

Foucault, anti-humanism and human rights

Ben Golder

Abstract

Responding to recent engagements with Foucault, and in part to the provocation of this conference ('... antifoundational humanism ...'), this paper argues that in his late work Foucault does not submit to the 'moral superiority' of humanism and introduce a liberal humanist subject. Rather, Foucault's late investigations of subjectivity constitute a continuation and not a radical departure from his earlier positions on the subject. Such a reading helps us to assess Foucault's late supposed 'embrace' of, or return to, human rights – which is here re-interpreted as a critical anti-humanist engagement with human rights, conducted in the name of an unfinished humanity. In this way, the paper engages not only with the way in which mainstream accounts of human rights tend to assimilate anti-foundational and post-structural challenges, but also with the quality of Foucault's own political legacy and future in the age of human rights, 25 years on.

Biography

Ben Golder is a lecturer in the Faculty of Law, UNSW, with an interest in legal theory and post-structuralist philosophy. He has written several articles on Foucault and is, with Professor Peter Fitzpatrick, the author and editor, respectively, of *Foucault's law* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2009) and *Foucault and law* (under contract with Ashgate, to come out in 2010).
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