legitimation

⁵³ Ibid. Gadamer, pp. 390-2 Furthermore, “Writing is the abstract ideality of language. Hence the meaning of something written is fundamentally identifiable and repeatable. What is identical in repetition is only what was actually deposited in the written record. This indicates that ‘repetition’ cannot be meant here in its strict sense. It does not mean referring back to the original source where something is said or written. The understanding of something written is not a repetition of something past but the sharing of a present meaning.” (p. 302)

⁵⁴ Foucault, *Order of Things*, p. 385

by modernists, in a sense, is not repeated in the self-same way as modernists argue for in terms of instruction, which is rejected by Ankersmit: Here, postmodernists may not have much to learn from modernists regarding the orders of knowledge in the study of modern history, if indeed a reconstruction. On the contrary, postmodernists tend to refer to information, or historical information as source material, rather than knowledge (or, knowledge as source), as a textual reference point for the organization of events of the human past or how humans interpreted the behavior of information (i.e. texts, ideas, concepts, representations, interpretations). Therefore, Ankersmit would have us view history as written by historians first, through historians' interpretations, rather than assume history is only about the past and texts as sources.

In Effect, of Resource Positions

At an interpretive level there is a question of historical method in that one can ask if a work of history is a historically reactive substance, a material through which we chart the changing forms of narrative. If the past is related through historians' narratives ("treated" some would say), especially from a chronological point of view, then is it possible that historians also relate the past in their present physical actions with resourceful material? It is in this sense that modernists attempt to represent the past in their texts, while postmodernists attempt to interpret representations of the past in their texts. Here, Zagorin and Ankersmit differ in terms of defining what precisely the real integrity of historical arguments has to do with history at all, and the degree to which modernism and postmodernism effect humanism and the various actions of human beings that are historical and their relation to historical texts.

Ankersmit states, "This problem is of a cultural-historical or an interpretive

nature, and could be compared with the sort of problem we sometimes pose when we are considering the place and meaning of a particular event within a totality of our life history.”⁵⁵ Ankersmit argues that information is not an altogether determination of the historiography of civilization, but is a contemporary phenomenon with our life history, so it is in a relative sense that information is posed as a possible counterpart to the overproduction of historiography.⁵⁶ In Ankersmit’s text a two-part outline of information is interpreted. First, that information is referred to as if physical; it “‘flows,’ ‘moves,’ ‘spreads,’ ‘is traded,’ ‘is stored,’ or ‘is organized.’”⁵⁷ Second, the inversion of the relationship between information and the subject matter of information has come to have a prevalent meaning in terms of information, rather than the previously dominant position, or perspective, which referred to the subject of information first and foremost.⁵⁸ In this sense, then, “the overproduction of history” has something to do with a historical reality as alternating between information and subject matter vis-à-vis productions of history since modern historical science developed a cultural knowledge based on an inquiry of the nature of reality’s changing. However, for postmodernists, instead:

This is not a question of metacriticism of scientific research or scientific method as we are used to in the philosophy of science. Philosophy of science remains inherent in the scientism of the modernists; philosophers follow the line of thought of scientists and study the path they have covered between the discovery of empirical data and theory. For postmodernists, both the philosophy of science and science itself form the given, the point of departure for their reflections. And, postmodernists are just as little interested in the sociological question of how research scientists react to one another or what the relation is between science and society. The postmodernist’s attention is focused neither

⁵⁵ Ibid. Ankersmit. “Historiography and Postmodernism,” p. 139

⁵⁶ Ibid. Ankersmit. “Historiography and Postmodernism,” p. 139

⁵⁷ Ibid. Ankersmit. “Historiography and Postmodernism,” pp. 139-140

⁵⁸ Ibid. Ankersmit. “Historiography and Postmodernism,” p. 140

on scientific research nor on the way in which society digests the results of scientific research, but only on the functioning of science and of scientific information itself.⁵⁹

Significantly, the opportunity to question, or we might say what is open to inquiry of, the functioning of science and scientific information, if not scientific inquiry itself, from cultural-historical perspective forms the crux of postmodernist information theory: The first principle law is that information multiplies.⁶⁰ And, with such informational multiplicity, “We must not shape ourselves according to or in conformity with the past, but learn to play our cultural game with it.”⁶¹

Zagorin criticizes Ankersmit for, evidently, turning away from the past and having a point of view dependent on references to historians’ interpretations of present “realities,” as I have already noted: For example, Zagorin emphasizes that the loss of European world history in the postmodern view is concurrently a historicist fatalism, therefore the loss of European world history in the postmodern view is illegitimate in that interpretation implies, then, a decline with the metanarrative of that interpretation.⁶² Thus, for Zagorin, it is unclear how information multiplies under the assumption that a reciprocal relationship, of subject and matter, inversely opposes an increase of information and a decrease of real world history to the extent that information is foremost what is produced with historians’ written texts. Perhaps I can be more clear: Modernist would like to know where subject matter is for postmodernists: Is it under, or behind, information? Postmodernists relate that information is in a position to alternate the subject of history with what historians use for material to produce historical texts,

⁵⁹ Ibid. Ankersmit. “Historiography and Postmodernism,” p. 141

⁶⁰ Ibid. Ankersmit. “Historiography and Postmodernism,” p. 141

⁶¹ Ibid. Ankersmit. “Historiography and Postmodernism,” p. 157

⁶² Ibid. Zagorin. p. 266

historiography, or more information, etc. The case of European world history is but one example, and after Foucault and Gadamer, we can say that such a case arises in this debate due to an understanding of traditional and cultural matters that are given to Zagorin's and Ankersmit's interpretation of historical texts. The social implications of the above example, as given with postmodernism, and in the humanist terms Zagorin articulates, regards the possible liberation from the oppressive European view of humanism, if you will, of histories involving "society's oppression of women, the working class, non-whites, sexual deviants, and colonized natives."⁶³

Zagorin states that Ankersmit's concern with "the overproduction of historiography," or historical writings, is a sociological question.⁶⁴ Significantly, Zagorin asks, "But how, in any event, can the condition of historical overproduction deprive us both of the text and the past, leaving us only with interpretations?"⁶⁵ On a practical level, it appears that with the rise of social history the obscurity of modern history was called into question. So, it may be necessary for the modernists to view information in terms of sociological implications, perhaps in statements such as in Ankersmit's paraphrase of Bachelard, explaining why, "it is the *debatable* facts which are the *true* facts."⁶⁶ However, I doubt that texts and pasts have totally disappeared for Ankersmit, given historical debate regarding interpretations of texts, or with the overproduction of historiography, but rather have a history that must be interpreted before made historical just as any other written text. I would suggest that if there is a sociological question for

⁶³ Ibid. Zagorin. pp. 264-5

⁶⁴ Ibid. Zagorin. p. 266

⁶⁵ Ibid. Zagorin. p. 267

⁶⁶ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Historiography and Postmodernism," p. 141

postmodernists it might be one of an ascientistic social insofar as "...the metaphorical dimension in historiography is more powerful than the literal or factual dimensions"; Where, with a social conflict, as any debate is, we can see that "Only metaphors 'refute' metaphors."⁶⁷

In these claims to render modernist history and postmodernist history as true to form Ankersmit and Zagorin differ to the degree that their positions are more, hermeneutically, of a question of error, as a opposed to fact. Here, Ankersmit illustrates the Nietzschean concept of causality, the "deconstruction" of postmodernism, meaning the observation of effects in a turn toward the observation of causes, to support the postmodernist argument: "This is the way things are in postmodernism. Science is 'destabilized,' placed outside its own center, the reversibility of patterns of thought and categories occurs. . .It is rather a recognition that every view has, besides its scientifically approved inside, an outside not noticed by science."⁶⁸ Ankersmit seems to accept both Gadamer's and Foucault's methodological approach to interpreting science in this way, while questioning the apparent reversibility of order in an effective interpretation: After all, Ankersmit is making a point with this argument, though its success is open to further inquiry. Of course, this is not to say that scientific facts only refer to an error in judging oppositions and reversibility, but that the possibility of a scientist's error is a prior bypass that must be, to be positive and correct, open to interpretations of error as such, especially of questions of causality, of what is an autonomous individual event, and of that which is representable of events of the past insofar as somebody claims such an event to have truly occurred, or not. For Ankersmit, the revolutionary nature of postmodernism forms a logical and ontological implication that modernism and modern

⁶⁷ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Historiography and Postmodernism," p. 152

⁶⁸ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Historiography and Postmodernism," p. 142

science, are for historiography, variants on the paradox of the liar.⁶⁹ In effect, the contrast of interpretations become recognizable and have an identity by what they are not, thus an identity is intrinsically defined by other interpretations, and is therefore related to the paradoxical nature of historical insight.⁷⁰ Zagorin's critical evaluation of this paradox, as in reply, follows from the problematic idea that "interpretation has acquired a new status in postmodern historiography...Observing that in contemporary society information and interpretations continually increase by law of their being."⁷¹ Here, again, Zagorin disagrees with the postmodernist perspective as the only way to explain that "powerful new interpretations do not put an end to writing but only generate more of it."⁷² Zagorin states, "Historical interpretations are similar in some respects to scientific theories and hypotheses [. . .] There is nothing paradoxical, however, or unique to the present, the fact that significant interpretations stimulate rather than close off discussion."⁷³ Thus, the problem of the overproduction of historiography is that there seems to be more of it in writing than ever before: And this involves what we do with it and our methods of interpretation, as if given more information by way of historical texts, but also paradoxically, how do we figure out what history is without assuming that we must accept more and more history as a traditional and cultural cause that was made with some temporary interpretation of the past; Is it not that we can question effects more than causes, now, perhaps more than ever before?

⁶⁹ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Historiography and Postmodernism," p. 142

⁷⁰ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Historiography and Postmodernism," pp. 142-143

⁷¹ Ibid. Zagorin. p. 268

⁷² Ibid. Zagorin. pp. 268-269

⁷³ Ibid. Zagorin. p. 269

The peculiar paradox of historical interpretation that Ankersmit recognizes is argued for further in “Reply to Professor Zagorin,” where in response to Zagorin’s criticism Ankersmit posits the criteria of the liar’s paradox, the ascientistic and literary form, which parallels the writing of history’s metaphors:

First, we must note that in the context of historical debate, narrative substances are polarized in a position of mutual exclusion: if we accept *this* narrative substance we must *eo ipso* reject the other(s). Second, these other narrative substances are required for the identification of the narrative substance we accept.⁷⁴

Here, the relation of the rejected view of the past is integral to the particular identity of the narrative substance that is accepted; “Thus one can justifiably say that a view of the past, or narrative substance, is what it is not.”⁷⁵ The hermeneutic circle is, from within, divided by such oppositions. In terms of style Ankersmit, after Nietzsche, cites that causalistic terminology in science must have a point of observation that positions the effect as the primary given and the cause as the secondary given, “for the point is precisely the artificiality of the traditional hierarchy of cause and effect.”⁷⁶

Consequently, if what is meant as style relates to the position of an observer, then to have interpreted what was written in a style as the content of history from that observer’s perspective is a position itself: “Because of the historiographical view and language used by the historian in order to express this view—a relation which nowhere intersects the domain of the past—historiography possesses the same opacity of and intentional dimension of art.”⁷⁷ Thus, for postmodernists, the contrast of historiography with scientific language is transparent if related to modern history, which intrinsically

⁷⁴ Ibid. Ankersmit, “Reply...” p. 284

⁷⁵ Ibid. Ankersmit. “Reply. . .” p. 284

⁷⁶ Ibid. Ankersmit. “Historiography and Postmodernism,” pp. 141-142

⁷⁷ Ibid. Ankersmit. “Historiography and Postmodernism,” p. 145

possesses scientific aspects, and opaque when it claims for itself an ascientistic legitimacy, or in other words is written in a language, metaphorically speaking, that obviously obscures scientific subject and objects.⁷⁸ This is postmodernism's ascientistic break through the traditional hermeneutic of science's methodology. To this extent postmodernists relate modernist concepts within their own, yet inverted, if not reversed perspective. Ankersmit writes further of the heuristic explanation, the explanation of "what makes us look for causes" involved in the postmodern reversal, the "deconstruction" as it were, against traditionally modern causalistic terminology:

In theories of causality it is customary to distinguish between sufficient and necessary conditions. A is a sufficient condition for B if each A is accompanied by a B; A is a necessary condition for B if each B is accompanied by an A. Hence there is a relation of symmetry between sufficient and necessary causes and this means that if A is a sufficient condition for B, then B must be a necessary condition for A and vice versa. So if there exists a causal relation between two events A and B and if A is a necessary condition for B, we can agree with Danto when he concludes that 'a sufficient condition for an event may thus occur later in time than the event.'⁷⁹

The division of the hermeneutic circle into oppositions of past (i.e. what the present is not) and present (i.e. what the past is not) can now be stated as regards what angle is given to the position of the divide: On the one hand, to be on the side of writing modern history traditionally, therefore leading one to consider past-present relations as one considers what caused the effect, and/or question the reversibility of what is given by this tradition as oppositional and consider what, in turn, effects are followed as if being present, first, and then following through by writing about possible causes as historically effective, as Foucault and Gadamer emphasize in their own way.

Further, it is causalistic language at the level of the statement that must be restricted to causal relations between individual descriptions, not only the level of the text

⁷⁸ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Historiography and Postmodernism," p. 145

⁷⁹ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Reply..." p. 284

and narrative substance.⁸⁰ In Ankersmit's argument, for postmodernists ". . .Evidence does not point toward the *past* but other *interpretations* of the past; for that is what we in fact use evidence for."⁸¹ Whereas, the modernist is concerned with, in Ankersmit's perspective, ". . .Evidence [insofar as it] is in essence the evidence that something happened in the past. The modernist historian follows a line of reasoning from his sources and evidence to an historical reality hidden behind the sources."⁸² If one accepts the postmodernist claim to, in effect, the primacy of the present over the past then "Evidence does not send us back to the past, but gives rise to the question what an historian here and now can or cannot do with it."⁸³ "The focus is no longer on the past itself, but on the incongruity between the present and past, between the language we presently use for speaking about the past and the past itself."⁸⁴ "Postmodernism does not reject scientific historiography, but only draws our attention to the modernists' vicious circle which would have us believe that nothing exists outside it. However, outside it is a whole domain of historical purpose and meaning."⁸⁵ And, it is the possibility that there is no end to postmodernist claims to the outside of modernism that modernists consider as a problem insofar as postmodernist may change, or appear to cause a change of, an overall disciplinary structure far beyond a point of no return to modernism. However, this cross-cultural and cross-traditional debate regarding historical

⁸⁰ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Reply..." p. 285

⁸¹ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Historiography and Postmodernism," pp. 145-146

⁸² Ibid. Ankersmit. "Historiography and Postmodernism," p. 145

⁸³ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Historiography and Postmodernism," p. 146

⁸⁴ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Historiography and Postmodernism," p. 153

⁸⁵ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Historiography and Postmodernism," p. 153

texts and interpretations, being-positive and being-correct in their own way, is here interpreted with understanding the experience and structure of modernists and postmodernists, Ankersmit and Zagorin; as hermeneutically circular, a passage of questioning what is a historical text and how it came to be. The implications of Foucault's archaeological aim of interpretation upon such a debate is that space of the historical text, the effect of interpreting possibilities for being positively, culturally, modern and postmodern. Similarly, the implications of Gadamer's phenomenological aim of interpretation upon such a debate is that of the language of the historical text, the effect of interpreting possibilities for being correctively, traditionally, modern and postmodern. Does this not imply that approaching the space and the language of debates about written history, as within a hermeneutic circle, are heuristically flexible, or what comes close to our experience as the given of historically structured argumentation? In this sense, we can question our historical texts further by relating the comparative aspects of historians' interpretations and the general effect on the organization of texts as a practice, where sources appear and disappear with intentions: And we can question the distinctions made by drawing a line through the past to the text in a heuristic divide of understanding interpretations and the breaks with tradition, and thereafter the cultural outcomes, as well as the priority of the writer to that those parts of historiography, the past and the present, and perhaps the significance of arguments made for the future of the discipline of history, where more information may obscure the hermeneutic circle in which modernism and postmodernism came to pass. In this way, Ankersmit and Zagorin agree that the productive, expansive, and extensive aspects of historiography concern the integration and synthesis of historical specialization.⁸⁶ To this degree, the aestheticizing of

⁸⁶ Ibid. Zagorin. p. 272 and Ankersmit. "Reply. . ." p. 287

historiography limits the definite advantages of modern history as a discipline.⁸⁷ Postmodernist theories of writing tend to support Ankersmit's position in that contemporary historiography moves toward fragmentation rather than synthesis, of integration.⁸⁸ "That is, not so much a theory of interpretation like hermeneutics but a theory of the (unintended) *effects* of interpretive writing as we find these effects in literary theory and, of course, in the writing of history."⁸⁹ So, what historians, historicists, historian, and historiographers may take away from modernists such as Zagorin and postmodernists such as Ankersmit, is current information, if not only a different knowing subject, regarding the contested aesthetic context of historical explanation in that written histories are interpretively debated about in different ways.

The implications of viewing historical texts after Ankersmit and Zagorin, and if we concern ourselves with Foucault and Gadamer, involves the metaphorical, "real," relationship of space to the language of text, and vice versa, as being effective: We have, in this text, examples of being positive and being corrective by a modernist, Zagorin, and a postmodernist, Ankersmit, which if both are taken to be effective, approach history and the writing of history with distinct views of each others' cultural epistemology and traditional ontology. The crisis of the overproduction of historiography, in my view, involves modernist and postmodernist perspectives. If we view such an overproduction in modern terms we may concern ourselves with stabilizing the modern historian's position to the human sciences. If we view such an overproduction in postmodern terms we may concern ourselves with destabilizing the modern historian's position. The divide,

⁸⁷ Ibid. Zagorin. p. 272

⁸⁸ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Reply. . ." p. 287

⁸⁹ Ibid. Ankersmit. "Reply. . ." p. 288

here, of the interpretation of texts can be viewed with this understanding of, in our sense, being correct and being positive, but ambiguously divided by modernists and postmodernists under the uncertainty of the future language and future space of the historical discipline. Yet, in our own right, and insofar as we may continue to write history with what might be called a pivotal theory that is defined by hermeneutic circles and heuristic divides, we may see the asymmetry of the past and present at a contemporary intersection with the correlates of cause and effect, the turning points of crises, each in their critical turn; and, we may see further the breaking symmetry of necessary and sufficient causes from different contemporary inquiries into problems of historical effectiveness.