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*Michel Foucault*. By L. Fendler. Pp 235. London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group. 2010. £75 (hbk). ISBN 9781847060884.

Lynn Fendler's book *Michel Foucault* (2010) is welcome as an introduction to one of the greatest thinkers of the twentieth century. If people know his name they are not often familiar with his works. This book would remedy that.

There are four main parts to the book. Part I is entitled 'Intellectual Biography' and covers Foucault's intellectual, national and international world. What *should* be in an introduction? In Foucault's case there should be something about his intellectual journey through Poitiers' schools, Paris's famous lycée Henry IV, and Paris's L'École Normale Supérieure (ENS) because of, as examples, his prevarications between studying history and philosophy, the influence upon him of the Second World War, and the great philosophers in Paris. Many books on Foucault cover (briefly) Foucault's earlier years before embarking on what is crucial for that book, for example, power. The reader can consult such an early chapter (or two), but there are often errors, and the three biographies – Eribon, Macey and Miller – are the safest to consult.

The secondary thesis for his 'doctorate' was Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. This has been available in English only recently, but it should be read before *The Order of Things* (as an introduction). What is particularly well done by Fendler is her advice on *how* to start reading Foucault; his 'place' in French (and international) philosophy and in French academia (in general).

Part II contains a number of definitions of his major concepts, such as discourse, archaeology and genealogy. I will concentrate on discourse. As a good way to *understand* Foucault's notions, she uses *analogies* with the internet. Thus, with discourse,

if it is not on the internet then, in some sense, it does not exist for us. Similarly, if something has never been thought or been put into words then it is not in discourse and in some sense, it does not exist for us. For anything that is not in discourse, we cannot know it; and as soon as we can know something it is in discourse. (Fendler, 2010, p. 36)

She continues (pp. 36–37) using the internet analogy, which seems to me an excellent tool for initially understanding Foucault. But merely leaving this analogy as it is, involves a different definition of 'discourse', which may be misleading. Fendler earlier (p. 16) had defined discourse as meaning 'a network of language, actions, laws, beliefs, and objects that make our lives understandable.' But the analogy is not sufficient for that earlier definition. I would offer an addition to her earlier definition from Thomas Flynn (2005, p. 30). Flynn says that Foucault's archaeologies (e.g., *The Archaeology of Knowledge*) examine archives by which he means 'systems that establish statements (énoncés) as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and as *things* (with their own possibility and field of use)' (Flynn quoting Foucault, p. 30). These can be considered as a gathered set of discourses actually pronounced, and not just any old set of discourses. The archive is a 'thing' with its own economy, scarcities etc. Thus any linguistic understanding of the archive becomes modified.

Foucault, in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, is careful to define what *he* means by a statement and it is not just a normal linguistic item like a sentence or a proposition. Thus a snarl or, on the military parade ground, two guttural sounds from the drill sergeant, may be understood as 'left turn' or 'right turn' or 'stand easy.' Woe betide a raw recruit who turns left instead of right – even if she or he may just be learning that military discourse. A basic statement then needs to be 'contextualised.'

In Part III several critical expositions are given of some of Foucault's works. I missed the later Foucault lectures. Unfortunately Fendler saw them only as precursors to Foucault's books (p. 121). I have been reading the lectures recently and her judgement seems awry. In the lectures Foucault exhibits contents, positions and arguments that do not occur in his later books (see for example, *The Birth of Biopower*).

In summary I believe that Fendler's book is very good. As suggested in the Preface and the Foreword it is more than a primer. George Dumezil, Philosopher of Theology and close mentor and friend of Foucault, said that there were a thousand Foucaults. There are certainly more than a thousand Foucault readers and thereby perhaps more than a thousand *readings* of Foucault. As part of that thousand plus, readers of this book should soon be able to consult with the author about her critical appraisals in Parts II and III.

#### REFERENCE

Flynn, T. (2005) Foucault's mapping of history, In G. Gutting (Ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).

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