

## Foucault Responds/2

### Editor's Note

This text is taken as presented in *Diacritics*, Vol. 1 No. 2, 1971, with a single spelling mistake corrected. It is a response to George Steiner's text 'Steiner Responds to Foucault,' published in the same issue. There is no credited translator, so one assumes it was originally written in English.

Mr. Steiner deserves our sympathy. Whether he is trying to understand or respond, he is unfailingly luckless: inaccuracies keep dogging him. For the sake of expediency, I would like to respond to only four such errors in his "reply."

1. He asserts that he is not unfamiliar with the meaning of the word "archaeology" as Kant uses it. He goes so far as to display this knowledge. Bad luck: he picks the wrong word, text or meaning. Let him read "Fortschritte der Metaphysik"; he will find the word, the text and the meaning to which I refer; there is absolutely no question, as he believes, of "a priori conditionings of perception."

2. He finds that I have a poor memory and worse manners since I deny having written several monographs on the diagnosis and treatment of mental diseases from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. With his good memory and manners, Mr. Steiner makes bold to cite two of these monographs — *Histoire de la folie* and *Naissance de la clinique*. Bad luck again: there is absolutely nothing in *L'Histoire de la clinique* which bears on mental diseases or psychiatry.

3. Mr. Steiner believes that I borrowed from Levi-Strauss the notion of connections between grammar, economic structures and "kinship relations." Bad luck once more: I spoke neither of economic structures (but of currency theory-something quite different), nor of grammatical structures (but of language theory-something quite different), nor especially of kinship relations or rules of marriage; could Mr. Steiner have confused these with the taxonomic proximity of vegetable and animal species? Strange ...

4. Mr. Steiner believes that I should have cited Kuhn. It is true that I hold Kuhn's work to be admirable and definitive. But bad luck again (for me as well as for Mr. Steiner). When I read Kuhn's book during the winter of 1963-64 (I believe it was a year after its publication), I had just finished writing *The Order of Things*. I thus did not cite Kuhn, but quoted instead from the historian of science who shaped and inspired his thoughts: G. Canguilhem. But, after all is said and done, I too made a mistake. Not knowing Mr. Steiner in any way, I thought, in good faith, that he was a journalist and that professional requirements had constrained him, against his will, to depart from his area of specialization in order to write about an unfamiliar subject. I thus read him with a genuine sense of amused indulgence. Mr. Steiner has let me know that he is a Professor. This greatly increased my amusement. But now, it will be necessary for me to increase my indulgence by at least an equal factor.