DOES THE PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL HAVE INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY?

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ABSTRACT: This article is concerned with the devaluation of the work of public intellectuals within the academic community. The principal reason given for this devaluation is that the work of the public intellectual does not have intellectual integrity as independent thought and original scholarship. I develop three models of public intellectual work: the permanent-critic model, the popularizer model, and the public-theorist model. I then consider each model in relation to the concern with intellectual integrity and conclude that both independent thought and original scholarship are possible within work that is engaged with nonacademic publics.

Keywords: public intellectual, Foucault, advocacy.

For academics who hail from embattled communities, whether communities of race/ethnicity, nationality, or sexuality, the issue of community responsibility and accountability often looms large. Some academics sacrifice their chance of getting tenure by intentionally doing the sort of things that they know are not likely to be recognized as scholarly achievement: writing for newspapers, mainstream magazines, or local newsletters; building community/university relationships and making university resources available to those in the outside community; creating forums, newsletters, or activist organizations; and coalescing community efforts to address crises like racist or homophobic violence, labor strikes, and war. Of course there are philosophers from majority groups who also participate in such activities, but the pull toward these activities can be especially strong for those whose sexual, ethnic, or national communities of origin are at war, engaged in revolution, experiencing military aggression or economic extortion, or suffering from other sorts of extreme but socially caused and socially remediable hardships.

If we truly want to diversify our academic departments, we need to recognize the different demands and pressures that philosophers from minority communities are often inundated by once they have a Ph.D. Sometimes the demands come externally, sometimes internally. That is, having made the sacrifices needed to get their degrees, many feel that the time has come to fulfill their responsibilities to their community (or

communities). Then again, many of us find ourselves being the object of external demands, demands that may well be based on unrealistic assumptions about the power of untenured professors. But even if the demands are unrealistic, when one's community is disenfranchised and bereft of adequate leadership, it is difficult to turn a deaf ear without feeling like a traitor or selfish individualist. I have seen many who try to walk a fine line between responsiveness to community needs and employment survival, pushing the boundaries of academic respectability even while trying to establish their credentials in conventional ways. And sometimes we may misjudge where that line exists. I remember finding myself in the second year of my assistant professorship loudly demonstrating on my chancellor's lawn, demanding along with a large group of students that he come out and face us about a campus crisis. Just as my son was moving to the front to yell at the policeman protecting the chancellor's property, I suddenly began to wonder if I had correctly estimated where that line was.

I know of at least two professors at my own institution who were denied tenure despite the fact that they demonstrably played a vital role in various communities, providing intellectual leadership and political guidance. It is easy to say of people like them that they had their priorities mixed up, they should have ignored the community demands long enough to do the kind of research that would build their tenure case. And some might also say that doing such research should be their first priority in any case, since that is what they are trained for. I do not dispute the need to establish and develop one's scholarly abilities, but I do dispute the value system that confers no credit at all on other sorts of intellectual work, the work that reaches beyond university discussions and academic journals and that answers the common rhetorical call most universities make to be of service beyond their campus boundaries.

Such work is sometimes disrespected because it is not considered intellectually rigorous or challenging. Another disparaging reason given is that such public work is thought to be incapable of maintaining a sufficient degree of intellectual integrity – for instance, if it is politically motivated. In this article my argument will be that we should rethink some of the assumptions behind those concepts of intellectual standards that render these negative assessments of intellectual work in the public sphere, though not simply for political or moral reasons but for epistemological ones. The claim is not that every instance of work in the public sphere will exemplify intellectual rigor and integrity but that its intellectual rigor and value can be judged just as we judge the articles written in scholarly journals.

Before I turn to that argument, however, I want to address the newly coined term *public intellectual*. The very invention of this term is problematic and revealing about the demise of civil society in the United States. In much of Europe and Latin America, such a term is unnecessary, because intellectuals are often sought out by the mainstream media. One

can read columns written by Richard Rorty and Pierre Bourdieu in German newspapers and interviews with Leopoldo Zea and Nestor Garcia Canclini in Mexican dailies. Academics from the United States are more likely to appear on local TV programs when they travel abroad than in their own home towns. In many countries it is simply expected that professors will play a role in public life. In Latin America this tradition dates back to Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas, who wrote moral and philosophical treatises criticizing the Spanish Crown's treatment of the Indians in the mid-sixteenth century, participating in public debates and trials, thus bringing his great theological learning to public disputations over the most critical issue of the day: the enslavement of and genocidal practices against the native peoples.

In the United States, however, we need a special term to denote this unusual behavior. And it is largely not a positive term, connoting a careerist ambition for fame or, worse, money, rather than the monastic ascetic anonymity in which we imagine the pursuit of truth to flourish best. Intellectuals are not supposed to *seek* a public; if we gain a public following, this should be merely the by-product of our rigorous work. And of course the term *intellectual* itself has a bad name in the United States where, as was evident in the most recent presidential election, a "populism" defined as being against intellectualism has become the main tactical discourse of the elite. In other words, *not* being an intellectual, or even intelligent, has become the way to the White House. Politicians flaunt their ignorance as if it establishes their anti-elitism, and this tactic seems to work even when the politician in question comes from one of the most elite families in the country and when his policies actually favor elites. The very term *intellectual* is taken as an epithet and is used against political candidates as if it were a disqualification.

This is not entirely new, or unique, to the United States. In England we are called the "chattering classes," and during the Dreyfus Affair in France, those who wanted Dreyfus convicted called his defenders *intellectuels* as a strategy to isolate, discredit, and separate them from "the people." In this latter case, to be an intellectual was to be a liberal, something like the "bleeding-heart liberal" whose image is thrown about today, and may also have been associated with Jewishness, thus bringing anti-Semitism into play as well. Certainly neither at that time in France nor in our own day has the image of the intellectual been associated with manliness, strength, or patriotism – indeed, anything but.

If, then, the term *intellectual* connotes elitism, the concept of a public intellectual connotes the idea of the intellectual going where he or she is not wanted, probably to lord it over the hoi polloi. Thus, the news that some academics are actually aspiring to such a role has generally been met with both derision and suspicion.

I recently spent a semester as a visiting professor in the new Ph.D. program in Comparative Studies for Public Intellectuals at Florida Atlantic

University (FAU). This new program, the brainchild of feminist philosopher Teresa Brennan, has come in for some ridicule in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Lingua Franca* for its very name. Announcing it as one's aim to become a public intellectual is thought by some to be too grandiose, perhaps based on the assumption that those who become public intellectuals should be chosen by the public rather than be self-nominated. Certainly there is some legitimate concern about what the curriculum of such a program could possibly be. But I agreed to visit the program for a semester, not just because it is in south Florida but because I was persuaded of the idea that those who seek a life engaged in the public domain might gain from a study beyond what is usually available to them – policy analysis, communications, and social sciences – and also from the kind of theory developed in the humanities. At FAU the basic curriculum had students taking courses on everything from Aristotle, Pericles, and Cicero to a wide spectrum of social issues, such as racism and environmentalism, as well as some contemporary social theory, writing classes, and moral philosophy. The cadre of students – who were in fact the first generation in the program – were predictably varied, from those seeking jobs in the news media, to owners of informational dot-com companies, to health-care reformers, to future policy analysts, lobbyists, and professors. Many had been outside the academy for some time. Whether the program will succeed is too early to tell, but one thing is clear: the model of the public intellectual this program is directed toward is not the national news pundit but a much more modest, and local, type.

In general, the term *public intellectual* largely signifies the celebrity intellectual who has achieved name recognition, at least among the educated classes, and who has made it into prime-time television and onto news or talk shows like those of Jim Lehrer, Charlie Rose, and Larry King. Nonetheless, I suggest we redefine the term to consider the public intellectual as the *publically engaged intellectual*, or the intellectual who spends some significant portion of his or her time engaged with the nonacademic public. This person may well work entirely within a restricted local context, such as a minority community or a particular social movement in his or her city or state. My decision to focus on this group rather than celebrity intellectuals should not in any way indicate that I am uninterested in or unsupportive of the latter's efforts to reach a national audience, or that my reference to them as celebrities is meant to be another of the familiar accusations of publicity seeking or opportunism (see, for example, the biting critiques in Brooks 2000, esp. 171–74). By and large, the academics who have been able to reach that stature – I think of Edward Said, Cornel West, Noam Chomsky – pay a high price for their fame in public attacks, criticism from colleagues, and sheer exhaustion from overwork. It appears that Cornel West's attempts to reach youths through recording a hip-hop CD may have even cost him his job at Harvard. Sometimes the criticisms are fair, accurate, and meant to be

constructive – see Michael Eric Dyson's affectionate but pointed critiques of his colleagues, and himself (Dyson 1996, chapter 2). Nonetheless, I am not interested in participating in the criticisms of celebrity intellectuals here; I wish to shift to a less famous but larger grouping of publically engaged intellectuals, those engaged in more local contexts.

There are various possible models for such publically engaged intellectuals, or ways to imagine their social role. There are three models I shall describe and consider in light of concern with intellectual integrity. The first model holds that the intellectual qua intellectual must be a kind of permanent critic or Socratic gadfly in order to operate with any independence, no matter whether the government is socialist or Republican, Somocista or Sandinista. This model conforms to the widespread but mostly unexamined assumption that the only way to retain credibility is to be incessantly critical, that a commitment to organizations, agendas, or any constructive projects compromises one's intellectual integrity by directing and constraining one's argumentative goals.

An exemplar of this first model, and one who actually advocates it, is Christopher Hitchens, staff writer for the *Nation*. In a forum on the topic of the future of the public intellectual in the United States, held in New York and then adapted for publication in the *Nation*, Hitchens argues that the intellectual-as-perpetual-critic model has been tarred by condescending tag lines like maverick, bad boy, angry young man, or contrarian (Hitchens 2001). However much it seems clear that Hitchens enjoys thinking of himself in these terms, terms that certainly work to redeem the intellectual's masculine status, he argues that these phrases indicate a society with no tolerance for critics: a society that thinks its dedication to pluralism can operate without "negative campaigning." He points out that critics are also charged with being humorless, as if they might be allowed at court only if they play the role of jester.

I agree with Hitchens that the position of the social critic has been unjustifiably disempowered in the contemporary public domain of discourse, often in ingenuous and insidious ways. The feminist social critic, in particular, is cast as a moral prude or closet authoritarian, not to mention humorless, who thinks she has the right to condemn the personal choices made by the mass of women. Social criticism of gender practices is thus made nearly impossible. However, while I would want to defend the social critic against such inaccuracies and ad hominems (or feminams), I would also argue against those who, like Hitchens, believe that the best role intellectuals can play in the public domain is just to be gadfly critics, as if only in this way they can retain their autonomy and intellectual integrity. This assumes that only criticism can be independent, whereas a stance of constructive support is always compromised. But the drive toward negativity is not necessarily more intellectually autonomous than a defense of organizations or specific agendas. One may retain an organizational independence by positioning oneself as a permanent critic, but one

is still operating under the influence of social position, cultural background, gender identity, and so forth. If the gadfly model is intended to maintain intellectual independence, it is a mistake to think that such independence ever completely exists.

One reason to want to hold onto the critical stance at all costs is that passionate advocacy has fallen into disfavor. To make passionate arguments is to abrogate the unspoken intellectual law of being at all times neutral and evenhanded. Revealing one's passionate commitments to an academic audience generally has the effect of discrediting everything one subsequently says. Besides the fact that one is purportedly compromised intellectually by being polemical and didactic, another reason that passion is out of favor is because of its association with 1960s-style radicalism, which has no respectability either among academics or nonacademics in the current climate. This has certainly been helped along by horrid TV documentaries that have given us an image of the 1960s as one mélange of tie-dye-wearing, acid-dropping, love-in-practicing, ultra-left radicals (in other words, taking the yippies as the paradigm of the decade). The radicals from yesteryear are seen today as loopy and, worse, always in the end self-motivated (a charge that was probably accurate about the yippies). Radicals from that period are seen today simply as people who wanted to play the hero, to be the cult leader, the charismatic professor or activist; they were never really concerned about the cause, only about their own ego gratification. This has been a devastatingly effective critique, chastising intellectuals for their selfish pursuits and quotidian weaknesses, claiming that their motivations were purely political-cum-psychological rather than purely scholarly.

Although the charge no doubt had merit in numerous cases, as a general argument against the passionate crusader there are two problems with this critique: first, its unverifiability and, second, its essential irrelevance. It becomes a circular argument and thus unverifiable to take anyone's passion for social justice as evidence of egotism; the more passionate one is, the more one then proves one's conceit, other evidence notwithstanding. More important, perhaps, the criticism, while sounding an important warning, is irrelevant to the validity of the argument being advanced. Personal motivations on their own neither prove nor disprove a given thesis, nor would even a perfect coincidence between base personal motives and one's claims about social injustice disprove those claims. Passion is not a reliable, much less an indefeasible, criterion for egotism, and egotism is irrelevant to truth. It is always possible that, occasionally, the radical charismatic professor is correct in his claims and even selfless in his motives.

Nonetheless, the intellectual as Socratic gadfly is often favorably compared to the intellectual as passionate social reformer, a judgment that gains further support from the assumption, often made by tenured academics, that there is a clear and sharp distinction between the tenured acad-

emic free to say whatever she or he likes and the political insider or policy hack who is beholden to a party or institution. Though there are some differences between these sorts of jobs, I suggest that the differences are more of degree than of kind. Policy hacks have presumably chosen which party to support, on the basis of their own independent political analysis and/or moral commitments. Thus, they are not necessarily the 'logic whores' they are sometimes portrayed to be. On the other hand, tenured academics are also aligned with a particular institution – the university – and are influenced as well by their class, ethnicity, and sexuality. They will not necessarily feel free to say just anything, to condemn private education if they teach at a private university, for example, or to dispute the importance of their own disciplines, or to attack the political party most likely to increase funds for higher education, or to blow a loud public whistle on institutional racism at their own college or in their own department. Their specific social identities may well make them defensive, or perceptive, or protective with regard to particular issues, but they are unlikely to have no impact at all on their views. Pure neutrality is an illusion that excuses the refusal to engage in self-reflexivity.

Frankfurt School theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argued that left-wing intellectuals should refrain from party affiliations so that they will be able to maintain sufficient autonomy for critique. This argument rests chiefly on two premises. One is that the party will control the intellectual's writing, which has been true in some cases but is not always or necessarily true. A party could recognize the importance of critique and not attempt to muzzle its writer members, a policy that is surely more likely under social conditions of free and open debate, in which the party itself is not under constant threat of being declared illegal. The second assumption is that rational argument or critical theory, unconstrained by instrumental goals, requires a complete openness to points of view, which a member of an organization cannot have. In this case the very possibility for rationality precludes one from signing up. This premise is more persuasive – one needs to be able to follow the rational critique wherever it leads and not be bound dogmatically to a set of principles that cannot be questioned or modified. But again, except for a wartime situation, which might require such a degree of mobilization that free argument needs to be limited, it is not clear that organizational membership will in all cases preclude the possibility of open argument. It depends on the nature of the organization; open argument could not in all likelihood work well, or at all, within a corporation. On the other hand, some electoral parties, and even governments, show regular evidence of internal debate, and most would agree this is a source of their strength and vibrancy.

A third and less obvious supporting premise behind this argument for the independence of intellectuals, a premise held by Adorno, is that in the affirmative culture of late commodity capitalism, transformation and critique can only be served by negation. Any affirmation will simply be

recuperated or co-opted. For example, the demand for radical social change is allowed expression and is then used to prove the ultimate openness and fairness of the current society. Revolutionary aspirations can also be reduced and trivialized, as, for example, when they are packaged and sold as Che Guevara T-shirts and thus are made into a style without substance. The argument that one must resist all affirmation in order to avoid co-optation is also mistaken, however, on two counts. First, it mistakenly assumes that only affirmation can be co-opted, although we should know very well by now that the negative, cynical, or fatalist stance can be co-opted just as easily, trivialized into a cool style, or made otherwise ineffective in subverting present unjust institutions. Second, it mistakenly assumes that one can devise a politics free from potential co-optation. Given the dynamism of our culture's ability to transform meanings and social formations, and the tremendous power of marketers to package even the most sociopathic – or morally sublime – of emotions, we cannot aim at resisting co-optation by some methodological ploy; we can only remain ever watchful and flexible enough to change game plans when necessary.

Thus, I argue that the first model of the intellectual – as Socratic gadfly or permanent critic – is unnecessary as well as insufficient to establish the independence that intellectual integrity requires.

A second model of the publically engaged intellectual is the popularizer model. On this view, the intellectual is merely taking theory or knowledge produced in the academy out to the hinterlands, and, in order to keep the crowd's attention, she or he must generally sacrifice rigor and nuance in favor of clear examples and unambiguous claims. The paradigm here is perhaps Carl Sagan, the Cornell astronomer known to viewers of the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) as the man who said there are "billions and billions and billions and billions" of stars out there. Sagan was not generally admired by his academic colleagues for his willingness to host science documentaries and write for a lay public, because this work was not seen as truly intellectual or scholarly, and his guarded optimism about the likelihood of life on other planets was also scoffed at as a form of pandering to sensationalism, as if this were the means to create an audience for science. But for the most part Sagan's efforts beyond the academy were seen simply as applying the knowledge gained elsewhere by other methods, whereas someone with the capacity to do original research should be doing just that. Moreover, he forsook the normative ideal in academia of the monk's life, in which we are supposed to be uninterested in the public's understanding or appreciation of our work, or even in its applications, and follow instead the monastic ideal in which pure truth alone motivates our daily actions. Sagan was paid well for his efforts and achieved household-name recognition, and he thus seemed to some to be pursuing personal ambition rather than a holy quest.

Stephen L. Carter has pointed out that to be seen as a popularizer is to

be seen as someone who is (a) unoriginal and (b) the opposite of deeply theoretical. "To be deeply [theoretical] in academic terms today means to be incapable of uttering a word such as 'poor.' No one is poor. The word . . . now . . . is 'restricted access to capital markets.' That's being deeply theoretical. . . . And some of us just say poor, and that makes us popularizers" (Carter 2001, 28–29). Carter is suggesting, I take it, that the linguistic conventions used to distinguish the popularizer and the theorist are not, in fact, deeply or sufficiently theorized.

With regard to these critiques of the popularizer model, I would argue two points: (1) that the popularizing aim is valuable and should be given academic respectability as an important public work and (2) that the popularizer need not sacrifice all nuance for accessibility. A positive recent example of these points is Janet Halley's *Don't: A Reader's Guide to the Military's Anti-Gay Policy*, a book that garnered reviews in the mainstream liberal press as well as National Public Radio and other radio interviews for Halley (Halley 1999). The key to her book's accessibility is no doubt its timeliness and connection to events of current interest, in this case the Clinton administration's adoption of the "Don't ask, don't tell" policy to deal with homosexuality in the ranks of the military. A professor of law at Harvard, Halley provides exhaustive analysis of why this policy is creating more harm for gays in the military than even the previous homophobic policies did, principally because it renders the very possibility of homosexual desire grounds for dismissal. Not only homosexual conduct is now actionable but also homosexual status, and thus any perceptible "conduct that manifests a propensity." Halley explains this in clear but uncompromised language, performing both close legal readings and ideological critique of the new law and recent relevant cases. Another example would be Martha Nussbaum's *Cultivating Humanity*, an even more accessible treatise that makes an educational and ethical case for multicultural curricular reform, using contemporary classroom examples combined with considerations drawn from Nussbaum's scholarly area of expertise in ancient Greek philosophy (Nussbaum 1998).

These two books are not popularizer models in the same vein as Sagan's, whose project was to provide readable renditions of cosmological theory rather than to apply that theory to present-day social concerns. But Halley and Nussbaum are two of our most erudite scholars, and their sophisticated and nuanced approaches to questions of law and ethics are presented intact through the concrete examples they dissect. There are other similar examples that have generated much controversy, such as *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, compiled by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr. and advertised via a miniseries on PBS hosted by Gates. But whether Appiah and Gates's contributions are more hurtful than helpful, as some Africana scholars have suggested, does not disprove the possibility of providing a popularly accessible form for recent academic work that is also

accurate and presents it with all its complexity intact. The problem we face may have much more to do with national corporate media that mandate soundbites than with the public's real interests and abilities.

Thus, I want to defend the popularizer model on the grounds that it does not require a distorting simplification and can, when it is done well, impart excellent scholarship and models of argument to a wider-than-academic audience. These are accomplishments that, while not capable of establishing one's ability to pursue original scholarship, should be valued by the academic community and rewarded accordingly. But I want also to argue against viewing the popularizer model as the essential way to characterize what the public intellectual is doing. To assume that this is the sole task of the public intellectual is to assume that theoretical development and creativity only happen back at the monastery.

This brings us to the main underlying epistemological reason for the devaluing of public work: it is assumed to be *applied* work rather than an authentic intellectual endeavor. It is seen as aiming (only) at persuasion or explanation, perhaps motivated primarily by money and fame, but most important as irrelevant to the real intellectual work of theory development and verification. Upon analysis this claim turns out to be unpersuasive itself.

To say that the work of the public intellectual is not real intellectual work is an epistemic mistake: the public arena can be a space where intellectual work is done, where problems emerge to be addressed, and where knowledge and experience are gained that can address a variety of issues, such as speaking for others, labor/academic alliances, public and democratic deliberation, the nature of white or male supremacy and heterosexism, political and epistemological issues of rape survivors speaking out, and many, many more. Furthermore, one can receive vital feedback concerning one's positions, which can suggest needed modifications. One might think of this as the auto mechanic who takes the newly repaired car on an arduous road trip in order to answer the following questions: Will the car survive? Is it strong enough to meet unexpected challenges? Can it be repaired or revamped as the need arises or as the mechanic learns from the creative peers he meets on the road? We cannot always test or develop social theory under laboratory conditions alone; in the case of many kinds of topics, we need to venture beyond the safe, protected, and largely controllable environment of the classroom. In public interactions, one expands one's knowledge base, learns new social criticisms, gains insights, tests claims, and develops previously unconsidered problematics. Discipline or field of study is relevant here without a doubt; those in the natural sciences will have less to learn than others from work in the public domain, though there may be possibilities here as well – for example, in biology.

I would suggest that this framework for understanding the work of the public intellectual requires a third model: neither the perpetual critic nor

the popularizer but the academic who does *intellectual* work in the *public* domain, or what might be called the public theorist. This should be distinguished from the accepted practice of social scientists who gather empirical and ethnographic data in nonacademic domains, and who are often characterized as properly having a neutral rather than active or interactive stance toward their subject matter or subject domain, though some have more recently advocated a constructive participatory model. But in general the social scientist is understood as gathering data that will be incorporated into theory later on. In contrast, the public theorist is actually doing theory in public. Let me demonstrate this model through an example taken from the work of Michel Foucault.

In 1971 Foucault helped to publish and circulate a forty-eight-page pamphlet in France under the title "Intolerable." The pamphlet was signed by the Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons, or GIP, which was founded by Foucault, and it listed the following as its targets: courts, cops, hospitals, asylums, schools, military service, the press, television, the state. In a speech announcing the formation of GIP, he said:

> There is no one among us who is certain of escaping prison. Today less than ever. Police control is tightening in our everyday life, in city streets and on the roads; expressing an opinion is once again an offense for foreigners and young people, and antidrug measures are increasingly arbitrary. We live in a state of "custody." They tell us that the system of justice is overwhelmed. That is easy to see. But what if the police are the ones who have overwhelmed it? They tell us that the prisons are overcrowded. But what if the population is overimprisoned? (Quoted in Eribon 1991, 224)

Foucault went on to explain that GIP was an organization of magistrates, lawyers, journalists, doctors, psychologists, and intellectuals dedicated to finding out and publishing information about prisons:

> We propose to let people know what prisons are: who goes there, and how and why they go; what happens there; what the existence of prisoners is like, and also the existence of those providing surveillance; what the buildings, food, and hygiene are like; how the inside rules, medical supervision and workshops function; how one gets out and what it is like in our society to be someone who does get out. (Quoted in Eribon 1991, 225)

Foucault had been politically active in an intermittent way throughout his career, but when the student/worker revolution took over Paris for six weeks in 1968, the Collège de France was shut down for "reorganization." Foucault was in the middle of these events, negotiating to change the academic institution, protesting the ill-treatment of immigrants, agitating for the release of imprisoned militants throughout Europe, and organizing and protesting against police brutality. He wrote and distributed leaflets, gave speeches in the streets and on the radio, and helped organize demonstrations. After 1968,

France, like every other Western country, responded to the democratic ferment with increased state surveillance and suppression. For this reason, and also because of his own already extensive research on the human sciences, Foucault began in this period to focus his theoretical analysis on prisons.

During the revolutionary period, Foucault had already focused much of his work concerning knowledge and discourse on the issue of the political context in which epistemic authority is distributed.

> First question: who is speaking? Who, among the totality of speaking individuals, is accorded the right to use this sort of language? Who is qualified to do so? Who derives from it his own special quality, his prestige, and from whom, in return, does he receive, if not the assurance, at least the presumption that what he says is true? (Foucault 1972, 50)

Foucault was interested in assessing the hierarchies of speaking authority and the designations of expertise, revealing their political genealogy, and critiquing their effects. In line with this, the idea of GIP was not to have intellectuals speaking on behalf of prisoners but to create forums and open up media whereby prisoners could themselves speak. What many consider to be Foucault's best work, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, was published in France in 1975 and thus was the product not only of Foucault's historical research but also of his experience in political practice. He developed the widely influential concept of discipline as the principal mode of political control in the contemporary period. His work with prisoners, students, and immigrants against the authorities provided him with critical elements for his innovative analysis of how power operates and circulates in even the "open societies" of the West, societies that on juridical or negative conceptions of power appear to allow for a great deal of individual freedom but that Foucault revealed as harboring insidious processes by which subjects are disciplined and thus made docile.

Toward the end of his life, Foucault described the role, and the ethical obligations, of the intellectual in the following way:

> The role of an intellectual is not to tell others what they have to do. By what right would he do so? And remember all the prophecies, promises, injunctions, and programs that intellectuals have managed to formulate over the last two centuries and whose effects we can now see. The work of an intellectual is not to shape others' political will; it is through the analyses that he carries out in his own field, to question over and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb people's mental habits, the way they do and think things, to dissipate what is familiar and accepted, to reexamine rules and institutions and on the basis of this reproblematization (in which he carries out his specific task as an intellectual) to participate in the formation of a political will (in which he has his role as citizen to play). (Foucault 1988, 265)

In this passage, Foucault critiques the popularizer model insofar as it imagines intellectuals to be taking their knowledge out to the masses, and what he proposes instead may sound closer to the Socratic-gadfly model I critiqued above. I shall discuss this further in a moment, but although Foucault emphasizes here that the intellectual has a mandate to engage in critique, he does not take this as preempting the intellectual's active participation and political advocacy. I take it that what Foucault means to say here is that intellectuals should be *intellectuals* insofar as they operate in the public domain, not political leaders or mere followers but theorists and critics who are simultaneously engaged in teaching and learning. He also argues that the ethical requirements of intellectual work involve making "oneself permanently capable of detaching oneself from oneself" (Foucault 1988, 263). Thus, publicly engaged work is actually one of the *best* sites from which to engage in at least certain kinds of intellectual work, not because one is merely applying and testing theory developed in the academy to the public domain, nor because one can simply gather raw data from which to build theory, but rather because the public domain is sometimes the best or only place in which to alter one's thoughts, to "reexamine rules and institutions," and thus to engage in intellectual work.

Foucault was sometimes tagged as a "philosopher of negativity," and some commentators would probably prefer to locate him in the perpetual-critic model of the public intellectual. In the passages quoted above, he defines the intellectual task as a *permanent* detachment from oneself, that is, from one's assumptions, language game, horizon of meaning, and the like. Foucault, however, was also an advocate with a passionate commitment to social change.[1] While it is certainly the case that the intellectual qua intellectual needs to be able to follow reason wherever it leads, even when it leads away from his or her political orientation, this does not mandate a retreat from intellectuals stating their convictions or their own personal beliefs. The purpose of reason, after all, is to *establish* belief and *justify* claims of certainty, not simply to destabilize. And surely beliefs can be better tested and theories further developed when stated openly than when left concealed or held back.

The public intellectual is not, then, in all cases simply either popularizing theoretical work or applying it to the public domain and is not, in this sense, a kind of "applied" intellectual. Rather, she or he is simply an intellectual. We can judge the integrity of intellectual work in the public domain just as we judge intellectual work in the academy. My argument has been that we should revisit the standard sort of academic requirements we impose in our promotion and tenure committees, not primarily or solely for political reasons but for epistemic reasons. The epistemic assumption behind the dismissal of public intellectual work is that no actual theory

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[1] David Halperin 1995 does perhaps the best job of squaring these political commitments with Foucault's methodological disposition.

development occurs in the public domain because it is the domain of gathering data, proselytizing, or popularizing. Foucault's work on prisons, however, is just one of numerous examples that could be given of theory development that could not have occurred without an intellectual engagement in, and with, the larger public sphere.[2]

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[2] Other examples that could be developed would include the work of C. L. R. James, Edward Said, Luce Irigaray, Marilyn Frye, Jean-Paul Sartre, Enrique Dussel, Lani Guinier, Jürgen Habermas, and Angela Davis, to mention a few.