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Amy Nigh & Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson

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How method travels: genealogy in Foucault and Castro-Gómez

Amy Nigh[a,b] and Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson[a,b]

[a]Department of Philosophy, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA; [b]Department of Philosophy, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, USA

ABSTRACT

This paper examines whether, and how, Foucauldian genealogy travels to contexts and problematizations beyond the method's European site of articulation. Our particular focus is on the work of Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez, whose work includes both a systematic defense of the usefulness of Foucauldian inquiry for decolonial study and genealogical inquiry in a Foucauldian spirit but in a context beyond Foucault's own horizon of study. We show that taking up Foucault's work in the context of Latin America leads Castro-Gómez to significantly change Foucauldian *concepts, categories*, and *methods*. We further survey the potential synergies of decolonial thought and Foucauldian critique, while also highlighting how their joint mobilization requires a revision and problematization of key commitments of both approaches.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary political philosophy has seen a veritable explosion of genealogical inquiry. Over the past two decades or so, a wide range of pressing political issues, from liberalism and neoliberalism to resentment, resilience, disobedience, the state, racism, realism, conscience, sovereignty, gender, and various forms of political violence, have been subject to genealogical analysis.[1] Even political theory itself has been the subject of genealogical inquiry (Alexander 2018). Yet, despite the long-standing and prolific *use of* genealogy in political theory and philosophy, scholars have done comparatively little systematic work

CONTACT Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson verlenbu@syr.edu

[1]For a small sample of works see Anwar (2018); Beistegui (2018); Bourbeau (2018); Bradley (2019); Brown (2015, 2019); Dean (1999); Dean and Villadsen (2016); Dilts (2014); Ditrych (2014); Engels (2015); Erlenbusch-Anderson (2018a); Laudani (2011); Lemke (1997); Mbembe (2017, 2019); Meiches (2019); Millard (2015); Mongia (2018); Ojakangas (2013); Olson (2016); Popa (2017); Rambukwella (2018); Repo (2015).

of *meta-theoretical reflection on* genealogy as a method of political theory.[2] Only a fairly small number of scholars have explicitly taken on second-order questions of method to examine the specificity of genealogy as a mode of critical inquiry as it is deployed in disciplines like philosophy, political theory, history, or law.[3] A recurrent claim in these debates is that Foucauldian method, in particular, is eminently useful to examine contexts and problematizations Foucault himself did not consider.

This paper seeks to substantiate this claim by investigating the use of Foucauldian genealogy as it is mobilized in a non-European geopolitical context. Specifically, we are interested in the use of genealogical analysis with and for decolonial work.[4] Given the Eurocentrism of Foucault's work, which has been subject to post- and decolonial critique, such interest in a productive dialogue between these two traditions might appear misguided.[5] But it is precisely the Eurocentrism of Foucault's own genealogies that throws into sharp relief the potential mobility of genealogy *as a method*. The work of decolonial theorists who already make use of genealogy thus presents a particularly propitious opportunity for studying the use of genealogy in contexts outside Foucault's own field of inquiry.[6]

Our aim in this paper, then, is to examine how genealogy travels to such contexts. Our particular focus will be on the work of Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez, whose reflections on method and genealogies of modernity/coloniality in Colombia are particularly fruitful for this purpose for two reasons. First, his body of work includes an explicit account of the status of coloniality in Foucault's own work and a systematic defense of the usefulness of Foucauldian inquiry for decolonial

[2]We acknowledge that there is significant disagreement among scholars about what genealogy is. While some regard it as an empirical-historical method grounded in archival research, others describe it as a mode of philosophical critique; a philosophical tradition running, roughly, from Nietzsche to Foucault; or as a particular way of doing history. The focus on this paper is on genealogy as a historico-empirical method appropriate for understanding present phenomena. For further discussion see in particular (Bevir 2008; Elden 2003; Davidson 1986; Dutilh Novaes 2015; Geuss 2002; Hacking 2004; Hoy 1994; Koopman 2013; Saar 2007).

[3]See Braunstein et al. (2017); Erlenbusch-Anderson (2018b); Geuss (2002); Koopman (2013, 2015); Koopman and Matza (2013); Krupp (2008); Saar (2007).

[4]For the purpose of this paper, we understand decoloniality as a set of practices, perspectives, philosophies, and social movements, both inside and outside the academy, which seek a 'delinking' (Castro-Gómez 2019) from and 'undoing of Eurocentrism's totalizing claim and frame, including the Eurocentric legacies incarnated in U.S.-centrism and perpetuated in the Western geopolitics of knowledge' (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 2). For more detailed discussion of coloniality and decoloniality in English see, for instance, Bhambra (2014); Grosfoguel (2007); Lugones (2007); Maldonado-Torres (2004); Maldonado-Torres (2007, 2016); Mignolo (2011); Mignolo and Walsh (2018); Ortega (2017); Quijano (2000); Wynter (2003).

[5]On this point see for instance Ahluwalia (2010); Lazreg (2017); Legg (2007); Mezzadra (2011); Nichols (2010); Said (1979, 2002); Spivak (2010); Stoler (1995); Young (1995).

[6]For some representative examples see Castro-Gómez (2005, 2009); Chatterjee (1995); Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015); Pérez (1999); Stoler (1995).

study. Second, Castro-Gómez has conducted genealogical inquiry in a Foucauldian spirit but in a context beyond Foucault's own horizon of study. His work thus allows us to survey both how Foucauldian genealogy is transformed when it is transported to a site outside its (European) context of articulation and how the use of genealogy also changes theoretical frameworks and understandings of coloniality. We show that Castro-Gómez's reading of Foucault against Foucault for the purpose of a de-Europeanized and decolonized critique of modernity results in a fundamental transformation of Foucauldian inquiry. If the present is constituted by complex entanglements between Europe and its colonies, then genealogy, as a history of the present, must situate the local practices it explores in their complex entanglements with global processes through which they are formed. By interrogating Castro-Gómez's joint mobilization of decolonial thought and Foucauldian analysis, we show that his resulting approach is more than the sum of its parts and instead problematizes and transforms both traditions. Note that the investigation pursued in this paper is not itself genealogical or decolonial. Rather our goal is to examine how genealogy travels to new contexts and intersects with other modes of inquiry through a reconstruction of Castro-Gómez's genealogy that locates the emergence of Colombian modernity/coloniality in eighteenth-century discourses and practices of Enlightenment science in New Granada.[7]

To accomplish this purpose, we begin by distinguishing different elements of Foucauldian inquiry, namely, concepts, categories, and methods (section 2). In section 3, we situate Castro-Gómez's uptake of Foucauldian genealogy against the background of his critique of decolonial theory, and we survey his explicit reflections on the specific kind of Eurocentrism that haunts Foucault's work. Castro-Gómez argues that Foucault's method is Eurocentric in content, though not in form. That is, while the concepts Foucault articulates on the basis of his genealogical method are tied to a European context and cannot easily be applied to other sites, the method itself is not Eurocentric and even offers resources that allow for a more nuanced understanding of the coloniality of power. Yet, Castro-Gómez's application of genealogy to trace the emergence of Colombian modernity complicates this view, suggesting that genealogy is not a 'pure' method that can travel without modification. Rather, his

[7]Nueva Granada, or the Viceroyalty of New Granada, was the name given to the jurisdiction under Spanish colonial rule that comprises the present-day countries Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. For detailed historical accounts of Spanish colonial rule in the Americas and the creation of New Granada see Eissa-Barroso (2016); Kuethe and Andrien (2014).

decolonial inflection of Foucauldian genealogy transforms the method itself into a historical ontology of ourselves that is much more radical than Foucault had imagined. To illustrate this claim, in section 4 we reconstruct Castro-Gómez's own genealogy of Colombian modernity that traces how Enlightenment discourses are taken up in the colonies where they generate contextually specific modes of subjectivity, norms of behavior, and bodies of knowledge. We conclude in section five with some reflections on the limitations and opportunities of Castro-Gómez's genealogy of Colombian modernity and of genealogical method more generally.

2. Concepts, methods, categories: components of Foucauldian inquiry

One key question motivating this paper is what happens to Foucauldian genealogy when it is used to study contexts and problems that are beyond the purview of Foucault's own horizon. While Foucault's work has been taken up in a range of fields about which he had nothing to say, a number of commentators have cautioned against a straightforward application of Foucauldian inquiry to new problematics.[8] They base their warning on the idea that Foucault's enigmatic concepts like governmentality, biopolitics, or discipline arise from an examination of the historically and contextually specific phenomena which they describe.

At the heart of these scholars' intervention is a distinction between *concepts*, *categories*, and *methods* in Foucault's work. Deploying this distinction, Koopman and Matza (2013, 824) suggest that whereas methods are 'constraints, limits, and heuristics that facilitate inquiry', concepts are 'formulations emerging out of or produced by inquiry'. Foucault's most prominent methods are archaeology and genealogy, and it is through these methods that Foucault elaborates concepts such as 'discipline', 'biopower', or 'governmentality'. Seen in this way, the concepts or conceptual networks that emerge out of the application of a method on a particular field site retain a highly specific empirical imprint that reflects the data they interpret. As a consequence, Koopman and Matza submit that while 'concepts require a high degree of careful disinterring in order to be redeployed, [methods] are much more portable in their original form' (825).

Notice, however, that archaeology and genealogy rely on certain terms or assumptions that facilitate and structure inquiry. Take as an example

[8]See Braunstein et al. (2017); Erlenbusch-Anderson (2018b); Koopman (2015); Koopman and Matza (2013).

Foucault's genealogy of penal practices in *Discipline and Punish*. His tracing of the contingent emergence of the prison as the preferred mode of punishment in France in the eighteenth century gives rise to Foucault's articulation of the concept of discipline to describe the particular way in which power is exercised on the bodies of individuals. *Discipline and Punish* offers both an archaeology of penal styles, which describes the differences between public torture and the prison, and a genealogy of modern power that locates the conditions of possibility of the emergence of the prison in the rise of a new kind of disciplinary power that comes to complement traditional forms of sovereignty. The concept of discipline thus captures a specific mode of using power that emerged in a highly localized historical and geographical context and that produces docile bodies through 'a dispositif that constrains through the play of the gaze' (Foucault 1975, 173). The notions of 'dispositif', 'power', and 'practice', however, are not themselves subject to critical inquiry but rather provide the framework that bestows intelligibility on Foucault's genealogy. Koopman and Matza (2013, 824) propose to call *categories* such 'conceptual lenses' that function 'as analytical grids of intelligibility' and organize inquiry from the outset. Categories are operative in the application of the method and serve as analytic tools that help demarcate the initial space of inquiry. In contrast to 'concepts [which] emerge out of the work of inquiry, … categories function like lenses through which inquiry takes place' (823). They are analytic tools imposed on an investigation or study by the researcher to orient the project, guide the selection of materials, and provide direction, coherence, and intelligibility. Like methods, categories are part of the analytic apparatus of inquiry, but like concepts, they must be attuned to the context on which inquiry is brought to bear. Different archaeologies or genealogies will, therefore, mobilize different categories depending on the subject matter under consideration and the aims of a particular inquiry. To illustrate this point, we simply note the contrast between the importance of the categories of power, dispositif, and practice in *Discipline and Punish* and the centrality of 'discourse', 'order', and 'structure' in Foucault's archaeology of the human sciences in *The Order of Things* (1998) where he develops the concept of episteme to describe the different ways in which knowledge was organized in the Renaissance, the classical age, and modernity.

Given the highly contextualized, empirical nature of Foucault's historical work, distinguishing between concepts, categories, and methods acknowledges different ways of approaching a field site to conduct inquiry while attending to the importance of context in shaping the results of that

inquiry. It also draws attention to the different mobilities of various conceptual and analytic elements. This has important consequences for the possibility of extending Foucauldian genealogy to other sites. In particular, we cannot simply assume that concepts emerging from genealogical inquiry meaningfully apply to other contexts. As Colin Koopman (2015, 576) argues, 'the application of extant concepts to ever more domains' is underwritten by 'hunting procedures' that 'predetermine what we will find; namely, that which is being hunted, just because the hunted conceptually organizes the field of inquiry at the outset'. A simplistic use of concepts that are designed to capture highly specific phenomena, in other words, leads to a kind of 'inflationism' that assumes what Foucault, in his discussion of the concept 'state', describes as an 'interchangeability of analyses' that is in tension with his own prioritization of discontinuity and change. The result is a 'loss of specificity', a 'general disqualification by the worst' which rejects a phenomenon not based on its real existence but its worst possible incarnation, an 'elision of actuality', and a lack of self-reflection and self-criticism (Foucault 2010, 187–188). Whether Foucault's concepts are meaningful beyond their context of emergence is, thus, a question to be answered through empirical study rather than a matter that can be decided in advance.

Foucault's critics have argued that the content of his analyses is Eurocentric due to his focus on Europe as the location of modernity (Mitchell 2000); his lack of attention to the role of imperialism, colonialism, and race in the formation of European sexuality (Stoler 1995); and his drawing of 'ostensibly universal conclusions' from his 'limited French evidence' (Said 2002, 196). This critical literature shows how 'the Orient' functions as a practically and epistemologically constitutive outside for Foucault's analyses of European practices and technologies of power (Lazreg 2017; Legg 2007). While one must, thus, be cautious in applying Foucault's concepts to contexts outside of their space of articulation in Western Europe, it is less clear whether his methods require the same degree of caution in extending them beyond the particular European context from which they emerged, lest they operate in the service of an epistemological colonialism.[9] In the following sections, we take up precisely this question and examine whether the conditions of articulation of Foucault's methods, like those of his concepts, make the method

[9]On the notion of epistemological colonialism see for instance Kincheloe (2008); Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008); Smith (1999).

itself, rather than the choice of contexts or the results of its application, Eurocentric and difficult to move without significant modification.

3. Castro-Gómez on decoloniality and genealogy

One prominent philosopher who has taken up the question of Foucauldian method in a non-European context is Santiago Castro-Gómez. Before turning to his genealogy of Colombian modernity, this section situates Castro-Gómez's turn to Foucault in the context of his critique of decolonial theory and examines his explicit reflections on and defense of Foucauldian analytics as an appropriate tool for the study of coloniality.

Castro-Gómez's oeuvre over the past three decades constitutes an effort to take seriously the claim that modernity and coloniality are inextricably intertwined and to account for the nature, limits, and promises of their relation. This project is motivated by an ambivalent relationship with decolonial thought. On the one hand, Castro-Gómez values decoloniality as a framework for understanding the history and present of Latin America that is superior to the Eurocentric view offered by twentieth-century philosophy and social science. On the other hand, he rejects a too rigid dichotomy of modernity and coloniality, center and periphery, and a subsequent turning away from all things modern and European that he diagnoses in certain decolonial theorists such as Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel, Leopoldo Zea, or Rodolfo Kusch. Such anti-modernism, Castro-Gómez argues, not only goes against the fundamental premise of decolonial thought but is also politically erroneous and self-refuting. First, the affirmation of radical exteriority that Castro-Gómez identifies, for instance, in the work of Mignolo and Dussel constitutes a regression with regard to the basic decolonial claim that modernity and coloniality are two sides of the same coin. Moreover, Castro-Gómez argues that demands for a 'philosophy that favors a Latin American "exteriority" with regard to Western modernity are, in fact, discourses that belong to a typically modern order of knowledge for whose articulation and diffusion those [decolonial] intellectuals have played a fundamental role' (Castro-Gómez 1996, 12).[10] And finally, a rejection of all things European is in tension with the centrality of European philosophical traditions from Marxism to phenomenology or psychoanalysis in the development of decolonial critique.

[10]For a restatement of this view see also Castro-Gómez (2019).

It is in response to these criticisms of decolonial thought that Castro-Gómez calls for methodological self-reflection with the aim of realizing the conceit of decolonial theory, namely thinking together modernity and decoloniality. For Castro-Gómez, such self-reflection involved a turn to the dialectical method of the Frankfurt School and Foucault's genealogy. His uptake of Foucault, in particular, is motivated by a desire to develop a more nuanced view of modernity and coloniality, not as monolithic structures facing each other but as 'a conjuncture of different rationalities in permanent conflict' (Castro-Gómez 2019, 11). Following Foucault's rejection of 'the "blackmail" of the Enlightenment' according to which 'one has to be "for" or "against" the Enlightenment' (Foucault 2007a, 119–120), Castro-Gómez aims to articulate the relationship between modernity and coloniality in order to achieve the 'creative and emancipatory assimilation of modernity realized from its colonial histories' and to '*de-Europeanize* the legacy of modernity by means of the normative criteria of modernity itself' (Castro-Gómez 2019, 11).

As Castro-Gómez explains in a 2007 article titled '*Michel Foucault y la colonialidad del poder*' ('Michel Foucault and the Coloniality of Power'), a dialectical and genealogical account of modernity/coloniality is the corner stone of this project for two reasons. First, it allows him to reject the notion of a 'pure' periphery, clearly demarcated from the center, by foregrounding the multiple and changing relations that are constitutive of both Europe and the colonies. Second, it allows him to correct what he perceives as an impoverished hierarchical understanding of power in post- and decolonial theory. In short, by applying a decolonial hermeneutic to Foucault's work, Castro-Gómez elaborates a de-Europeanized account of modernity and a heterarchical account of coloniality of power that enables him to reject the blackmail of modernity according to whose false dichotomy one must either be anti-modern or Eurocentric.

Let us consider Castro-Gómez's appropriation of Foucault in some more detail, starting with his problematization of the notion of power that underlies decolonial thought. His main target is a broadly Marxist and structuralist view of power which decolonial theorists import from world-systems theory and according to which colonial power is a long-standing structure that is implanted at the very heart of the capitalist global economy and reproduced at every level of social life.

This account in turn gives rise to a modification of Foucault's account of power, which prepares the ground for Castro-Gómez's second intervention: correcting what he perceives as an impoverished understanding of power in post- and decolonial theory. More specifically, he aims to

problematize the broadly Marxist and structuralist view of colonial power as a long-standing structure that is implanted at the very heart of the capitalist global economy and reproduced at every level of social life. We can see this in Aníbal Quijano's seminal concept of the coloniality of power, by which he understands a form of social organization based on the idea of race and a new division of labor that has its origin in European colonialism and global capital. For Quijano (2000, 533), coloniality is not merely a historical category but a 'model of power that is globally hegemonic today'. On his view, the colonial era divided the world into two basic units: the colonizer and the colonized wherein the colonizers 'exercised', 'repressed', 'expropriated' and 'forced' the colonized who were 'condemned' and 'objectified' through the imposition of 'colonized forms of knowledge production' that 'forced the colonized to learn the dominant culture' (540–41). As Castro-Gómez points out, the model of power underlying this account of coloniality is one in which power is essentially understood in terms of domination, leaving little room for the productive effects of power with regard to the construction of knowledges, behaviors, and modes of subjectivity. Moreover, Quijano's account presupposes that power is isomorphic at different levels. That is, he assumes that global relations of domination are replicated at the local level.

For Castro-Gómez, however, this view fails to account for the specific and concrete ways in which colonial power is exercised at different levels of social life. As a consequence, he proposes to replace this 'hierarchical representation of power' according to which all exercises of power follow the same logic, with a 'heterarchical' view of power that he gleans from Foucault and which attends to the concrete functioning of different regimes of power at various levels of abstraction (Castro-Gómez 2007, 155). Specifically, he distinguishes three levels:

> [A] *microphysical level* on which technologies of discipline and of the production of subjects operate … ; a *mesophysical level* on which the governmentality of the modern State and its control over populations through biopolitics is inscribed; and a *macrophysical level* in which supra-state dispositifs of security are located which facilitate the 'free competition' between hegemonic states for the natural and human resources of the planet. On each of these three levels capitalism and coloniality of power manifest in *different* ways. (162)

Notice that these three levels are not Foucault's conceptual innovation, who, despite his articulation of a heterarchical model of power, explicitly rejects global analysis in favor of attending to how power is exercised at the local level.[11] Rather, they come into view against the background of

Castro-Gómez's decolonial reading of Foucault, which enables a focus on the interdependence of local, regional, and global forms of power. Castro-Gómez thus gleans from Foucault a non-hierarchical conception of power which he modifies so as to accommodate a decolonial concern with totality via an understanding of coloniality as a global phenomenon.[12]

For Castro-Gómez, such a heterarchical view of power is particularly relevant for post- and decolonial studies because it offers a mode of thinking about and a method for studying coloniality that understands the complexity and lasting effects of colonization which inform present modes of sociality in Latin America. This method is genealogy: an empirical investigation into the heterogeneous and contingent historical processes that have made the present what it is. Yet his turn to Foucault in the service of a more nuanced understanding of coloniality appears controversial in light of post- and decolonial criticism of Foucault's work. Scholars like Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha have famously argued that it is precisely Foucault's attention to local exercises of power that makes his work unhelpful for a consideration of the global networks of power that characterize colonialism and coloniality.[13] But for Castro-Gómez, this rejection of Foucault falls prey to the very blackmail of modernity that forces one to accept the modern-colonial terms of discourse. A genuine decolonial intervention, according to Castro-Gómez, instead asks what is worth salvaging from Foucault to be put to decolonial use. This does not amount to a wholesale adoption of Foucault's work in unmodified form or a reading of Foucault as a thinker of decoloniality. Rather, Castro-Gómez's claim is that Foucault's work yields tools – in this case, the insight that power circulates in 'many directions' and always as part of a complex 'network' in which local and global levels are connected through a variety of practices in ways that are neither necessary nor pre-determined (Castro-Gómez 2007, 162) – through which that very work can be decolonized.

To articulate such a de-Europeanized account of modernity through Foucault's heterarchical view of power, Castro-Gómez examines when and how coloniality appears in Foucault's own work. The first example

[11]Consider just two instructive examples from Foucault's work. In 'What Is Enlightenment?' (2007a), Foucault advises that genealogical critique must reject all global or radical aspirations. Similarly, in *'Society Must Be Defended'* (2004a, 6) he argues that the successful application of global theories to concrete problematics requires that the 'theoretical unity of their discourse is, so to speak, suspended, or at least cut up, ripped up, torn to shreds, turned inside out, displaced, caricatured, dramatized, theatricalized, and so on'.

[12]On totality in decolonial and critical theory see Zambrana (2016). On the notion of inheritance see Allen (2016).

[13]On this point see Bhabha (1994); Said (1994); Spivak (2010).

he considers is Foucault's controversial discussion of racism, which diverges significantly from traditional notions of 'ethnic racism' that targets foreign races deemed inferior (Foucault 2004b, 316). For Foucault, by contrast, 'racism' is the name for a set of mechanisms specific to biopolitical societies that enable the elimination of those members of the population who are said to threaten the life of the social body as a whole. Recall that, for Foucault, the sovereign right to 'take life or let live' is supplemented in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by new powers that '"make" live and "let" die' (Foucault 2004a, 241). These new forms of biopower target the life of individuals and populations in order to produce a strong and healthy social body. These processes, however, also require mechanisms to identify and exclude those who threaten its integrity – and this is precisely what racism does. As Castro-Gómez explains, Foucault's account of racism is a genealogy of 'the mode in which the discourse of *physical, ethnic, and moral superiority* is transformed into a biopolitical dispositif of the modern State'.

> His thesis is that this discourse appears in different moments and with different conjunctures: first at the end of the 16th century and in the middle of the 17th century in within the emerging English bourgeoisie, then in the 18th century as a weapon of the French aristocracy against the bourgeoisie, after that in the 19th century under the cover of social Darwinism, and, finally, in Nazi concentration camps and Soviet gulags during the 20th century. In sum, Foucault wants to present a genealogy of racism as a biopolitical technology in the hands of the State that is concretized in different situations. What interests him, then, is not racism 'in itself' but racism as a discursive formation and a dispositif of war of the state against unwanted populations inside the borders of Europe. Populations against whom biopolitics does not apply as a technology that 'makes live,' but as a strategy of 'letting die,' that is, of killing. (Castro-Gómez 2007, 158)

At first blush, such an understanding of racism appears very remote both from more mainstream notions of racism as well as colonialism. But as Castro-Gómez shows, colonialism plays a role in Foucault's account as '*one* specific form of racism'. For Foucault claims that before it was absorbed into the mechanisms of the modern European state, racism had 'functioned elsewhere' (Foucault 2004a, 254) – namely, in colonization and 'colonizing genocide' bent on 'destroying the enemy race … destroying that sort of biological threat that those people over there represent to our race' (257).[14] To be sure, on this account racism neither originates in nor constitutes the condition of possibility for colonialism, as is often

[14]On the notion of racism in Foucault see Erlenbusch (2017); Hong and Ferguson (2011); Kelly (2004); Macey (2009); Mader (2011); McWhorter (2009); Rasmussen (2011); Stoler (1995); Taylor (2011).

assumed. Rather, Foucault reverses such causal explanations to show that colonial racism is a specific manifestation of a more general mechanism of social defense that operates through the circulation of different technologies of power across various contexts. Through Castro-Gómez's decolonial hermeneutic, colonialism thus comes into view as itself a condition of possibility of modern biopolitical racism, which serves the purpose of defending European society against internal threats. In other words, coloniality provides the lens through which Castro-Gómez renders intelligible colonial racism as a mechanism and enabling condition of social defense for European society.

But coloniality not only sheds light on Foucault's account of the mesophysics of power, that is, of biopolitical concerns with the health and survival of European society. It also offers a framework through which to ascertain Foucault's concern with global power relations, for instance as they operate in his account of the emergence of the modern European interstate system of security. In *Security, Territory, Population* (2007b), Foucault argues that the emergence of European nation states can only be understood against the background of larger developments at the international or global level, developments which are themselves subject to historical change. While in the 16th century interstate relations arose out of the conquest of the Americas and Spain's imperial claims over other European states, the seventeenth century saw the formation of an interstate system in which an equilibrium of forces served as a warrant for security. In short, Foucault's claim is that intra-European transformations of power relations among states were embedded within larger changes at the global level at which relations of competition between states came to replace relations of subordination over states. The emergence of the European nation state and the idea of Europe as a system of states is, thus, made possible, among a range of other things, by global mechanisms of power engendered by Spanish imperial pretensions over other European states. For Castro-Gómez, a consideration of Foucault's development of the notion of biopolitics through the lens of coloniality thus shows that his account of biopolitics is inextricably tied to geopolitics and colonialism in complex ways. This interpretation not only shows that Foucault's work is compatible with decolonial inquiry but also adds to it. This is because it reveals colonialism not simply as the result or other side of European modernity and its concomitant economy of power in Europe but as a constitutive element at every level of its formation. For Castro-Gómez, decolonial studies can thus benefit from a more

expansive account of the coloniality of power refracted through a Foucauldian heterarchical notion of power. Such an account in turn calls for a method that attends to the concrete and specific practices in which coloniality is manifest at various levels.

In sum, Castro-Gómez's explicit engagement with Foucault exemplifies his vision for decolonial thought that rejects the blackmail of modernity by navigating between an anti-modernism that disavows Europe in favor of a retreat to an ostensibly pure Latin American reason, on the one hand, and a Eurocentrism flowing from an uncritical uptake of modern European themes and approaches, on the other. Likewise, he counters the widespread dismissal of Foucault on account of his Eurocentrism by means of a decolonial engagement with Foucault that also eschews a straightforward replication of his analyses. By working with Foucault against Foucault, Castro-Gómez develops a decolonized approach to modernity/coloniality that leaves neither Foucault nor decolonial thought unchanged. In the next section, we examine Castro-Gómez's use of Foucauldian method in his own genealogy of Colombian modernity. We interrogate how methods, concepts, and categories travel to new sites of inquiry and show that such travel problematizes the very idea of a pure and objective method.

4. A decolonial genealogy of Colombian modernity

Having surveyed Castro-Gómez's decolonial reading of Foucault's work, we now examine his use of Foucauldian inquiry in a field site about which Foucault himself had nothing to say. Our aim is to assess the extent to which his de-Europeanized appropriation of Foucault not only modifies all elements of Foucauldian inquiry but also provides a powerful corrective to genealogical method. Even though Castro-Gómez mobilizes some of Foucault's concepts (such as 'biopolitics') and categories (like 'discourse', 'power', and 'subjectivity') to make his case, we will see that he complements these with analytic tools gleaned from other philosophical texts and traditions and engages in significant modification and even invention of concepts. Moreover, we show that Castro-Gómez's genealogy of Colombian modernity not only modifies the method but effectively closes the door on the idea that genealogy can offer what Foucault (2007a, 124) calls a 'historical ontology of ourselves' without accounting for, and finding an archive in, the complex entanglements between Europe and its colonies. To flesh out this claim, this section reconstructs Castro-Gómez's genealogy of Colombian modernity in *La hybris del punto cero: ciencia, raza e ilustración en la Nueva Granada (1750–1816)* (*Zero-Point Hubris: Science, Race, and*

Enlightenment in New Granada), with a particular focus on the role of the methods, categories, and concepts of his decolonial analysis that operates with a heterarchical notion of the coloniality of power.[15]

In *Zero-Point Hubris*, Castro-Gómez seeks to show that the Enlightenment is not a European phenomenon that is replicated in other geographical contexts but a 'set of discourses with different sites of production and enunciation which, already in the eighteenth century, enjoyed global circulation' as well as a 'complex global network of scientific ideas, liberal sentiments, racial attitudes, and imperial ambitions'. Problematizing the standard view of the Enlightenment as an 'original text' that is '"disseminated" throughout the world' from Europe and 'copied by others', Castro-Gómez demonstrates that European Enlightenment and colonialism are co-constitutive. His point is that 'colonial discourse not only receives legitimation from modern science, but also plays an important role in the construction of the scientific imaginary of the Enlightenment'.

> Science and colonial power form part of the same genealogic matrix that emerges in the 16th century with the formation of the modern world-system. Put differently, if modernity and coloniality are two sides of the same coin, then it is possible to reconstruct the links between the colonial project and the scientific project of the Enlightenment.

This reconstruction, then, is the goal of Castro-Gómez's genealogy, which serves to offer a more complete picture of the Enlightenment in different sites of its articulation. Based on an examination of a vast archive of periodicals, legal documents, maps, diaries, university constitutions, land surveys, natural histories, edicts, and educational treatises as well as works by monks, journalists, polymaths, geographers, lawyers, physicians, explorers, and hygienists like Francisco José de Caldas, Joaquin de Finestrad, or Francisco Javier Eugenio de Santa Cruz y Espejo,[16] Castro-Gómez reveals that *in addition to* operating as a justificatory tool for colonization and racial domination of Europeans over indigenous peoples in the Americas, the Enlightenment and its scientific discourse is *both* produced by colonialism and the encounter with the non-European world *and* taken up, in modified form, in local practices in the colonies.

As a consequence, and *pace* Foucault, the project of a critique of modernity cannot be restricted to a European context and archive. Instead, Castro-Gómez argues, first, that the Enlightenment is a global discourse with multiple sites of articulation. Second, he shows that the scientific project of the

[15]The forthcoming English translation is Castro-Gómez (2020).
[16]For a list of primary sources see Castro-Gómez (2005).

Enlightenment is inextricably tied to colonialism. Third, and consequently, he demonstrates that the Enlightenment is enunciated from concrete places, even as it presents itself and its ostensibly objective and universal scientific discourse as coming from no place or a 'zero point'.[17]

Examining the works of modern philosophers from Descartes to Hume, Smith, Turgot, and Kant, Castro-Gómez (2005, 37) makes plain that the scientific method employed by these philosophers, in spite of its universalist claims, presupposes the 'natural superiority of the white race', which it simultaneously posits as the telos of human development. Scientific neutrality, in other words, is not neutral at all but rather betrays an epistemological whiteness at the heart of the modern scientific project that tacitly excludes non-white and non-European perspectives despite its ostensible generality. This, he argues, is why Hobbes (2003) and Locke (1980) are able to appeal to indigenous peoples to conjure earlier stages of human development; colonies appear as key sources of wealth in Smith's (1993) economic theory; and Kant (2009, 2013) can defend a moral theory based on universal laws of reason while at the same time denying the capacity of moral development to what he regards as immature races.

As Castro-Gómez acknowledges, this is not a novel claim, but a familiar point for post- and decolonial theorists. His account of the relationship between the scientific and colonial projects of the Enlightenment and the modern sciences thus follows the standard narrative of post- and decolonial critiques. What is distinct and original about Castro-Gómez's intervention is that he explores the Enlightenment from the perspective of the colonies, thereby supplementing the standard narrative with a genealogy that traces how Enlightenment discourses are taken up in the colonies where they generate contextually specific and unique modes of subjectivity, norms of behavior, and bodies of knowledge. This genealogy thus proceeds along the three axes, or levels, of power discussed above: a microphysics of power that concerns modes of subjectivation and technologies of the self; a mesophysics of power that examines the government of populations; and a macrophysics of power that interrogates the constitution of a global economy of knowledge whose standards of production, validation, and circulation are firmly situated in Europe.

At the microphysical level, Castro-Gómez examines a set of cultural practices through which the scientific discourse of the Enlightenment was co-opted by local elites in an effort to bolster their social status. Drawing on a variety of documents such as legal complaints for being denied the

[17]On this point see also Mills (1998).

title 'don' or dissents filed to prevent marriages between members of different socio-racial groups, he traces how the epistemological whiteness of European scientific discourse was transformed into a discourse of the purity of blood as a principle of social order. The result was a highly complex system of socio-racial classification, famously represented in the painting *Las castas* (Figure 1), which distinguished four main races – European-born whites, whites born in the colonies (criollos), indigenous peoples, and persons of black African descent – and sixteen possible combinations thereof. These classificatory groupings not only reflected different racial lineages but also indicated a person's social status, which was reflected in different tax classes and marked by distinct clothing and other cultural features. The aspirational whiteness produced by the discourse of the purity of blood thus extended the belief in the superiority of whites to the colonies, where it took shape in distinct social and cultural practices specific to the Americas. Moreover, whiteness became an 'internalized aspiration for many sectors of colonial society' and served as a 'central axis' along which criollos came to understand and constitute themselves as subjects (Castro-Gómez 2005, 64). The discourse of the purity of blood thus generated a normative ideal of whiteness that not only functioned as cultural capital but also gave rise, at the microphysical level of subject formation and practices of the self, to a particular lifestyle or habitus – that is, a 'mode in which individuals incorporate a whole series of cultural values in their psychological structure that are pertinent to their "class condition" and that identify them unfailingly as a member of a specific social group' (81). As Castro-Gómez thus shows, the discourse of the purity of blood was both a 'hegemonic discourse of subjectivation' and a basic principle of social organization that connected, in contingent and unpredictable ways, local practices in the colonies with larger formations of Enlightenment discourse (89).

Castro-Gómez illustrates this interplay between different registers and relations of power through an examination of two concrete sciences: medical knowledge and geography. Specifically, he shows the implication of these sciences with the discourse of the purity of blood by tracing their reliance on and simultaneous disavowal of indigenous knowledge as unscientific. Here, the Enlightenment functions as what Castro-Gómez describes as a dispositif of epistemic expropriation which presents the modern sciences as the pinnacle of knowledge and indigenous knowledges as their inferior past.[18]

[18]For other decolonial and indigenous thinkers who discuss the question of epistemic expropriation of indigenous knowledge see Grosfoguel (2007); Mignolo (2000, 2009); Ortega (2017); Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007); Maldonado-Torres (2016); de Sousa Santos (2014); Kusch (1962); Walsh

Figure 1. Las castas. Anonymous, 18th cent. Museo Nacional del Virreinato (Tepotzotlán). Image in public domain (https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pintura_de_castas#/media/File:Casta_painting_all.jpg).

(2015). For related work on epistemic injustice see (Anderson 2017; Berenstain 2016; Code 2014; Dotson 2011, 2012; Fricker 2007; Kidd, Medina, and Polhaus 2017; Medina 2013; Pohlhaus 2012).

Examining educational treatises, assessments of the state of hospitals and medicine, reports on the 'probabilities of human life' (316), and the work of physicians and hygienists, Castro-Gómez demonstrates that the racial caste system elaborated through the principle of the purity of blood is operationalized by the criollo elite to, first, ensure 'their indisputable ethnic superiority' and, second, establishes their subject position as what Castro-Gómez calls an epistemological zero point: an allegedly universal point of scientific observation characterized by its lack of particular perspective (230). White superiority is both justified by at the same time as it justifies the ostensible unscientificity of indigenous knowledge, which is portrayed as incapable of engaging the kind of 'abstract language' necessary to 'formulate and produce scientific knowledge' (192). On this view, indigenous knowledge presents an 'epistemological obstacle' for the successful development of the criollo population (186). But simultaneously, criollos who were trained in medical science in universities, which served as spaces for transmitting Euro-modern knowledge to local elites, relied on 'a mix of European medical knowledge from the Middle Ages' and 'pre-Columbian indigenous' knowledge (193). Yet, while these criollo physicians made use of indigenous knowledge in their medical practice, they also limited and often outright denied 'access to education for Indians, blacks, and mestizos' (117) and discredited their knowledge by appealing to the 'unscientific' means of its discovery (195–96). In this way, local medical practices intersected with the scientific discourse of the Enlightenment in ways that did not simply apply existing practices to a different geographical site but rather produced new bodies of knowledge, relations of power, and modes of being.

A similar dynamic can be observed in the case of geography, which enjoyed growing popularity in Europe. Climatic surveys, maps, travel logs, and other works produced by naturalists, geographers, and explorers show that an intimate connection was posited between altitude, temperature, geography and the 'moral quality of the population' (256). In its attempt to gain international prestige and power through colonization, the Spanish crown relied on geographical knowledge about colonized territories and populations to 'completely regulate the economic life of the empire'. Colonialism was thus enabled through 'a politics that was legitimated by geography and a budding economic science' (249). In the colonies, however, the discourse of geography that bolstered European superiority posed a threat to the racial caste system which secured the social status of the criollo elite. For if natural features of the territory and local climate shaped the moral capacity of the population, surely even a

white elite born in the colonies was subject to moral corruption and underdevelopment. Criollo scientists responded to this problem by arguing that even though the local environment played a role in shaping the moral character of the people, their 'negative influences could be corrected' and more 'positive' influences promoted through 'a politically directed science' (272). In this way, geographical ideas about the climate and territory were coupled with a science of education – albeit an education that was denied to certain sectors of the population – to maintain the racial caste system that shored up white superiority.

Again, Castro-Gómez effectively shows that Enlightenment discourses and practices are not simply applied to the colonies but taken up and modified by a local elite to serve specific and concrete contexts and concerns. Yet, this uptake and transformation is neither isomorphic at each level of power nor unidirectional. Rather, as the inheritance of the science of geography shows, Enlightenment discourse is integrated in a complex web of local practices, and this integration generates unintended effects on both local power relations and scientific discourse. By attending to the 'specificity of Enlightenment in the colonies', that is, to the particular place in which the 'discourses of the new science were re-located and acquired *meaning* in that region of the world, by the mid-eighteenth century' (15), Castro-Gómez is thus able to reveal that the Enlightenment is a global discourse that is articulated differently at various levels of power and in different geographical sites. His analysis of the Enlightenment and its reception at three distinct yet interconnected levels of power – the *macrophysical,* the *mesophysical, and* the *microphysical* – troubles straightforward causal explanations of the modern scientific project as a justificatory mechanism for colonial forms of domination. On Castro-Gómez's account, 'different chains of power' operate at different levels and nevertheless cannot be 'thought one without the other' (165). They are necessarily entangled in a larger network that defies a single unified logic or a univocal explanation of the totality of power relations. Different levels of power interact and inform each other in contingent ways based on historically specific articulations of power and without a 'structural imperative that determines the necessity of this connection' (166). While practices of colonial power must, therefore, be studied in their dispersion, with attention to difference, and in localized contexts, they must also be grasped in their constitutive relation with European modernity.

Castro-Gómez's work has an important implication for genealogical inquiry more generally. For just as it is impossible to retreat from modernity without replicating its modern-colonial gestures, so it is impossible to

really understand modernity without accounting for its historical emergence through a complex web of relations between Europe and its colonies. The project of a critique of modernity, like Foucault set out to provide, must, therefore, take the form of a historical ontology of a present that is indelibly marked by global relations of modernity/coloniality, even as these relations take highly specific and irreducible forms in different parts of the world.

5. Conclusion

This paper sought to contribute to recent debates on the use of genealogy in political theory by examining what happens to Foucauldian genealogy when it is deployed in non-European geopolitical contexts. Based on a close reading of Santiago Castro-Gómez's work and paying special attention to concepts, categories, and methods of Foucauldian inquiry, we sought to show that his appropriation of Foucauldian method through a decolonial lens transforms both genealogy and decolonial theory. By way of conclusion, we summarize why Castro-Gómez's work should be understood as a genealogy and spell out its implications with respect to the promises and limitations of using Foucauldian genealogy in sites beyond Foucault's European horizon.

Drawing on the notions of *concepts, categories,* and *methods* introduced in section 2, we can, at a first pass, describe Castro-Gómez's work on Colombian modernity as a genealogy which, like Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* discussed earlier, maps the contingent emergence of relations of power, knowledge, and subjectivation. Unlike Foucault's genealogies, which are firmly situated in Europe, Castro-Gómez deploys genealogy in a Latin American context to trace the formation of a social hierarchy in eighteenth-century Colombia through the co-optation and transformation of the scientific discourse of Enlightenment. This mobilization of Foucauldian inquiry in a different geopolitical field site generates a set of *concepts* and *categories*, some of which have no precedent in Foucault's analyses. For instance, Castro-Gómez proposes the concept of the purity of blood to describe the specific ways in which the epistemological whiteness of the modern European sciences is doubled in the colonies where a criollo elite claims for itself a zero point to secure its superior status in a race-based social hierarchy. The concept of the purity of blood describes a set of discourses and practices that emerged in a very specific historical and geographical context as the effect of efforts to make the scientific discourse of the Enlightenment work in favor of local interests. These discourses and practices

included microphysical techniques of subject formation that took shape in the habitus of individuals, and mesophysical regulatory interventions aimed at the maintenance of a white elite and a strict hierarchical ordering of a racially stratified population. In this way, practices of knowledge production, subject formation, and the government of populations in Europe and the colonies are both revealed as localized phenomena that are connected at the macrophysical level in their co-constitution of the Enlightenment as a scientific-cum-colonial project. Deploying the *methods* of archaeology and genealogy, Castro-Gómez thus describes the articulation of the Enlightenment in highly specific geographical sites and traces the conditions of its contingent emergence to the complex and specific interplay of scientific discourse and practices of external and internal colonization at different registers of power. In his genealogy, notions like 'power' – especially of the micro-, meso-,- and macrophysics of power –, 'practice', or 'discourse' are operationalized as *categories*, that is, as analytic devices that provide coherence to Castro-Gómez's project and are not themselves subject to historicization and critical interrogation.

Yet, Castro-Gómez's genealogy also provides an important corrective to Foucault's work. Most notably, his commitment to realizing the core claim of decolonial thought concerning the co-constitutiveness and inextricable entanglement of modernity and coloniality leads him to develop a decolonial reading of Foucault that transforms key *categories* of both traditions of thought. Consider the role which notions of power and coloniality as central categories of Foucauldian and decolonial analytics play in Castro-Gómez's work. He takes from Foucault a non-hierarchical model of power according to which power is studied at local points at which it is exercised, while retaining from decolonial theory an appreciation of coloniality as a global phenomenon that attunes him to moments where global networks of power appear in Foucault's work. By jointly mobilizing the tools of genealogical and decolonial inquiry, Castro-Gómez articulates decolonized Foucauldian critique of modernity, enriched by a Foucault-inspired heterarchical account of the coloniality of power. Castro-Gómez thus also transforms the notion of coloniality from a structuralist view of coloniality as repressive and isomorphic at different levels with a heterarchical view of coloniality as productive, heterogeneous, and circulating at micro-, meso-, and macro-physical levels that are themselves connected in specific and concrete ways depending on the context of investigation. In this way, he is able to more fully account for the multiplicity of knowledges, behaviors, and subjectivities modernity/coloniality produces in the periphery that are different yet nonetheless related to discourses and

practices in the center. For Castro-Gómez, the co-production and intertwinement of modernity and coloniality ultimately suggests that a clear distinction between center and periphery, metropole and colony, be abandoned in favor of a view of modernity/coloniality as a constellation of multiple and mobile rationalities in productive tension.

In conclusion, Castro-Gómez's uptake of genealogy in a field site outside of Foucault's European context inaugurates a radical transformation of Foucauldian inquiry. Not only does his genealogy give rise to new *concepts* that emanate from his concrete archive as well as distinct *categories* that organize his inquiry, but it also problematizes the idea that Foucault's *methods* can travel to new sites of inquiry without significant modification. We saw in section 2 of this paper that while scholars interested in questions of Foucauldian methodology in political theory warn against a straightforward application of Foucault's concepts to new problematics, they regard his methods as 'much more portable in their original form' (Koopman and Matza 2013, 825). Castro-Gómez's work should lead us to reconsider and perhaps revise this claim. As he compellingly shows, modernity and coloniality are inseparable and consequently, a critique of modernity must at the same time be a critique of colonialism through whose mechanisms and institutions knowledge is produced, power circulates, and subjects are formed. If genealogy is to be a method 'consisting in a critique of what we are saying, thinking, and doing, through a historical ontology of ourselves' (Foucault 2007a, 124), it cannot deliver on this promise without articulating the historical ontology of 'the West' with that of its colonies. To act on this insight and transform genealogy accordingly is Castro-Gómez's challenge to all those who seek to take up genealogy today.

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