Foucault, Freedom, and the Limits of Modernity

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In order to locate and understand a notion of freedom in the later works of Michel Foucault, I will first offer a discussion of delinquency as described in Discipline and Punish. Within this discussion I will argue against Thomas Dumm’s characterization of the delinquent as emblematic of freedom on the grounds that such a characterization is implicitly contested in Discipline and Punish. I will use aspects of Dumm’s characterization of freedom to transition into my own reading of late Foucault as thoroughly attentive to historical limits. It is my reading of Foucault that, through a critical and continued engagement with the limits of modernity, one may able to work towards personal freedom. Freedom will be understood, here, as one’s ability to enact some degree of autonomy. Indeed, in the face of the supposedly ubiquitous influence of power, I do not find this definition to be too modest. In locating this sort of freedom in late Foucault, I will draw upon Foucault’s specific discussions each of genealogy, space, modernity, and the cultivation of the self, and will relate each to a notion of historical limits. It is my aim with this paper to articulate the importance, for Foucault, of a critical recognition of these historical limits towards a cultivation of possible freedom.

Delinquency, as defined by Foucault, is an effect of incarceration, as it is produced within the prison itself, and is a tool used for the supervision of illegalities. A cyclical relationship exists between the prison, the police, and the delinquent, as “police surveillance provides the prison with offenders, which the prison transforms into delinquents, the targets and auxiliaries of police supervisions, which regularly send back a certain number of them to prison”. In this way, the prison system has succeeded in creating its own politically usable object of knowledge in the production of delinquency. As an object of knowledge, the delinquent is produced by the prison as the paradigmatic illegality, which acts as the pathologized subject of criminal behavior. Put another way, delinquency is that form of illegality that the prison is able to isolate, organize, and penetrate. The delinquent is useful to disciplinary power, then, as it
symbolically sums up all forms of illegality, making it possible to disregard those illegalities that must be tolerated. In this way, the delinquent is not the most dangerous of illegalities, and is not the form of illegality that must be eliminated through incarceration. Instead the delinquent is a necessary instrument of disciplinary power.

Dumm understands the delinquent as tied to freedom in two distinct ways. First, Dumm posits the delinquent himself as the emblematic figure of freedom in the modern world. The delinquent’s status as a figure of freedom is due to the delinquent’s role as disciplinary power’s paradigmatic transgressor. In so fully cultivating a transgressive existence for the delinquent, disciplinary power has created that sort of social being whose role it is to work against societal norms. Dumm understands the paradox of the imprisoned delinquent’s role as transgressor, as he states: “The double figuring of the delinquent as both prisoner and transgressor puts the most elemental aspect of freedom on the margins of a social order that claims freedom as its most important value.” In this statement, I understand Dumm as considering resistance, or transgression, as the “most elemental aspect of freedom.” By this characterization, that member of society most resistant to the norm is a symbol of freedom. Further, once released from prison, the delinquent remains a figure of freedom in practicing indiscipline. Indiscipline, as characterized by Dumm, is the manifestation in society at large of that transgressive behavior that has characterized the delinquent. In having been wholly constructed by disciplinary power, the delinquent in society possesses the “possibilities of resistance to discipline engendered by its domination.” Again, as Dumm characterizes freedom as transgression, the delinquent in society, practicing indiscipline, represents freedom.

For Dumm, the second way that the delinquent represents freedom involves the delinquent’s effect on society more broadly. That is, the techniques of surveillance are extended to the population at large through the continued surveillance of the delinquent after he is no longer incarcerated. In Dumm’s view, this extension of the techniques of surveillance encourages new ways in which to resist this surveillance. Resistance against surveillance, then, continues to arise in different ways as surveillance finds new methods of infiltration. As supervision of the delinquent is the stated reason for the carceral system’s entrance in society more broadly, and as the delinquent is responsible for this entrance, the delinquent’s existence also plays a role in the resistances that arise against the carceral system. Again, freedom is characterized by the struggle against disciplinary power, and as resistance against the growth of that power’s scope.

In arguing against Dumm’s characterization of the delinquent, I will give a close reading of that section of Discipline and Punish regarding illegalities and delinquen- cies. In doing so, I will argue against Dumm’s interpretation of carceral scrutiny as cultivating a unique transgressive capability in the delinquent. Instead, I interpret this carceral scrutiny as precluding the acquisition of the necessary means towards any sort of freedom. Indeed, the delinquent, once produced, experiences a fundamental disconnect with societal norms and behaviors. However because of physical constraints placed on the delinquent’s body, which extend beyond the walls of the prison, the
delinquent is unable to enact successful forms of transgression. My argument will serve, hopefully, to remove the delinquent from the unique role of transgressor, and will set the stage for a broader discussion concerning freedom in modernity.

According to Foucault, the prison creates and maintains delinquency in a number of ways. This creation and maintenance takes place both within the walls of the prison as well as outside of that physical space. Inside the prison, through means of isolation and useless work, an “unnatural, useless, and dangerous existence(s)” is bestowed upon individuals. Further, the prison produces delinquency through the violent constraints that it imposes on its inmates. That is, the prison is supposed to teach respect for the law, but instead abuses its power through various forms of corruption, employment of fear tactics, and exploitation. In creating delinquency in these ways, the prison fosters a feeling of solidarity amongst delinquent inmates against justice itself. It is within these sites of solidarity, which are most concentrated within the prison walls that a new morality is produced, and from which the delinquent breaks with everything that has previous bound him to society. I agree with Dumm, then, that Foucault describes the production of the delinquent as involving a certain encouragement towards transgression. It is within the realm of this production, which takes place within the prison walls, that the delinquent’s character is altered towards a rejection of authority, and towards an untamable character. The impetus for transgression is, therefore, produced.

However, once the incarcerated delinquent is freed, the actualization of this transgression is thwarted by other elements of the carceral system. The carceral system is defined, by Foucault, as combining “in a single figure discourses and architectures, coercive regulations and scientific propositions, real social effects and invincible utopias, programs for correcting delinquents and mechanisms that reinforce delinquency.” That is, first, the free delinquent is under continued police surveillance, restricted in areas of residence, and is unable to find work due to his delinquent status. Further, the delinquent’s family is thrown into destitution due to the delinquent’s inability to freely find work and residence. It is out of this individual and familial misery that the delinquent is condemned to recidivism. This recidivism, because of the intensity of the networks of surveillance, leads to further incarceration. If the delinquent does not succumb to recidivism, he is faced with the material insufficiencies described above. An inability to secure the means of sustenance precludes the ability to act freely in any sense, as one’s energies cannot help but be bound to this struggle. Put another way, one may only act freely if one is able to secure one’s means of sustenance. Therefore, as Foucault describes the delinquent as being able to secure the means of sustenance only through recidivism, which leads to further incarceration, the delinquent is a poor example of freedom in disciplinary society.

I disagree, also, with the second aspect of Dumm’s perceived relation between delinquency and freedom. Dumm understands the new and continued ways in which the network of surveillance operates, which enter into society via the delinquent, as providing new and continued means of transgression. Indeed, Dumm is right to understand delinquency as the way in which surveillance enters society, as Foucault
states:

...Delinquency, an object among others of police surveillance, is also one of its privileged instruments...Delinquency, with the secret agents that it procures, but also with the general policing that it authorizes, constitutes a means of perpetual surveillance of the population: an apparatus that makes it possible to supervise, through the delinquents themselves, the whole social field. ix

I begin to disagree with Dumm’s view regarding surveillance’s connection to transgressive behavior, however, after his characterization of the widespread resistance to the networks of surveillance. Indeed, as these methods of surveillance are part of an intricate network of disciplinary power, steps were taken to preclude such resistance. This prevention of resistance did not come through an obvious exertion of power, which would surely only serve to heighten resistance. Instead, the carceral system initiated a perception of the delinquent as Other, which served to posit a conception of the delinquent as dangerous to society, or as necessitating extensive techniques of surveillance. As Foucault highlights, there existed a:

patient attempt to impose a highly specific grid on the common perception of delinquents: to present them as close by, everywhere present and everywhere to be feared...Delinquency appears both as very close and quite alien, a perpetual threat to everyday life, but extremely distant in its origin and motives. x

The remaining potential for resistance against these networks of surveillance was seized by the working class and placed in the context of the already existing conflict with the bourgeoisie. That is, the working class often came to the defense of the delinquent through articles written in the workers’ newspapers. However, this defense of the delinquent was not directed against the carceral system. Instead, these papers argued that the origin of delinquency was society itself, as the distribution of wealth was so unequal as to produce a need for criminal activity. Regarding workers’ perceived responsibility for delinquency, Foucault writes that:

The man who kills you is not free to kill you. It is society, or to be more precise, bad social organization that is responsible...[This is so] because society is incapable of providing its fundamental needs...and the heart crushed by forced labor at too tender an age. xi

This way of arguing on behalf of the delinquent, in my view, simply subsumes transgressive potential against the networks of surveillance into the already existing workers’ struggle. As the backlash against networks of surveillance became a part of this ongoing antagonism, Dumm’s conception of a “transgressive impulse that comes
“into play through the very establishment of limits” seems to posit a stronger correlation between networks of surveillance and impetus towards transgression than Foucault intends. Foucault does not identify networks of surveillance with new ways of resisting disciplinary power. Instead, he points to the appropriation of the delinquent’s plight by the working class movement.

There is also a way in which these networks of surveillance would be even less explicit in modernity. Noting this change in governmental rationality is important, first, if Dumm is to posit the existence of delinquency in modernity, and therefore of delinquency as a site of modern freedom. More importantly, this change in governmental rationality is important for a broader argument against resistances to the networks of surveillance as sites of freedom in modernity. Foucault briefly addresses the modern sort of government rationality in the essay “Space, Knowledge, and Power.” In this essay, Foucault cites the shift from a carceral presence that “…manage[d] to penetrate, to stimulate, to regulate, and to render almost automatic all the mechanisms of society,” to a “limitation that applies to governmental actions such that things will occur…in conformity with the rationality of government, and without intervention.” The impetus for this change, as Foucault cites, was the discovery that the abundance of government intervention serves to produce results contrary to those desired. That is, to penetrate society too deeply through carceral intervention is to disrupt society’s “complex and independent reality,” and to therefore excite its “laws and mechanisms of reaction…its possibilities of disturbance.” These precautions were beginning to be taken already with regard to nineteenth-century delinquency, as articulated above. In any case, this argument suggests not only that resistance to the networks of surveillance was strategically prevented in nineteenth-century France, but that this sort of resistance is even less likely in modernity.

I have, above, argued that there are reasons given in Discipline and Punish against the understanding of delinquency as emblematic of freedom. Dumm’s discussion of the delinquent, though, does highlight an important notion regarding freedom in disciplinary society. That is, for Dumm, freedom can be found, through transgression, within the limits of disciplinary power. Indeed, in “What is Enlightenment?” Foucault understands modernity’s limits as important to a “critical ontology of the self.” In exploring the relationship between freedom and limits, I will investigate the degree to which the sort of transgression that Dumm ascribes to the delinquent may lead to freedom. For the purpose of my argument, this sort of transgression may be characterized, so as to make general, as resistance to the limits of disciplinary society without a strong understanding of those limits. Further, I will attempt to articulate a new form of transgression as calculated and carefully considered in contrast to the delinquent’s seemingly unreflective sort of resistance. It is my view that the possibility of free action within disciplinary society may be based on a direct acknowledgment of the limits of modernity, as well as a certain respect for these limits. I believe that this is Foucault’s own interpretation of the subject’s role in modernity.
I. CRITICAL ONTOLOGY AND THE LIMITS OF MODERNITY

In “What is Enlightenment?”, Foucault offers a philosophical ethos with which one is to engage with modernity. This ethos is understood as a “mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task.”15 I interpret this “belonging” as belonging to modernity and its attachment to Enlightenment values, and this “task” as being in a state of constant critique of modernity. This constant critique of both modernity and the Enlightenment poses a complicated relationship between the subject and her historical situation. That is, Foucault explains that this ethos’ job is not to accept a simplistic view that presents itself as either wholly for or against the Enlightenment. Rather, the practitioner of this ethos must understand herself as partially determined by the Enlightenment and as working within these contemporary limits.16

More specifically, Foucault understands this philosophical ethos as a “limit-attitude” through which the subject may conduct a practical critique of modernity towards possible transgression. This practical critique comes in the form of a historical investigation, the goal of which is to understand oneself as the subject of how one has been constituted, and how one acts, within the limits of modernity. Further, this investigation tries to identify, within the contingent constitution of how one acts in modernity, the possibility of no longer acting that way. Thus, as Foucault states, this ethos of permanent critique seeks to “give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.”17

Within this philosophical ethos there exists a definite consideration for the limits of modernity. Indeed, Foucault even makes a distinction between the “affirmation or the empty dream of freedom”, which is to be avoided, and “this work done at the limits of ourselves [which] must…open up a realm of historical inquiry and…put itself to the test of reality, of contemporary reality.”18 This “empty dream of freedom” seems to correspond with the understanding of institutions or spaces of freedom as sufficient for the birth of freedom itself. These spaces may, in some sense, be more conducive to a cultivation of freedom than are other spaces. However, Foucault understands these spaces as ultimately unable to ensure any sort of freedom.19 Searching for freedom outside of one’s own critical stance towards modernity is, then, an empty dream. The alternative to this empty dream, which is “carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings,” consists in a systematic investigation into and test of the historical limits that we may go beyond.20 This philosophical ethos does not consist in actually attempting to transcend these limits, because, as Foucault states, there is no “hope of ever acceding to a point of view that could give us access to any complete and definitive knowledge of what may constitute [these] limits.”21

Foucault outlines two specific aspects of this historico-critical investigation that I find most pertinent to this discussion of limits. First, Foucault discusses the homogeneity of this critical work with regard to what individuals do, and the ways that they do it, as influenced by the practical systems of modernity. That is, the practitioner
of the philosophical ethos, in engaging in this critical investigation, must view the freedom with which they act as organized by the modern forms of rationality. These ways of acting, as well as the critical investigations into these ways of acting, cannot help but adhere to some degree of homogeneity between individuals due to the shared limits that modernity imparts. If one were advised to, or even able to, step outside of these limits, there would be no reason for Foucault to emphasize this homogeneity as a necessary component of the philosophical ethos of modernity. One must remain within the limits of modernity, and be subject to this homogeneity, if one is to engage in Foucault’s suggested critical ontology.

The systematicity of this historico-critical investigation, especially the systematicity that pertains to the relations with oneself, is the other aspect of Foucault’s critical ontology which is relevant to the discussion of limits. The systematicity of this investigation, on my reading, can be characterized as the attempt to look more deeply into the realm of practices’ influence on one’s way of freely doing things, such that ways of going beyond the limits imposed by this realm may be discovered. Investigation into the specificity of the “axis of ethics,” or the relations with oneself, serves to enhance the understanding of how one is constituted as a moral subject of one’s own actions. In this way, one must attempt to search beyond the homogeneity of the historico-critical analysis of one’s way of acting in modernity, and of one’s relation to the modern realms of practice. That is, one must cultivate an understanding one’s relations with oneself as potential autonomous actor. However, this position of autonomy over oneself is paradoxical in that one is “constituted” as a subject of one’s own knowledge and moral actions. This constitution comes from the limits placed on the modern subject by the disciplinary practices of modernity itself, as Foucault writes:

“We have been able to see what forms of power relation were conveyed by various technologies...: disciplines, both collective and individual, procedures of normalization exercised in the name of the power of the state, demands of society or of population zones, are examples. What is at stake, then, is this: How can the growth of capabilities be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?”

The possibility of autonomy over oneself is, then, embedded within a strong relation to the limits imposed by modern practices of discipline and power relations. As argued with regard to both the homogeneity and systematicity of one’s critical investigation, one must appreciate modernity’s limits in order to enact the critical ontology of oneself. Therefore, as this critical ontology is necessary before possibly going beyond these limits, freedom may only come through the initial critical engagement with modernity’s limits, from within these limits.

II. CULTIVATION OF THE SELF AS RELATION TO ONESELF

In further exploring the investigation of one’s relations with oneself as necessary
for a proper philosophical ethos, I will appeal to Foucault’s *Care of the Self*. More specifically, I will look at Foucault’s investigation into the “cultivation of the self,” as articulated in the second part of this work. I aim to show, here, that Foucault accounts historically for one’s ability to relate to oneself, and that this relation may actively occur within the limits of one’s historical period.

Foucault’s discussion of the cultivation of the self, as pertaining to the self of Ancient Greece, emphasizes this cultivation’s personal objective. That is, the cultivation of the self took place for the self, and this relation to oneself was to be considered when undertaking most activities. Foucault states:

> The common goal of these practices of the self…can be characterized by the entirely general principle of conversion to self…in the activities that one ought to engage in, one had best keep in mind that the chief objective one should set for oneself is to be sought within oneself, in the relation of oneself to oneself.xxv

In positing this relation to oneself, Foucault is not arguing that one must transcend historical limits in order to somehow cultivate a relation to oneself outside of power’s reach. Instead, this cultivation is to focus on the pleasure that comes from such a relation, and specifically those pleasures that one may experience within the limits of history and power. In this way, one must not implement the notion that “one is answerable only to oneself…one exercises over oneself an authority that nothing limits or threatens”xxvi Instead, the relation to oneself may be defined as

> a concrete relationship enabling one to delight in oneself…the experience of self that forms itself in this possession is not simply that of a force overcome, or a rule exercised over a power that is on the point of rebelling; it is the experience of a pleasure that one takes in oneself. The individual who has finally succeeded in gaining access to himself is, for himself, an object of pleasure. Not only is one satisfied with what one is and accepting of one’s limits, but one ‘pleases oneself’.xxvii

Therefore, the relationship between the cultivation of the self and historical limits is not one involving transgression against those limits. Rather, one may experience pleasure through a deep relation with oneself within the limits of history.

It may be argued that this discussion of self-pleasure pertains specifically to ancient Greece, and is therefore irrelevant to modernity. I understand this criticism as accurate, but only to a point. That is, in citing that cultivation of the self which took place in Ancient Greece, I am not arguing that we must look towards this cultivation of the self as an example for the modern relation to oneself. Indeed, Foucault has argued specifically against just this sort of “hatred of the present.”xxviii Instead, I am simply pointing to an example of a relation to oneself that may occur within the limits of the historical period. Foucault characterizes this self-pleasure as accepting of one’s limits,
which seems to imply that, in Ancient Greece, this relation to oneself was not critical of the historical period. However, the self-relation that may occur in modernity, as Foucault describes it, seems to entail a critical stance regarding modernity’s influence on the subject’s self. This difference in content, on my view, is not important in this discussion. What is important, at least for this discussion, is that a relation to oneself may occur, and has occurred, within the limits of one’s historical period. It is the task of the modern subject to utilize this relation towards critical ends.

III. Spatial Limits and the Practice of Freedom

One may also argue on Foucault’s behalf for remaining within the specifically spatial limits of modernity. This argument, which relies on Foucault’s thoughts on society’s spatial elements, does not make the above claim that one must work towards freedom from within modernity’s limits. However, I will highlight a way in which Foucault argues that there is no spatial arrangement that explicitly precludes the practice of freedom. The notion of freedom that will be employed for this argument is the same as that used in the above discussion, which comes down to one’s ability to employ autonomy over oneself. It is my view that Foucault understands this autonomy as remaining attentive to historico-spatial limits.

In an interview called “Space, Knowledge, and Power,” Foucault doubts the supposed causal link between space and freedom. That is, on Foucault’s view, there is no institution or law that has the capacity, on its own, to ensure freedom. Indeed, as has been implied above, freedom is a practice. However, the absence of a causal link between institutional space and freedom does not mean that there is no correlation between these concepts. Indeed, Foucault articulates the impossibility of separately understanding the practice of freedom and the space in which it is practiced, or as conceiving of one without appeal to the other. Foucault states:

> I think it is somewhat arbitrary to try to disassociate the effective practice of freedom by people, the practice of social relations, and the spatial distributions in which they find themselves. If they are separated, they become impossible to understand. Each can only be understood through the other.

This relation seems to suggest that the only freedom that may be conceived of from within the limits and institutions of modernity is that which may be practiced within these limits. Therefore, it does not make sense, because it is seemingly impossible, to conceive of a freedom that is practiced outside of modernity’s limits. One must, instead, recognize modernity’s spatial limits, understood as its institutions and laws, in order to act freely.
IV. GENEALOGY AND MODERNITY: CRITIQUING THE SUPRA-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Foucault specifically cites genealogy as a necessary component of the philosophical ethos’ permanent critique of modernity. Using Foucault’s *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, I will argue that certain aspects of genealogical investigation may be translated into positive expressions of critique, and that these aspects of the critique of modernity must be enacted with explicit attention paid to modernity’s limits in order to be effective.

In expressing the importance of genealogy, Foucault introduces a way in which genealogy recognizes modernity’s limits. That is, genealogy is an alternative to the “suprahistorical perspective,” or that way of doing history by stepping outside of it. Foucault characterizes this sort of history as that “history whose perspective on all that precedes it implies the end of time, a completed development.”xxxi Effective history, or genealogy, “refuses the certainty of absolutes…[and] corresponds to the acuity of a glance that distinguishes, separates, and disperses.”xxxii In this way, genealogy is an important tool for critical ontology, as it helps to locate those aspects of modernity that constitute one as a subject of one’s knowledge and actions. Further, if genealogical investigation is necessary for adopting a critical ontology, genealogy must be undertaken within the limits of modernity. Indeed, it is the job of genealogy to expose these limits as accidental, and as not necessary for the “constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects.”xxxiii Since genealogy is necessary for this unveiling, we may not step outside of these limits until genealogy has determined their contingency and, therefore, our ability to possibly go beyond them.

More specifically, I understand Foucault’s three immediate uses of effective history as appreciative of modernity’s limits, if not only for the purpose of possibly finding fissures within these limits. That is, it is my view that Foucault’s articulation of effective history’s three uses further strengthens the claim that one must thoroughly understand these limits, and must work extensively within them, if one hopes to go beyond them. First, the parodic use of history is explicated as a response to modern individuals’ adoptions of past identities. The genealogist parodies this adoption by applying a number of these identities to herself at different times, serving to uncover the transience of these identities and their applications. It is through this process of delegitimating modern identity-options, and exposing their “unreality,” that the genealogist hopes to disrupt that supra-historical impulse to eternalize the past. Indeed, it is only through the supra- or traditional historical attempt to work outside of historical limits that this eternalization is attempted. Genealogy strives to highlight this attempt’s illegitimacy not by going beyond these accepted alternative identities, and therefore going beyond modernity’s limits, but by parodying these identities by excessively adopting them within historical limits.

Foucault’s second use of history is the “systematic disassociation of identity.”xxxiv This use of effective history is meant to indicate the plurality and competition of identities that are often misinterpreted as unified. The genealogical understanding of identity as a “complex system of distinct and multiple elements, unable to be mastered by
the powers of synthesis” emphasizes the mortality and discontinuity of one’s identity. This allows, or forces, the genealogist to remain situated within this multiplicity, from which she can investigate so as to criticize those disparate elements of which she is comprised. Again, it is the traditional historian that hopes to sever ties with the contingency and plurality of identity so as to “possess in oneself an immortal soul” outside of the limits of history.

The final use of history, which is the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge, is that use which most explicitly attempts to understand historical limits, while working within those limits, so as to move beyond them. According to Foucault, the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge is an inevitable part of historical investigation, as it occurs as a consequence of both traditional and genealogical history. That is, there is an intrinsic “violence [in the] position that sides against those who are happy in their ignorance, against the effective illusions by which humanity protects itself, [in the] position that encourages the dangers of research and delights in disturbing discoveries.”xxxv

However, it is only the genealogist that explicitly addresses this sacrifice made by the “will to knowledge,” and makes use of this sacrifice in criticizing modernity. The traditional historian, instead, makes this sacrifice without notice, in the name of objectivity and universality. The traditional historian claims to possess the capacity for absolute knowledge, outside of the constraints of history, whereas the genealogist deliberately sacrifices the traditional historian as the subject of absolute knowledge. The genealogist, then, engages in the “destruction of the man who maintains knowledge by the injustice proper to the will to knowledge,” and thereby destroys the traditional historian’s claim to objectivity and limitless knowledge.

We must now return to the case of the delinquent. It has been my aim, with this paper, to distinguish between Dumm’s notion of freedom as ascribed to the delinquent and my interpretation of Foucault’s notion of freedom as a critical engagement with historical limits. By interpreting Foucault’s discussions of the modern self as very much related to the limits of that self’s historical period, I have tried to put forth a subtle way in which the subject must engage critically and continuously with historical limits in order to possibly reach a place of sovereignty over oneself. I have not argued that this sovereignty is imminent for, as Foucault states, “I do not know whether we will ever reach mature adulthood.”xxxvi Instead, I only hope to have shown that, on Foucault’s view, the search for freedom necessitates an active and agonistic consideration of limits. Indeed, the delinquent does not meet this criteria first because it is not his constituted position in society to be reflective of these limits. Second because he is the embodiment, produced by disciplinary power, of those limits with which others may critically engage. In this way, the delinquent is important to the discussion of freedom and limits in Foucault because he is uniquely unable to effectively criticize these limits. Indeed, he is a limit with which the rest of society may engage. Therefore, the delinquent is an unfortunate yet helpful example, unfortunate because he is unable to work towards freedom, and helpful because he motivates the above discussion.
ENDNOTES

3: Dumm, 112.
4: Dumm, 114.
5: DP, 266.
7: DP, 271.
8: DP, 267.
10: DP, 286.
11: DP, 287.
12: Dumm does not discuss this notion in *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom*. However, he may address some similar idea in his book *Democracy and Punishment: Disciplinary Origins of the United States*. I have not investigated whether or not delinquency comes up in this work, as doing so is outside the scope of this paper.
16: WIE, 43.
17: WIE, 46.
18: WIE, 46.
19: I will address this concept more thoroughly later in the paper through a discussion of spatial limits and freedom.
20: WIE, 47.
21: WIE, 47.
23: WIE, 49.
24: WIE, 48.
26: COS, 65.
27: COS, 66, italics mine.
28: Foucault argues, in Spaces, Knowledge, and Power, that one must be careful not to “designate that which has just occurred as the primary enemy, as if this were always the principal form of oppression from which one had to liberate oneself…There is in this hatred of the present or the immediate past a dangerous tendency to invoke a completely mythical past.”

29: In this discussion, Foucault uses the word “liberty” instead of “freedom”. As liberty is commonly understood as a sort of “negative freedom,” I think that it may be understood, in this context, as the absence of total constraint by the modern realms of practice.


33: WIE, 46.

34: N, G, H, 94.


36: WIE, 48.