

„[...] Chomsky's case is quite complex [...] Unfortunately, I lack a background in mathematical logic, which would be indispensable for understanding and evaluating the most technical (and probably the most valid) side to Chomsky's linguistics. I cannot, therefore make judgements, but only express impressions and doubts – which, moreover, are not just my own, but have already been expressed in part by scholars far more qualified than I. There is a Chomsky who is on the front line of the anti-imperialist struggle within the United States, and who associates himself with the ‚Marxist-anarchist‘ perspective informed by the thought of Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin's State and Revolution (even though he is not and does not declare himself a Marxist in the strict sense); a Chomsky who with great courage and extraordinary lucidity lays bare the responsibilities of intellectuals in capitalist society. There is also a Chomsky who, in order to explain what he calls ‚linguistic competence‘, i.e. the capacity to produce sentences which are not merely repetitions of sentences already heard, has resort to the most metaphysical and retrograde side of Cartesianism: the doctrine of innate ideas and the absolute distinction between spirit and ‚mechanism‘, between man and animal. In other words, he resorts to a spiritualistic metaphysics which has been abandoned for some time now by the more discerning elements of spiritualistic culture itself, which, under the pressure of objections raised by empiricism and materialism, have created much more polished forms of spiritualism represented by the Kantian critique, post-kantian idealism and the various tendencies customarily referred to as neo-positivism.“

Sebastiano Timpano, Sul Materialismo (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1970) / On Materialism (London: Verso, 1980), p 199

„Chomsky himself presents the essay on Cartesian Linguistics not as an actual historiographic study, but as a rediscovery of ideas unjustly overlooked in the nineteenth and early twentieth century which find confirmation and full development in present-day transformational grammar. But if this character of the essay legitimately removes it from it all pedantic objections as to matters of detail, it does not justify the crudest forms of misinterpretation, such as the unbroken link which is made between the Jansenists of Port-Royal, the German Romantics and von Humbolt, or the failure to take into account all the contributions to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century general linguistics made by empiricists, etc. Furthermore, although Chomsky does not fail to make a few references (negative, of course) to La Mettrie, he does not appear to take seriously enough that process of thought whereby, under the stimulus of the difficulties created by Cartesian dualism and the theory of the ‚animal-machine‘, La Mettrie’s ‚man-the-machine‘ and Diderot’s far from crude materialist biology were arrived at [...] if we begin to distinguish in the human psyche what is still explicable in automatist terms from what is not, then how are we to avoid declaring that some men (individuals or nations or races) are ‚more equal than others‘, i.e. the bearers to a greater degree than others of mankind’s ‚divine‘ as opposed to merely ‚feral‘ characteristics? [...] if one wants to pose correctly the problem of man’s animality and a non-metaphysical distinction between man and animal, one has to be a Darwinist and Marxist. But this is impossible as long as one continues to talk about innate ideas and the present-day validity of Cartesian dualism, however fine one’s ethico-political intentions may be.“

Sebastiano Timparano, Sul Materialismo (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1970)
/ On Materialism (London: Verso, 1980), p 203-205

„I know that, though Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* (The Order of Things) and *L'archéologie du savoir* merely represent an (entirely successful) attempt to outstrip Lévi-Strauss in snobism and pretension (1), the same Foucault has written things about the history of madness and the origins of modern medicine which, even if open to debate, are certainly worthy of attention [...] But the altogether disproportionate fame enjoyed by these authors [Foucault and Barthes] during the last fifteen years is not a consequence of the scientific side of their work, but rather, for the most part, a consequence of its charlatanesque features: that admixture of abstract scientism and aestheticist spiritualism which, however patently contradictory it may be, nonetheless represents a perfect solution for the needs of a bourgeoisie which at one and the same time worships science and attempts to outstrip it of its demystificatory and liberating force.“

(1) [...] With regard to his less than precise knowledge of structural linguistics, cf. Georges Mounin, *Clefs pour la linguistique*, Paris 1968, p. 13. But no better is his factual background as regards nineteenth-century linguistics; one need only read the section on Franz Bopp in *The Order of Things*, New York 1970, pp. 280-294, in order to see how Foucault's attempt to reduce the opposing ideas of Friedrich Schlegel and Bopp on the origins of the Indo-European inflection to a single formula completely distorts both positions [...]

Sebastiano Timparano, Sul Materialismo (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1970) / On Materialism (London: Verso, 1980), p 175-176

„[My] point is not simply that Foucault contradicts himself. Rather, it is that he does so in part because he misunderstands, at least when it comes to his own situation, the way that norms function in social description. He assumes that he can purge all traces of liberalism from his account of modern power simply by forswearing explicit reference to the tip-of-the-iceberg notions of legitimacy and illegitimacy. He assumes, in other words, that these norms can be neatly isolated and excised from the larger cultural and linguistic matrix in which they are situated.“

Nancy Fraser, Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p 30

„Der Saussureschen Tradition und ihrem Bruch zwischen interner und externer Linguistik folgt er [Foucault] insoweit, als er die absolute Autonomie dieses “Felds strategischer Möglichkeiten” behauptet und den Anspruch als “doxologische Illusion” zurückweist, in dem, was er “das Feld der Polemik” nennt, und in den “Interessenunterschieden und mentalen Gewohnheiten der Individuen” (also in allem, womit ich fast gleichzeitig die Begriffe “Feld” und “Habitus” füllte...) die Grundlage zur Erklärung dessen zu finden, was sich im “Feld der strategischen Möglichkeiten” zuträgt und was ihm bloß durch die “strategischen Möglichkeiten von Begriffsspielen” determiniert scheint, die einzige Wirklichkeit, deren eine Wissenschaft der Kulturprodukte seines Erachtens Rechnung zu tragen braucht. Damit projiziert er die in den Beziehungen zwischen den Produzenten verankerten (wenngleich nicht auf die reduzierbaren) Gegensätze und Antagonismen in den Ideenhimmel und weigert sich, die Kulturprodukte zu den gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen ihrer Produktion in Beziehung zu setzen (wie er es auch fernerhin in einem kritischen Diskurs über Wissen und Macht tut, der die Akteure und ihre Interessen und vor allem die Gewalt in ihrer symbolischen Funktion außer acht läßt und somit abstrakt und idealistisch bleibt).“

Pierre Bourdieu, Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire (Paris: ed du Seuil, 1992) / Die Regeln der Kunst. Genese und Struktur des literarischen Feldes (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001), p 316-317

„To sum up this part of my argument, Foucault’s ambivalent rhetoric vis-à-vis the masses lands him in a dilemma he will resolutely not resolve. Having begun to „speak about them,“ he cannot but employ the categories of his own intellectual formation. Once he mobilizes these categories and protocols of analysis, he is paralyzed by the insight that these procedures do not apply to „them,“ and so, for fear of doing epistemic violence to „them,“ he forecloses his own analysis, thus denying „them“ the historical materiality of „representation.“ His predicament is rather similar to Samuel Beckett, who „cannot go on, but must go on.“ Having disarmed „representation“ universally, Foucault denies „them“ the perspectivity of their particular form of representation. This universal and unsituated delegitimation of „representation“ does away with distinctions between „who“ is saying and „what“ is being said, and also between forms of representation that are organic and coercive - in other words, insider/outsider differentiations are entirely dismantled.“

R. Radhakrishnan, Diasporic Mediations (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p 41

„[Foucault's theory of power has] captivated not only Foucault himself but many of his readers who wish to go beyond Left optimism and Right pessimism so as to justify political quietism with sophisticated intellectualism, at the same time wishing to appear realistic, in touch with the world of power and reality.“

Edward Said, The World, the Text, and the Critic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), p 245

„Wir verstehen nun auch, warum Foucault sich für die von Rusche und Kirschheimer herausgearbeiteten Gegensätze zwischen sozialpädagogisch orientierten Ansätzen einer Gefängnisreform und eugenischen und (proto-) faschistischen Orientierungen nicht interessiert: Die »sozialdemokratische« Konstellation, auf die er seine Normalisierungskritik konzentriert, ist zugleich diejenige, die in Deutschland von den Nazis als »Weimarer Gefängnisparadies« denunziert wurde (vgl., Sozialstruktur und Strafvollzug, Frankfurt 1981 (1939), p 249). Aber eine Kritik, die das Feuer ihre “radikalen” Entlarvung auf die sozialpädagogischen Rehabilitationsprojekte konzentriert und dabei deren faschistische Abschaffung und Ablösung durch Liquidierung der A-Normalen und Verelendung der Gefangenen übersieht, hat die Verbindung zu den historischen Frontstellungen verloren und läuft ins Leere.“

Jan Rehmann, Postmoderner Links-Nietzscheanismus. Deleuze & Foucault. Eine Dekonstruktion (Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 2004), p 163

„Foucaults Nietzscheanismus äußert sich darin, dass er in die Protestbewegung einen partikularistischen Kritiktypus einzuführen versucht, der die Entwicklung einer Verantwortungsethik fürs Ganze unterminiert. Die Begründung folgt einer totalisierenden Logik, die eine historische “Linie” bzw. eine ganze Mega-Epoche (wie das “Abendland”) zur homogenen Einheit abschließt. Im Ergebnis nimmt Foucault mitten im linksradikalen Diskurs die neoliberale Zerstörung des gesellschaftlichen Gesamtzusammenhangs vorweg.“

Jan Rehmann, Postmoderner Links-Nietzscheanismus. Deleuze & Foucault. Eine Dekonstruktion (Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 2004), p 133

„I would rather argue that the „global“ controls and articulates Foucault in ways that he is not aware of. In a super-Nietzschean move on behalf of a local and discontinuous perspectivity, Foucault forgets that even the most disjunct perspective is globally subtended and that the very local perspectivity he champions against the claims of universality envisions his „own world“ and thereby sneaks in through the back door the authoritarianism of global thinking into the terrain of the local. In other words, the local perspective is symptomatic of a certain choice on behalf of a certain world. Moreover, the will to power that resides within even the most local perspective shores up certain priorities and agendas, thus providing for that location the authority of a „world.“ It is ironic that Foucault, the theorist of constituted subjectivities and assigned subject positions, suddenly „chooses“ freely and joyously to be a specific, deglobalized, local, and counter-mnemonic intellectual. What gives him the right to make that choice, that is, given his historical proximity to the regimes and narratives of colonialism and imperialism? By what mandate, global or regional, does Foucault assume a statute of limitations on the long durée of colonialism and imperialism so as to inaugurate his local and counter-mnemonic discourses?“

R. Radhakrishnan, Diasporic Mediations (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p 38

[...] Foucault's Marxism- "Überwindung" besteht 1970/71 zunächst darin, die jeweils konkrete Analyse der Kraftverhältnisse in Staat und Zivilgesellschaft durch einen pathetischen "Kampfismus" zu ersetzen, in dem Nietzsche's Macht-Wille und Mao Tse Tungs "Macht aus den Gewehrläufen" auf irrealer Weise miteinander verschränkt sind. Man kann den politischen Kontext nicht überspringen, wenn man Foucault's anschließende Weiterentwicklung des Machtbegriffs verstehen will: es geht nicht so sehr um eine plurale Überwindung "des" Marxismus, sondern konkret um die Frage, wie Foucault machttheoretisch aus der Sackgasse des eigenen linksradikalen Paradigma wieder herauskommt."

Jan Rehmann, Postmoderner Links-Nietzscheanismus. Deleuze & Foucault. Eine Dekonstruktion (Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 2004), p 137