

COMMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

MALMO-KINGS EXCHANGE SEMINAR

MAY, 2017

General Instructions: The students for this exchange seminar are part of separate courses at their respective schools, and these courses entail different requirements and assignments. This sheet outlines some common tasks built around the shared readings, presentations, and discussion sessions.

For each discussion, all students are asked to bring *two questions* and to be prepared to discuss the following questions.

DISCUSSION SESSION 1 - MONDAY MAY 15 - 3PM - KC 119

READING: T. MAY, CHAPTER 1, PGS. 1-23.

1. If we believe May, all of the following bodies of thought provide an answer to the question "Who are we?": Christianity, Enlightenment Rationalism (Descartes), Marxism (Marx), Psycho-Analysis (Freud), 20c Existentialism (Sartre). **For each of these 5 try to write a single phrase that summarizes what they say we are.**
2. Look over your answers to 1 - Foucault rejects each and May tells us why (or for most of them he does) on page 15. **Can you find the paragraph?**
3. May (page 13-14) summarizes Marx's answer to the question about who we are, and he explains Marx's principle of historical change. **How do Marxian and Foucauldian understandings of who we are and their principles of historical change differ?**
4. **Who does Foucault say we are? And what five features arise from this answer according to May? (pgs. 16-21)**
5. May comments on MF's concept of power-knowledge on pages 20-21; **can you name a practice where adults are positioned as knowing subjects and children as subjects of knowledge? Can you think of one where children are seen as the knowing subjects and adults the subjects of knowledge?**
6. People who have only read a little Foucault, or who have read a lot of it poorly - sometimes wrongly assert that by dismantling histories of progress, Foucault offers hopeless, angry pessimism. **How does May respond to this reading of Foucault, and what non-progressive understanding of enlightenment does May's reading of Foucault require?**

DISCUSSION SESSION 2 - TUESDAY MAY 16 - 3PM - KC 119

READING: T. MAY PGS. 24-43.

1. On page 26, P2-3 (lines 10-29) May summarizes Foucault's ground-breaking approach to insanity and reason in *Madness and Civilization*. In these lines, replace the words 'madness' and/or 'disease of this,' with versions of "childhood" or "child" as grammatically appropriate. Then, reread the paragraphs. **Are you familiar with these sorts of claims about childhood, and if so - what do you think of them?**
2. Rereading the now transformed paragraphs on pg. 26 (with childhood substituted for madness), **do you think the Foucault of MC would accept a study of childhood if we defined it as: *an attempt to uncover what it is (or was) like to experience childhood - revealing the perspective of children?* If no, try to rewrite this statement of inquiry (above in italics) to make it more consistent with early Foucauldian thought.**
3. According to Foucault (bottom of pg. 26), the mad became visibly "Other of reason," beginning in the late-medieval/early modern periods (1350-1750) partly through practices of "exclusion and confinement." **Can you think of any practices (past or present) by which childhood became or becomes visibly "Other" of adulthood?**
4. On page 31-32, May explains that by the L17C madness became equated with idleness (a refusal or inability to work), whereas reason had become nothing more than engagement with work as "a person's calling." Of course, we no longer equate sanity with work, nor define insanity by idleness. **What do you think has become the specific difference between insanity and sanity today; if it not located in the distinction between work and idleness, where is the difference located for us?**
5. May (pgs. 34-36) summarizes several questions/problems that MC posed for progressive narratives of psychiatric medicine. **Can you locate and note Foucault's challenges to narratives of progressive liberation?**
6. Go to pages 38-39; the object of archaeology is 'discourse,' which May tells us is neither defined by conscious agreement (the intentions of individual heroes or villains), nor is it merely competing opinions (the claims of individuals). **If discourse is not framed by intentions or opinions, what shapes it?**
7. Find the two sentences beginning 8 lines from the bottom of page 39 ("What *Historie...*"), and once again replace the words "mad," or "madness" with variations of "child." Then, consider the late middle English proverb: "*a mayde schuld be seen, but*

not herd." (a maid [*young unmarried female/servant*] should be seen, but not heard). In terms of generational relations, does this proverb belong in (see May, top pg. 40) an "archaeology of silence" or an "archaeology of silencing" - and why?

DISCUSSION SESSION 3 - WEDNESDAY MAY 17 - 3PM - KC 119

READING: T. MAY PGS. 44-60; P. RYAN "HOW NEW?".

1. What terms in your vocabulary might be related to Foucauldian words "episteme" or "discursive formation"? (See May, pg. 44; Ryan, pg. 554)

2. On pages 45-47, May introduces Foucault's argument that a search for 'resemblances' structured knowledge during the 14c-16c. He explains that during this period, "the language that articulates the world is also of the order of the world; they are inseparable in the Renaissance *episteme*." Within this episteme, things *are* signs, and signs *are* things. Words were not merely tools used by human subjects to *represent* things and things were not merely speechless objects waiting for us to assign meaning to them - the world was animated with and formed by an intelligence (a *logos*) from the beginning. But, this way of knowing was transformed in the early modern period; words and things become "separated, when the working of language is no longer of a piece with the cosmos, the Renaissance episteme has given way to the classical (17c-18c) one." (May, pg. 47). Over the next several pages (48-52), May tries to explain some very complex parts of *OT*. He tells us that through two epistemic transitions (from the 14c to the e19c) there was a "slackening of the bonds of representation [that] corresponds to two spaces of depth, one on the side of the sign or the observer, the other on the side of the object." As a consequence there is a new play between "the object to be known and the subject who acts." (pg. 52)

Now, turn your attention to Figure 2, LMC, Ryan pg. 558; also explained in the [Althouse interview](#). How might the discursive structure of modern childhood as diagrammed by Ryan be related to (or exemplify) the opening up of the epistemic spaces of modernity as described by Foucault (and summarized in May, pgs. 45-52)?

3. On page 53, May explains that the concept of "Man" (with a capital M) is the centre of the modern episteme as Foucault understood it. What does Foucault mean by this term - "Man"?

4. Now turn your attention to Fig 4, pg. 575 in Ryan; Foucault begins *The Order of Things* with an analysis of *Las Meninas*. How does this painting contribute to the production of 'Man' in the Foucauldian sense? or Where is 'Man' in this painting?

5. How does *Order of Things* answer the question "who are we?"

6) On page 54 and 55, May comments on the antagonism between Foucault's historical analyses of human sciences and the universal claims of these sciences. Think about this antagonism in terms of the discourses of childhood. What might historicising

modern responses to questions about '*who children are*' do to the way we think about and live with these responses? [e.g. the bodies of thought and practice that position children as (i) products of conditioning, (ii) sources of authenticity, (iii) developing organisms, (iv) competent agents]

7) May concludes his commentary on Foucault's archaeological works by identifying a contradiction which emerges from his approach to human reflexivity. If Foucault is correct that the universal, essential claims of human sciences and transcendental philosophy are themselves only historically contingent, what about his own approach? **Doesn't the idea of an episteme reinsert essentialism into the answer to the question of "who we are?" Or do you think it changes the question itself?**

DISCUSSION SESSION 4 - THURSDAY MAY 18 - 3PM - KC 119

READING: P. RYAN, "GOVERNMENT OF WOMEN," AND WATCH BBC - OUR WORLD ["NORWAY: PARENTS AGAINST THE STATE."](#)

1) Borge Tomter (representing Barnevernet) made two types of defenses, **what were they and in what ways are these defenses relevant for the critique offered by Norwegian psychologist Einar Salvesen (writer of the expert letter)?**

2) "Government of Women" begins with a brief picture of late-19C American innovations in family investigation and the arguments that supported this reform effort. **Why did these people think family investigation was necessary, and what did they hope to accomplish?**

3) Name two or three discursive practices - highlighted in Ryan - that arose in social work during the early 20C. **Which of these practices are conditions of possibility for the stories pictured in the BBC short documentary to be told?**

4) **How does Ryan define the term 'discipline', and/or what is a 'disciplinary technique' in the Foucauldian sense?**

5) Return to question 1 and Salvesen's critique of Barnevernet's investigative practices. **Was Salvesen arguing for a withdrawal or intensification of disciplinary techniques in the Foucauldian sense?**

6) **Name an example** from your own life where you may have experienced a disciplinary practice or witnessed something like the "the spiral of reflexivity" (Ryan, 14) in schools, camps, hospitals, clinics, or any other therapeutic environment.

DISCUSSION SESSION 5 - MONDAY MAY 29 - 2PM - RM OR:F215

READING: T. MAY CHAPTER 3, 61-85

- 1) On page 63 May begins his description of Foucault's genealogical approach to history. **How does this approach differ from the standard tracing of family genealogy?**
- 2) On page 68 May discusses Foucault's inversion of the received view of history. **What does this entail in relation to the histories of madness, punishment and sexuality, and how does it relate to the notion of progressive history?**
- 3) On pages 71-72 May describes two difficulties with *supplice* as an exercise of the power to punish. **What are these and how are these difficulties tackled by penal reformers?**
- 4) On pages 73-76 May discusses the concept of discipline in relation to the birth of the prison. **What are the three central aspects of disciplinary training and how are these related to schooling and to the productivity of power?**
- 5) **What does it mean to say that the role of the body has changed "from being a site of pain to being a site of normalization" (May, page 77)?**
- 6) On pages 81-85 May outlines some differences between the traditional (liberal) view of power and a Foucauldian understanding of power. **What are these (connect with May's five theses of power)?**

DISCUSSION SESSION 6 - TUESDAY MAY 30 - 2PM - ROOM G8:507

READING: T. MAY CHAPTER 3, 85-95; QVARSEBO & AXELSSON, "LUTHERANS, VALUE PEOPLE OR US CITIZENS: THE EVER PRESENT DREAM OF THE GOOD CITIZEN."

- 1) **What are some of the practices or projects that make-up Swedish "foundation of values work," and what historical comparison do Axelsson and Qvarsebo draw to shed light on these practices and programs? What is your response to the connection they draw?**

- 2) Try to recall an experience you have had with programs similar to those outlined in the Swedish “foundation of values work” (anti-bullying, anti-drugs, anti-racism, anti-sexism, life skills, civics, ‘future’ this or that, etc.). **While you were a participant, did you see them as designed by others to shape *who you were* or *would become*? Were you oblivious, ambivalent, rebellious, something else? What do you think about these experiences now?**
 - 3) On pages 86-88 May discusses the *repressive hypothesis*. **What is the “repressive hypothesis,” and how is it questioned by Foucault?**
 - 4) Foucault describes four figures that he claims are “elements of the creation ... of sexuality” (May, page 88), **what are these and in what sense can they be said to be elements of the creation of sexuality and how do they relate to the notion of biopolitics?**
 - 5) Discuss key differences between Foucault's disciplinary power and his notion of bio-power. **How do these concepts relate to one another? And, how might these concepts of power (in contrast to the ‘traditional’ one (q6, discussion 5) alter the way we approach questions like: who are we? who might we become?**
 - 6) Refer back to the previous question, and to number 6 in Discussion 5. **Which of Foucault’s theses on power, and what types of power would help us examine Swedish “foundation of values work” as an exercise of power?**
 - 7) **In what sense does Foucault's genealogical approach help him resist the essentialism of what May terms “traditional philosophy” (page 94)?**
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EXERCISE 7 - WEDNESDAY MAY 31 - 2PM - ROOM NI:B0308

READING: T. MAY CHAPTER 4, 96-109; DAHLBECK, J. (2014) “HOPE AND FEAR IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”, *CRITICAL STUDIES IN EDUCATION* 55(2).

- 1) **How does Foucault's interest in the care of the self differ from his earlier genealogical project on sexuality? (May discusses three changes on pages 97-99)**
- 2) **On pages 100-101 May relates the care of the self to the Foucauldian notion of straying afield of oneself. How are these two concepts related? How is Foucault's notion of straying afield of oneself different from ancient understandings of the care of the self?**

3) Define the term *problematization* in the Foucauldian sense, and distinguish it from obligations, prohibitions and interdictions (May, pages 103-104). **How has the Swedish discourse on sustainable development ethically “problematized” the earth or consumption or technology? Can you name examples?**

4) Dahlbeck (pg. 11) utilizes the concept of ‘participatory governance’ (or the Foucauldian concept of governmentality) to read ‘Moffles and men,’ and advice given to teachers regarding sustainable development. **In these texts, can you locate the presence of competing discourses of childhood as they are diagrammed by Ryan, 558?**

5) Dahlbeck offers examples such as the “advertising no-thanks” sign-making project, and other seemingly “open-ended questions and what in a given context appear to be more less pre-determined answers” (pg. 12). **Why might such paradoxical pedagogical practices exist and what might they produce?**

Respond to the above question in light of the readings we have had to this point in the course. **Make a note that considers the above question in terms of at least three of these five:** (i) Foucault's 5 theses on power (May, 82-85); (ii) Ryan's discursive structure of modern childhood (Ryan, 2008, 558); Ryan's (2017) arguments about discipline and the 'spiral of reflexivity'; (iii) Axelsson's and Qvorsebo's analogue between Lutheran catechism and doing 'a value work,' (iv) what Dahlbeck calls the "functions of hope and fear for governing human behavior" (Dahlbeck, 160-162).

6) On pages 108-109, May discusses the four elements of the ethical. **Which are these and how do they relate to the care of the self?**

7) Take each of these four ethical elements in the above question, and apply them to what you learn in Dahlbeck about foundational value work on sustainable development in Swedish early childhood education by completing the following:

X part (or example or text) of the education for sustainable development seems to define the ethical substance as Y. (provide page numbers)

X part (or example or text) of the education for sustainable development seems to produce an ethical subject who is Y. (provide page numbers)

X part (or example or text) of the education for sustainable development seems to extend the ethical work to Y. (provide page numbers)

X part (or example or text) of the education for sustainable development seems to set an ethical goal which is Y. (provide page numbers)

EXERCISE 8 - THURSDAY JUNE 1 - 9:15A -12P, ROOM OR:E477

READING: T. MAY CHAPTER 4, 109-125

- 1) **What is the care of the self? What are some of the key differences between different conceptions of the care of the self as described by May in Chapter 4?**
- 2) **On page 111 May discusses some of the differences between the ancient Greek attitude towards pleasures of the body and the mastery of the self and the later Christian attitude. How do these approaches differ?**
- 3) **What distinguishes the ancient Greek understanding of freedom, discussed by May on pages 111-112, from a more contemporary understanding of freedom?**
- 4) **How can Foucault's concept of freedom be characterized? Insofar as Foucault's concept of freedom hints at a normative project for Foucault, how may this normative project be described and what distinguishes it from other normative approaches?**
- 5) **How can we describe the ancients' relation to the truth and how is this different from the relation of modern science to truth?**
- 6) **What does it mean to say that Foucault is attempting to introduce "aesthetic considerations into the conduct of living" (May, page 118), and how is this a critique of a modern approach to life?**
- 7) **How can Foucault's own ethics be characterized? Insofar as "the project of living otherwise" (May, page 120) hints at a normative project for Foucault, how is this normative project different from other - more dominant - normative projects? How can we describe Foucault's notion of freedom?**