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**Bound to the back of a Tiger:
Michel Foucault's "Pragmatic Humanism"
as a Frame for Understanding an Ethics of Resistance**

by

Joan M. Reynolds



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Political Science

Department of Sociology

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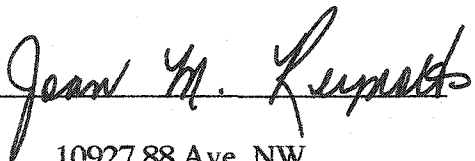
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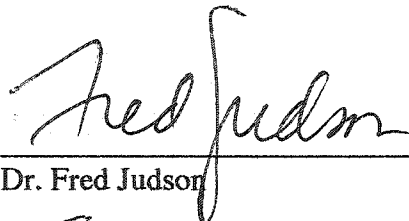
We will call them the "historical men." Their vision of the past turns them toward the future, encourages them to persevere with life, and kindles the hope that justice will yet come and happiness is behind the mountain they are climbing. They believe that the meaning of existence will become ever clearer in the course of evolution; they only look backward at the process to understand the present and stimulate their longing for the future. They do not know how unhistorical their thoughts and actions are in spite of all their history....

- Friedrich Nietzsche,
Thoughts Out of Season

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Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Bound to the Back of a Tiger: Michel Foucault's Pragmatic Humanism as a Frame for Understanding a Maya Ethic of Resistance* submitted by Joan M. Reynolds in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



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Dedication

This work is dedicated to its own subject, Michel Foucault, whose idiosyncratic style of pedagogy, much like a cryptic crossword puzzle, takes us on a historical odyssey of the present so that we may think, do, and say things *differently*. That is Foucault's particular prescription for the ongoing project of human freedom.

Abstract

Michel Foucault's late turn to ethics for an understanding of subject self-constitution is explored in relation to the doctrine of humanism. Foucault's reconsideration of the importance of Immanuel Kant's legacy of humanism that issued out of the Enlightenment constitutes, it is argued, a significant resource for thinking about new ways to approach cultural practices that have as their aim a reconstitution of identity outside dominant structures of scientific and legal knowledge. Sketching Foucault's "anti-humanist" views from his earlier archaeological and genealogical analyses of knowledge constitution, this work explores how such anti-humanist misgivings give way to a more pragmatic conception of humanism in relation to notions of freedom, rights, and equality. The work of John Dewey is employed as a means by which to situate what is called here the "pragmatic humanism" of the later Foucault. It is further argued that such a conception offers a way out of the impasse between modern and postmodern sensibilities. As an empirical focus, Foucault's pragmatic humanism is employed in relation to current Maya revitalization practices in Guatemala. The Maya case – conceived as an "ethic of resistance" – serves as one example of how we might use Foucault's insights on ethics and passive resistance within the context of everyday identity claims.

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Preface

What are we calling postmodernity? I'm not up to date...

- Michel Foucault

In so far as the social and human sciences are concerned, the phenomenon we call "postmodernism" involves the abandonment of foundational knowledge and epistemological "first principles." In social and political theory, this means that attempts to explain the organization of social and political action in terms of collective norms, universal forms of rationality, and collective uses of public reason have been put into question. Along with the purported decline of that old, great monolith, the nation-state, it appeared that epistemology, and particularly those currents dealing with notions of identity, had succumbed to a process of fragmentation as well. As one commentary notes, "[the] crisis in the political is but one dimension of a more general sense of disintegration in the human sciences" (Good and Velody 1998: 2).

At the same time, however, there is in the academy a growing sense of defiance oriented around redressing the devastating blow that French poststructuralism is said to have dealt to the notion of a secure identity. These efforts have taken seriously the claims of critics of identity and have begun to search for new, yet non-foundational, pathways to reanchor identity and to address the growing malaise of postmodernism without, however, ignoring the multiplicity of meanings in social action, and without positing a realm of "objective" knowledge. One of the more recent trends in this regard is a group led by Satya Mohanty, a group seeking to "reclaim identity" by positing a "postrealist" understanding of the epistemic status of cultural identity (Moya and Hames-García 2000). This approach originates in a claim about the "crisis of identity" and culminates in set of arguments related to the inexorable connection between experience and identity at the level of epistemology. As Mohanty points out, such an approach is not meant to elide *either* essentialist notions of identity *or* the postmodern claim that experience is too heterogenous to serve as a ground for social analysis. Rather, a postrealist understanding of identity is intended to reintroduce the experience of social actors as both central to an understanding of how identities are constructed and as having a cognitive component (Mohanty 2000: 30-2). In other words, by emphasizing the cognitive aspects of our experience, we can gain access to a better understanding of the reality that shapes our experience.

Coincident with the resurrection of realist theory is another current that in recent years has experienced a revival in relation to the themes of postmodernism, deconstruction, and identity politics: that of pragmatism, with particular emphasis on the political writings of John Dewey. (Bernstein 1992a) (Bernstein 1992b) (Mouffe 1996) (Stuhr 1997) (Shusterman 1997) (Festenstein 1997) (Good and Velody 1998). Anxious to distance themselves from either "radical" postmodernism or strong foundationalism, some neo-pragmatists have begun to use the insights of classical pragmatism in a effort directed towards understanding

“who we are” by engaging in a discourse which overcomes the despair, negativity and transgressive tendencies of earlier postmodernism and embraces what Richard Bernstein refers to as a more pragmatic orientation to ethico-political questions and notions of identity (Bernstein 1992a: 838-40). Going “beyond objectivism and relativism” (Bernstein 1983), this new constellation of thought rejects fixed foundations when approaching questions of ethical and political value, but retains the demand for making “reasonable discriminations” (Bernstein 1992a: 839). The return to classical pragmatism rests on an appreciation that these thinkers were ahead of their time in anticipating the plurality of values and the importance of non-discursive experience while at the same time recognizing their own beliefs as historically conditioned, fallibilistic, and open to continual revision (Festenstein 1997: 191).

It is this general impulse guiding the aims of pragmatism that I wish to explore in relation to Michel Foucault’s changing views on the legacy of Enlightenment humanism. Pragmatism is by no means a uniform body of thought; a bit of Peirce here and a bit of James and Dewey there has resulted in a distorted reception of the underlying direction of this current, but there are certain common themes and threads that can be pointed to which lend some coherence to the overall approach of pragmatists (see “Introduction” in Festenstein 1997 for a full discussion of this). Without digressing at length into the history of pragmatism, it is nonetheless important to note that the later Foucault’s desire to make life “a work of art” through “limit-testing,” “critique” and “ethical self-fashioning” dovetails with Dewey’s revisionary theory of “art as experience,” his insistence on the importance of transformative “self-realization,” and his emphasis on the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of life. Both want to free liberalism from the philosophical foundations of Enlightenment metaphysics; both advocate testing the limits of experience through “inquiry” or “critique”; both privilege individualism and freedom through self-creation; and, finally, both view the individual as a contingent product of history, never completed and thus, lacking a human essence. While the differences in how each realizes this ideal of the self are abundant, there is nevertheless a common pursuit for an understanding of contemporary life through a separation of non-discursive experience from ultimate foundations. Dewey argued for a “naturalistic humanism” to overcome the Enlightenment dualisms of metaphysics and epistemology, realism and idealism, mind and matter, etc. (Shusterman 1997: 158). In a parallel manner, Foucault’s “anti-humanism,” I will argue, is the affirmation of a new type of freedom, one which leaves behind the Cartesian ego as the foundation of all knowledge and refurbishes humanism with a sense of embodiedness and emergent, non-discursive, and practical creativity.

But, what, it may be rightly asked, is the purpose of such an exercise? Both Dewey and Foucault defend the aesthetic model of philosophical life: so what? Do we really need to rubber stamp philosophy’s retreat into what Dewey called “smug, scholastic professionalism?” Or, should we, with Dewey and Foucault, use philosophy to highlight the practical, concrete life-experiences of individuals? How can we apply the insights of knowledge to everyday experiences, particularly in the ethical-political realm? Should we simply stuff

Foucault into a dusty archive without attempting to tease out the wider implications of his turn to ethics? How, finally, can we turn Foucault's skepticism about liberal freedom into something positive, into a tangible suggestion for understanding practices of self-creation? The time is propitious, in the current age of imploded identities, to employ the insights of high theory to some of the more concrete aspects of forms and practices of cultural existence. And it is just such a project that I wish to undertake here. Nowadays, it is fashionable to "do" Foucaultian discourse analysis. Unfortunately, however, some of these efforts fall back on a spurious use of Foucault, originating in an extraction of selected concepts and resulting in a pernicious affiliation of those insights with whatever project is at hand, whether empirical or theoretical. My strategy is thus to probe the hollows and contours of Foucault's views on the legacy of humanism and then to determine whether his deconstruction of this hallmark of modernity can be translated into a reconstructive agenda for an understanding of current pan-Mayan revitalization practices. To this it may be objected that Foucault's ethic of the care of the self bears too strongly the imprint of a nominalist conception of subjectivity to extend his insights into a collective understanding of politics. Time and time again, he insists on the specificity and local and historically contingent character of subjective practices. And, to be sure, he is at best tentative in suggesting anything resembling a formula for how "we" as moral agents can transgress the limits imposed upon our freedom. But does this exclude the possibility that Foucault's ethics opens up new lines of inquiry to be explored, probed and applied in relation to a collective ethic of political practice? My response is that, by placing such a limitation on Foucault's thinking, we do not do justice to his invitation to conceptualize practices of the self as something not invented by the individual, but rather something modeled on actions that are "proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group" (Foucault 1997: 291). Ethics, Foucault, says, is a form of political practice that has its stakes, its generality, its homogeneity, and its systematicity (Foucault 1997: 316).

This statement issues in an invitation to embrace the care of the self on a political as well as individual level. This does not mean that we must revert back to the project of modernity and see identities as fixed, stable and timeless. But, it does mean that the struggle for recognition in identity politics is real one, one that has found expression through channels other than the traditional social politics of redistribution (Fraser 1997: 3). It also means that we must, along with Foucault "think differently" about our capacities to transcend the limits that have been imposed on our identities. It means that perhaps it is time to start thinking differently about Foucault's contribution to identity politics. As Jon Simons notes, "Foucault's political thought is timely in way that are not immediately obvious. The concern for 'cultural' issues of identity politics and concern for the self ... should not be considered the luxury of the rich" (Simons 1995: 123).

My advocacy of Foucault's emerging "pragmatic humanism" must be tempered with an *apologia*: that such a study is necessarily exploratory and experimental. I want to make use of Foucault's ongoing debate with humanism not least because I think that its import – particularly in its later manifestations –

derives from how it might be used to rescue to some small extent, the concept of identity, a concept so widely condemned these days among activists and academic influenced by French poststructuralism. Following Foucault's own dictum that "one need not be for or against the Enlightenment," this study is premised on the view that one need not be "for" or "against" humanism or cultural identity. Furthermore, a core argument advanced here is that Foucault's later thinking lends itself to the identification of new and different ways to think about humanism in the context of everyday ethical-political practices, however contradictory these two terms – Foucault and humanism – might seem. In this light, Foucault himself asks, aptly: "[Do] you think I have worked like that all those years to say the same thing and not be changed?" (Foucault 1997: 131).

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Introduction

The argument of this study is that Michel Foucault's reconsideration of the importance of Kant's legacy, enlightenment, and particularly *humanism*, constitutes a significant resource for thinking about new ways to approach what has become a suspect term in the academy: identity politics. This is a work of discourse analysis, but one with an odd bent, for it seeks to articulate, both theoretically and in political practical terms, a more nuanced understanding of the relations of pragmatism and humanism and how they might fall sympathetically into a (later) Foucaultian analysis as a frame for understanding the processes of identity-based politics. Central to this work is the claim that Foucault's changing views on humanism - which I argue here took a pragmatic turn - are rather unconventional for those who would place him beneath the enigmatic banner of postmodernism. Any enterprise which seeks to mediate humanism and pragmatism for purposes of political critique appears at first glance to be paradoxical, if not downright improbable, but when one emancipates the doctrines of pragmatism and humanism from their conservative domains, it becomes possible to relieve this paradox and extend a more liberal reconsideration to Foucault's views in relation to the social and political. These considerations, then, will be framed in such a way as to articulate a specific, key theoretical problematic for purposes of identifying social and cultural contexts of "truth" ; how can Foucault's reconsideration of enlightenment and his ethics of the "care of the self," - in his view a means of acquiring knowledge of the self - be accommodated in a pragmatic humanist understanding of the epistemic status of cultural identity? In recent years, Maya cultural activists in Guatemala have worked to promote a movement aimed at cultural empowerment and at rectifying many of the structural imbalances brought on by long-standing ladino hegemony and the politics of neo-liberal globalization. Following a preface to the theoretical problematic of this study, I will sketch the lines along which this contemporary cultural movement will be used as a point of departure for determining what implications such a reconstituted, pragmatic humanism might have for political actualities.

Theoretical Orientation

Many of us have read Foucault. Some of us even claim that he has had a profound impact on the way we think about phenomena ranging from knowledge and the history of science to power, modernity, postmodernity, the criminal system, psychiatry, and so on. And, many of us have attempted to read at least a smattering of the myriad works that have appropriated Foucault as the intellectual backdrop for this or that conception of postmodernity, for the justification of "irrational," anti-scientific social theory as opposed to a more dogmatic, foundational, or rationalist approach. This is not one such endeavor. The Foucault that beckons as ardent poststructuralist, as theorist of discontinuity, or as evangelist of a politics of transgression is not the Foucault that will figure largely in this work. Neither is this - happily, for those much more rigorously trained in the treatment of difficult philosophical issues - a work about Michel Foucault, philosopher. Rather, this

proposed study is intended as an excursus which seeks to make use of Foucault in a positive, one could almost say imaginative, manner: to present him as one who thought through from the beginning to the end of his career both the possibilities and the obstacles emanating out of the Enlightenment legacy of *anthropological humanism* and how that theme is inherently tied to a politics of freedom. At the heart of such an endeavor is a *leitmotif* that sounds repeatedly throughout the rhetorical complexity of Foucault's works.

To be sure, there are a host of problems that one is confronted with when invoking Foucault for the sort of project envisioned here. By some accounts, because he was deeply suspicious of the Kantian transcendental formula for determining the conditions for the possibility of experience, renouncing all quests to identify universal structures of knowledge, it is unlikely that Foucault turned to Kantian formal ethics to round out his investigations into how we are constituted as subjects. Conversely, critics have suggested that once Foucault turned from descriptive to prescriptive claims about the limits of our freedom, he could not avoid running into something resembling a transcendental subject and general ethic (Fraser 1989; Habermas 1987; Taylor 1986). The proposed work can be seen as intervening in this debate, one which concerns the status of the subject and related notions of the care of the self coming out of the later Foucault. In particular, I want to demonstrate how Foucaultian ethics ("a critical ontology of ourselves") may be used in a way that Foucault himself did not fully develop. My aim is to construct what might look like a Foucaultian ethic around the theme of what can be detected in his later work as the germination of a critical, pragmatic humanism. Such an enterprise must necessarily be constructed around what was absent in Foucault's archaeological and genealogical rejection of humanism, namely, an ethic of human engagement and a politics of self-invention. In his reflections on Kant's views about what enlightenment means ("What is Enlightenment?"), Foucault now wonders whether we might not envisage modernity as an "attitude," as

a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task. No doubt, a bit like what the Greeks called an *ethos* (Foucault 1997: 309).

Foucault's use of Kant sustains his own critical ontology, conceived as a "historico-practical test of the limits that we may go beyond" (Foucault 1997: 316). He claims that this ethos, this way of living in the present, presents itself to us as a political problem and leads to the study of "practical systems" around which one can pose such questions as: how can the growth of capacities and autonomy be severed from the intensification of power relations (*stakes*)? What forms of rationality are employed in the determination of freedom and the organization of such practical systems (*homogeneity*)? How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge, as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations, and who act as moral agents (*systematicity*)? Finally, how can we problematize such questions so as to make general sense of them in their albeit historically unique forms (*generality*)? (Foucault 1997: 317-18). Such metaquestions are indeed a long way off from the Foucault who

proclaimed in *Power/Knowledge* that the individual is not the vis-à-vis of power, but rather its ubiquitous effect (Foucault 1980b: 98). This seemed to imply that the individual's conscious intentions could not be accommodated in an analysis of power and subjectivity, though "the logic of opposing strategies" is invoked as a means of constructing an ontology grounded in what Charles Taylor aptly calls "a strange kind of Schopenhauerian will, ungrounded in human action" (Taylor 1986: 88).

The Problematic of Humanism

On a thematic level, then, this work is concerned with the problematic of anthropological humanism, how such a concept might be de-transcendentalized so as to make it more compatible with a later Foucaultian ethics, and how such an extension of Foucault's thought might point to ways by which legitimate identities may be identified. It must be stated at the outset that a comprehensive and decisive definition of Western humanism is a goal that is practically impossible to attain, given its multiple varieties, presuppositions and meanings. This is not the sort of humanism that emerged out of a revival of "man" during the heyday of the Renaissance. Nor is it the type of "secular humanism," according to which humans try to attain, in the most humane ways possible, the highest of ethical standards in a self-conscious, self-evaluative way (and which has come under attack by organized religion). And, to be sure, Foucault's anti-humanism is not parallel to a rejection of "humanistic anthropology" according to which history is the story of human creativity carried out in different, culturally constructed locales. The type of anti-humanism with which this work is concerned is related to a specific variety of French poststructuralist anti-humanism that emerged out of a dissatisfaction with structuralism in the 1960s. When Foucault speaks disparagingly of the "humanistic episode," he is rejecting something specific: namely, the Cartesian notion that a reasoned and responsive cogito lies at the root of all knowledge, or to put it in the philosophical vernacular, *the internal unity of the conscious subject*. Foucault's overall analyses of the modern era are grounded in a critical analysis of the Enlightenment and steadfastly circle around an ontology of what it has meant historically to speak of "man" in the modern era.

This humanistic theme, Foucault tells us ("always tied to value judgments"), has since the nineteenth century presented itself as an "analytic of finitude," according to which "man appears in his ambiguous position as an object of knowledge and as a subject that knows: enslaved sovereign, observed spectator" (Foucault 1970: 312). And it is this very specific sense of humanism, with reference to an all-knowing, transcendental subject and to the same individual as an object of empirical investigation to which Foucault objects. However, Foucault's thinking on the demerits of such a doctrine underwent, I argue, significant modifications with the maturation of his work. Toward the end of his life (and, astonishingly to some), he proclaimed in the French newspaper, *Libération*, that there existed an "international citizenship that has its rights and its duties", an obligation to speak out against governmental abuses of power (Foucault 2000: 474). Now, what is so odd about this statement? After all, do we not embrace Foucault as the champion of "the undefined work of freedom" and resistance against the excesses of biopower and governmentality?

Perhaps we do. But perhaps we also need to take a sidelong glance at the notion of an “international citizenship with rights and duties” when invoking the name of Foucault. This is certainly not the Foucault who proclaimed, somewhat cryptically that, if fundamental arrangements in knowledge were to occur, modern man “would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea” (Foucault 1970: 387). Neither is this the Foucault according to whom notions of anthropological humanism were suspect and who, in fact, spent the lion’s share of his academic career attempting to debunk. Nor can we say that this is the Foucault who decried all endeavors to formulate anything resembling a “theory of the subject.” Finally, this is not the Foucault who resonantly asserted the futility, or non-value of the language of humanism, human rights and notions of justice in struggles against the excesses of government. In appropriating these themes, this earlier Foucault would say we can no longer think in terms of the rational progress of “humanity” in general. We can no longer succumb to the epistemological tyranny of the human sciences with their fantastical and arbitrary insistence on the primacy of ideas as representations residing in a finite cogito, and thus, anthropocentric reflection.

However, this *is* the Foucault who, in the end, rounded out his own archaeological and genealogical investigations into what has made us subjects by supplying what might be called his own third critique, following a reconsideration of Kant and the Enlightenment. The relationship between knowledge and how we are formed as subjects in the world was always at the center of Foucault’s project. In his archaeological investigations into the human sciences, for example, Foucault assessed the impact that Kant’s anthropological study of the limits of human knowledge came to bear on how we act on practical grounds, morally or ethically, in the world around us. The Foucault of *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* (volume I) posed a similar set of problems. How, through the “discourse of power” are subjects constituted, or, more precisely why, in the name of “reason”, can the power of some be established over others? (Foucault 1991: 152). And, in the work of the “final Foucault” of *The History of Sexuality* (Volumes II and III), the emphasis shifts to how the individual constitutes - through morally significant actions - itself as subject (“the subject qua subject”).

One might almost venture to say that there is a binding thread that runs through Foucault’s many axes of inquiry into the status of the modern subject as a determinative element of the discourse of truth. Foucault’s questioning of anthropological humanism and the universalist certitude regarding our abstract freedom that goes hand in hand with such a doctrine turns on his insistence that there is a better way to both define and practice particular forms of freedom. But, it is also a major contention of this work that, having rejected in his earlier work the whole anthropological and humanist thematic as an axis for reflection, Foucault established the parameters for what I have called here a form of pragmatic humanism to underscore how subjects might productively engage in practices of self-invention.

Aside from *The Order of Things*, we must be satisfied with a series of writings concerned only tacitly with the question of anthropological humanism. Up until the last two volumes of *HS* Foucault, rather than engaging in abstract, metaphysical speculation about a foundational subject, invites us to undertake a historical ontology and empirical diagnostic of how we are made into subjects in the context of a

negative anthropologism: that is, the claim that holds that to understand how human beings engage productively in social, political and cultural activities, we must start from the assumption that “permits the conceptual demonstration of the impossibility of a concept of the human being” (Honneth and Joas 1988) quoting (Kamper 1973). Within this corpus of writings, Foucault discards the individual’s cognitive achievements as grounded in the progressive activity of the transcendental ego. His extreme nominalism thus prevents him from formulating an account of an intersubjective constitution of reality at any level. Yet, strangely, we read in Foucault’s essay *What is Enlightenment?* that an analysis of humanism and the Enlightenment is “a worthwhile project” if we are to have an understanding of our consciousness and our past, and elsewhere, that the critical function of philosophy derives from the Socratic injunction, “Make freedom your foundation, through mastery of yourself,” (Foucault 1997: 300-01). What is particularly striking about this reformulation is that, for the first time, Foucault introduces the notion of a conscious subject as a primary ground or criterion for an ontology of truth and knowledge. Prior to *The History of Sexuality* (vols. I & II), Foucault attempted to think through the question of subjectivation without invoking the notion of a subject (Deleuze 1988: 101). There is, I will argue, a sense in which Foucault’s critique cannot altogether escape the sovereign aspirations of Kant’s categorical imperative which Kant deems necessary for a politics of freedom. As we shall see, for Foucault this quest must necessarily entail discarding previous injunctions against the Kantian imperative for an analysis of one’s being, a stress on the search for personal identity, *some* ground for knowledge, truth, beauty and concomitant notions of human rights without, however, adopting the old adage that “universal man” is final arbiter of truth, one buttressed by a transparent, all-knowing, transcendental ego. Put differently, Foucault must retain the possibility of *critique*; and, his critique of the limits of reason, like that of Kant, must resort to the invocation of a ground for self-judgment, for the self-legislation of what he wants to call a “critical ontology of the present.”

Noted humanism scholar Albert Levi offers a summary formulation of humanism as “*the quest for value*,” apart from abstract transcendental ideals and impartial “nature” (Levi 1969: 15). This seems to me to capture what Foucault is attempting to problematize in relation to freedom, enlightenment and the care of the self. Thinking of Foucault as a humanist appears fraught with contradiction, but when one considers that “the quest for value” might include a quest beyond the search for ultimate grounds of knowledge, moving in the direction of “life as a work of art,” then this seemingly perverse placement of Foucault within the humanist tradition has, I argue, some merit. When one extends this problematic to contemporary avenues of social and political analysis, the question becomes: can political arrangements be subjected to the scrutiny of such a pragmatic humanism without also being subjected to the necessary mandates of critical, universal reason and the concomitant notion of an essential human nature? What would a critical, pragmatic humanism look like?

Empirical Focus

The four criteria Foucault offers as tools for analysis – *stakes, homogeneity, systematicity and generality* - around which to determine the status of subjectivity

within the broader context of the tension between power and freedom point to novel ways by which to examine how subjects construe their freedom outside of juridical judgment and outside a resolve of universal structures of knowledge. The *foci* of these four categories will thus foreground the study of a contemporary political movement in Latin America. Spurred on by Foucault's own challenge to use his insights to further social and political analysis, this work is further premised on the notion that such a reconstructed humanism offers new ways by which to ground analyses concerning those so-called third world subjects who turn to *criticism*, who seek to make their daily worlds livable by turning to a politics of self-development in a bid to reshape practices of freedom in an era of advanced liberal government. The relocation of this freedom in politics is further premised on a rejection of individuals and communities working their way to "freedom" through existing neo-liberal institutions such as The World Bank and the IMF. Finally, such a quest is also a response to the failure of the promise of Marxism which sought to locate freedom through progressive reason: that is to say, through the realization of universal social justice.

Against the background of what I allege are Foucault's changing views on humanism, this work will have as its empirical focus the achievements of a distinctive cultural movement in Latin America: Maya cultural activism in Guatemala. Recent anthropological debates on the efforts of Guatemalan Maya activists to carve out a distinctive Maya identity converge around the Maya quest for ethnic autonomy at cultural and political levels (Fischer and McKenna Brown 1996b). In the Lacandon forests of southern Mexico, the stakes are similar in that there is a sustained effort to articulate a tripartite set of demands for language, cultural and political recognition at the national level of government, a movement organized around what Neil Harvey has called "the right to have rights" (Harvey 1998). What both of these movements have in common are sustained efforts to effect counterhegemonic practices by projecting identity outward through acts of what I have called "self-invention." Where they diverge is arguably in the degree of success that has been achieved by each. I argue that such practices are interactive, and both *strategic* and *symbolic* in character (Mato 1996). Confining my study to the Maya of Guatemala, I hope to demonstrate that Maya cultural activism, may be organized around Foucault's pragmatic humanism, making use of his four criteria of stakes, homogeneity, systematicity, and generality.

Foucault's later work on ethics and the constitution of the self will thus provide the setting against which these "subjects of development" are thinking about the ways in which they are constituted in and through the spaces they inhabit. These practices, including everyday interactions with others, are framed in such a way as to make them *political* acts. This is not emancipation *from* politics in the tradition of Marxism or the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, but rather a recognition that only by engaging *in* politics - by meeting politics on its own terrain of power, by interrogating political strategies and by reformulating notions of identity through self-constituted practice - can one exercise political self-production. And, these daily practices are undoubtedly ethical if one considers ethics to be a matter of enabling practices which form the individual in relation to such things as knowledge, politics and modern law (Rajchman 1992: 219). It is on a more nuanced level, then, that I

wish to explore the problematic of humanism in Foucault, one that follows the trajectories of his analyses concerning how subjects do not, cannot, or *can possibly* create the conditions of possibility for their own knowledge, understandings, beliefs, and practices.

Structure of the Argument

In the first chapter, I develop a sketch of humanism, from its Kantian roots to its critique by French poststructuralism in the late 1960s. I suggest an number of guiding themes surrounding the doctrine of transcendental humanism in an effort to capture the presuppositions underlying humanism and the principle claims against it by Martin Heidegger and later, Jacques Derrida. In the second chapter, I explore Foucault's anti-humanist views in their early, archaeological phase in an attempt to illuminate Foucault's critique of the human sciences and the epistemological limits he sees as being imposed on social orders beginning in the nineteenth century. The focus of this sketch can be mapped onto one principle question: in the name of Foucault's "critique" of truth as being governed by transcendental legislation, does he succeed in eradicating the subject as a ground for knowledge? In other words, did Foucault succeed in resolving the problem of humanism through his demonstration that there have existed radical shifts in the epistemological field and that the humanism that emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century and "continues to this day" was the result of a spatial reordering of determinate elements within knowledge?

In the third chapter, I look at how Foucault's anti-humanism shifts in emphasis to a social-theoretic analysis of the conditions under which subjects are said to be constituted in the name of humanist political rationality. I intervene in the debates over whether there is a "hidden" normative agenda in his genealogical diagnosis of humanism, and follow up by asking the following questions: is Foucault able to open his method to the domain of the social in terms of intentional, strategic social action? Is he able to provide an explanation of the causal genesis of social phenomena? In chapter fourth, I look at the metatheoretical assumptions of self-proclaimed "post-development theory," the most radical approach to "alternative development". My point is to demonstrate how Foucault's anti-humanism is used in a spurious vein; that is, in contrast to attempts to show how his views on humanism might, or have been, reconfigured so as to construct a positive ethic for purposes of social analysis, it is argued that post-development, as a self-proclaimed paradigm, is fundamentally incoherent as an alternative.

In the fifth chapter, I look at Foucault's "subject of the present" in an effort to capture how he problematizes the question of how we constitute ourselves as subjects. Although the principle focus for Foucault is the question of how we construct our own ethics in relation to our sexuality, these concerns will be extended to a more generalized account of how his work on ethics contains the seeds for the development of a pragmatic form of humanism that cannot be reduced to abstract, transcendental, first principles. Chapter six addresses the question of identity from the perspective of Derrida, Judith Butler, and William Connolly. I argue in this chapter that Foucault *did* conceptualize the notion of identity, however tentatively, and that if we look closely at his later essays and interviews, it becomes apparent that he also believed liberation struggles were efficacious in advancing identity claims.

The purpose of chapter seven may well be seen as parasitic in that it attempts to fill a conceptual gap left by the post-development critique of Western humanism. First, I will elucidate a number of important principle claims being made by Maya activists in the name of ethnic legitimacy. Within the growing anthropological literature on the epistemic status of this movement, there exists a divide between those who view Maya activism as a bid to retrieve and preserve an essentially conceived past and those who adopt a constructivist position, arguing that Maya culture is not a “natural,” homogeneous phenomenon and therefore must be conceived in deessentializing, constructivist terms. In this chapter, I argue that this kind of polarization fails to do justice to the complexity of cultural initiatives and cognitive schemas that have provided the necessary, revitalizing fodder for the pan-Maya search for cultural recognition. Towards what I perceive to be a corrective to bridging the essentialism/constructivism divide, I make use of in this chapter Foucault’s later work on ethics and the Enlightenment in an effort to demonstrate that radical skepticism about the ethical implications of cultural identity is not the only alternative to ahistorical essentialism, conceived as foundational humanism.

In my conclusion I reflect on how a reconstituted humanism suggests what both needs to be avoided and what needs to characterize the contingent, experiential, and historical character of identity politics. This in turn suggests what the implications of a pragmatic understanding of humanism might be for an assessment of the ethical sensibilities underlying cultural revitalization practices.

Chapter One

Kant, Poststructuralism, and the Age of Humanism

Cursed is everyone who places his hope in man.

-Saint Augustine

We are too late for the gods and too early for Being.

Being's poem, just begun, is man.

-Heidegger

I wonder who it was defined man as a rational animal?

It was the most premature definition ever given.

- Oscar Wilde

Introduction

One of the assumptions underlying this work is that the occurrence of pluralized values, beliefs and styles of existence that have in the last few decades made their mark in industrialized societies has at its core a significant reconstitution of the ideals of humanism. This means, on the one hand, that one cannot help bumping up against Descartes and, more pointedly, Kant. On the other hand, it is necessary to question whether we cannot leave behind Kant's transcendental humanism with its built-in logic of historical inevitability and construct an embodied, socially grounded humanism that retains, in the last instance, some of the (non-essentialist) creative impulses of Enlightenment humanism. But first, it is necessary to sketch the historical outlines of modern humanism from its inception in the writings of Descartes to Kant's "anthropological" humanism and the reception by French poststructuralism in the 1960s.

Section One: Philosophy of the Subject

Cogito as Certainty

The epistemology of modernity has been variously defined as the rationalism of the subject, the philosophy of consciousness, or the philosophy of the subject. The goal of modernity, since René Descartes, has been the search for certainty and the use of reason to arrive at the absolute foundations of knowledge which are said to reside in the rationality of the knowing subject itself. It was Descartes who first conceived the subject as a self-conscious, all-knowing entity who reflects on objects in the world around it. As one commentator puts it, the modern Cartesian subject is one who can

disclose for itself a privileged sphere of immediately accessible and absolutely certain experiences...when it does not focus directly on objects but rather reflexively on its own representations...of objects. For classical epistemology, there is a constitutive separation between inner and outer – a dualism of mind and body- that appeals to the

privileged access of the first person to her own experiences (Habermas 1998: 348-9).

The epistemic authority of this first person is sustained by three assumptions:

- (i) that we know our own mental states better than anyone else [the given]
- (ii) that knowing takes places essentially in the mode of representing objects; and [thought as representation]; and
- (iii) that the truth of judgments rests on evidence that vouches for their certainty [truth as certainty].

On this view, the representing subject stands above and against a world of things and events, all the while asserting its sovereignty in the world as a *purposively acting subject*. From the perspective of an acting subject, “he encounters other subjects who, in turn, assert themselves. As subjects capable of action, they influence each other in the way in which they generally intervene causally in innerworldly processes” (Habermas 1998: 279). The fundamental dynamic of the philosophy of the subject thus rests on the premise of a self which acts on an objective world and defines other subjects as objects to be additionally acted upon. Descartes was the first to locate a psychologistic foundation for the all-knowing subject in the cogito. There was nothing heretical in the questions he asked about nature and the existence of God (i.e., the questions of metaphysics); however, what *was* heretical “was his suggestion that assertions about them could not be said to have the status of *knowledge*, and could not be said to be *known* to be true, *unless* they were capable of rational demonstration” (Schacht 1984: 5). However, it was Immanuel Kant who first identified philosophy with *criticism* and made the revolutionary observation that humanity was the sole arbiter of its own destiny.

Dare to Know!

Humanism emerged as the philosophical *leitmotif* at the close of the eighteenth century with questions first posed by Kant, and is therefore inseparable from the philosophy of the subject. Kant entered on the scene amidst a “revolt against superstition,” and called this revolt the *Aufklärung*, or the age of Enlightenment (Gay 1967: 20-1). The problem arose when a group of Enlightenment *philosophes* began to question the authority that the Enlightenment had bestowed upon reason and began to seek ultimate answers to questions regarding the ways in which reason had undermined morality, religion, the state, and the general conduct of life, the inherent dangers of which had been pointed to first by Rousseau and David Hume. The challenge to rational metaphysics - with its blind acceptance of an apriori knowledge of God - led Kant to formulate a view that placed reason’s unbounded authority on trial by seeking self-awareness of its own “external laws.” This new philosophical terrain – “thought thinking itself,” as Kant put it - placed the human subject at the center of its own knowledge regarding how human beings justify their moral and religious beliefs through a practical reason of universal moral law (Beiser 1987: 1-5). No longer could the individual, much less religion and the state, rely passively on the

dictates of reason alone, but was now obligated to search for its limits. What emerged from this 'Copernican revolution' was the view that the self now became its own agent in the construction of order and meaning in the world. This exaltation of the human subject further presupposed notions of autonomy and freedom (Kant uses these terms interchangeably) won through a process of "developmental perfectionism" founded on this practical reason of moral law, and resulting in what philosophy has referred to as Kant's "radical humanism" (Galston 1993: 218). The basis for this moral law is the individual as a transcendental subject who possesses an autonomous will in the exercise of its own freedom. Humanism thus locates an "essence" in human beings who strive, through the faculties of developmental reason, to overcome external religious and political constraints which attempt to hamper self-fulfillment and autonomy.

Kant branded his own philosophy "anthropology from a pragmatic point of view." So as to distinguish between philosophical reflection which focused on the dichotomy between Nature and "man," (that was the project of rationalism, one which Kant calls "physiological" reflection) Kant's "pragmatism" circled around the question of "what man makes, can, or should make of himself as a freely acting being" (Kant 1978: 3). This conception of human nature is ineluctably tied to Kant's attempts to resolve "the crisis of reason" at the end of the eighteenth century. Richard Velkley explains that

Kant tries to resolve the crisis by a demarcation of the grounds and limits of reason. In Kant's case the defense of reason secures a place for rational morality strictly demarcated from the realm of mere "phenomena" subject to description by science. Therewith Kant believes he guarantees the source both of moral obligation and of teleological principles that satisfy the human striving for an ultimate purposive context (Velkley 1993: 76-7).

In order to arrive at the judgments that he did, Kant invoked the notion of a *subject* who is at once the sole referent of its intentions, the sole arbiter of the limits of moral reason, and the legislator of itself as an *object*, both empirical and transcendental, about whom it was possible to establish grounds for everlasting, universal truths. In considering what makes the human species unique, Kant sets up the transcendental conditions for the self-legislation of the limits of man's own reason. For him, man

has a character which he himself creates, because he is capable of perfecting himself according to purposes which he himself adopts. Consequently, man as an animal endowed with capability of reason (*animal rationabile*) can make himself a rational animal (*animal rationale*). This wisdom is to affect the perfection of man through cultural progress, even if this should mean some sacrifice of the pleasures of his life (Kant 1978: 238).

On this account, “reason” is that which unifies our many concepts by means of ideas. These ideas transcend the possibility of experience, though they help to make possible certain forms of experience. However, we cannot ever really know these ideas of reason and so must act “as if” they can be known; such facets of the “categorical imperative” are the tools of self-legislation which make possible the ascent to freedom and human immortality.

Kant supplied his own formula for the limits of knowledge with his transcendental turn. Here, the subject relates to objects via a transcendental, self-sufficient ego. Reason, Kant argued, should not serve idle or speculative (i.e., theoretical) ends, but should be the source of universal moral law. Kant’s philosophy of the subject rests on the premise that this moral law which binds us comes from within ourselves, not from any external source. The limits of theoretical knowledge are circumscribed by insufficient application to empirical data, but practical or moral reason is bounded only through its own, pure (non-experiential) principle. It follows from this the subject possesses a free will by virtue of the recognition that it binds itself by such a moral law (Guyer 1992: 18-19). On this account, Kant concludes that reason strives for completion and unity through the determination of its *own* ends, hence the autonomy of the anthropological subject, otherwise referred to as the doctrine of humanism.

Kant states that it was David Hume - with his devastating critique of metaphysics - who interrupted him from his dogmatic slumber. Classical philosophy rejected the view that empirical knowledge based on the senses could give us access to the true nature of reality. The rationalists did not question this but Hume, and after him Kant, did. Kant came to the conclusion that metaphysics could yield knowledge only of the essential structures of the phenomena we experience, but not the *nature* of objects which are beyond the realm of possible experience (Schacht 1984: 225). Kant starts out from the premise that we are active agents. And, as active agents, we must reject the idea of a “human nature” and supplant it with new ideals of freedom, history and culture. His critique of rationalism was thus grounded in his attempt to overturn rationalism’s fundamental principle: that reason alone can explain our relations to experience (Beiser 1992: 42). Furthermore, Kant himself came to doubt the possibility of Enlightenment metaphysics and began to search for the ways in which reason could service the ends of humanity. This task, he claimed, could only be accomplished by redirecting reason in two ways. First, reason should be practical as opposed to theoretical, so that it served humanity and not idle speculation. Second, reason should serve as a faculty to moral ends. By redirecting reason thus, Kant supposed that we could recover the source of morality (i.e., freedom) within ourselves, rather than relying on the metaphysical assumption that our source of morality lay outside us (Beiser 1992: 43-50). This era – *the transcendental/humanist era* - culminated in the nineteenth century progressive historicist philosophies of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Marx.

Kant’s project was to determine the limits of our reason on the basis of his view that we, as rational agents, are also active agents in the creation of both a moral and natural world (Guyer 1992: 3). The purpose, or rather the effect, of Kant’s critique of speculative, metaphysical reason was the establishment of the possibility of a transcendental subject through which may be determined ‘the ends of reason.’

Previously, all philosophy had assumed that knowledge conformed to the objective world and that reason was always in the service of extrarational principles such as passions and sentiment. One might say that, until Kant, reason and perception coexisted in a kind of unfriendly alliance, each vying for supreme authority in the determination of the direction of reason and the advancement of knowledge (Velkley 1993: 78). Kant wants to determine the teleology, or the ends, of reason because of certain inherent dangers in modern philosophy: namely, that Enlightenment philosophy (i.e., metaphysics) had become 'speculative' in its attempt to ground human affairs in scientific reason. His critique of metaphysics consequently took the form of a moral subjectivism in which individuals ('Man') were accorded a place of primacy in the determination of the ends of reason. This was, according to Kant, a self-legislative process through which individuals, in human affairs (such as happiness) both practical and moral, could place the ground of individual action in human nature itself. No longer do we, as humans, need to fumble around in the darkroom of metaphysics with its emphasis on passion as the guiding instrument to reason. Kant says that such a metaphysics of morals allows for the primacy of nature in the determination of the course of reason and knowledge.

Furthermore, says Kant, we need to search for a type of knowledge that goes beyond sense experience and the mere accumulation of empirical facts. Such a speculative type of knowledge ('pure reason'), he suggests, is not only undesirable, it undermines the very possibility of human freedom. Rather, pure reason must be grounded in our actions or in the moral and practical use of our reason. Hence, reason can no longer, as it was with Classical metaphysics, be grounded in the assumption that truth is found in the conformity of the mind to the (supposed) thing-in-itself (*ding-an-sich*). The idea that representation-through-imagination guarantees that what is brought to reflective consciousness is given in experience is refused by Kant (di Giovanni 1992: 419-20). This opposition in experience of reason to faith or reflection to intuition led Kant to surmise that a new type of knowledge, an a priori knowledge which was beyond experience and which was to be found in two faculties of the mind – cognition and desire – can be discovered and "their scope and limits determined" (Kant 1965: 12).

What was the nature of this a priori reason and how did it lead Kant to a system of transcendental deduction regarding the nature of knowledge, one that had Man at its center? The discussion might best be framed by pointing to the question of truth. Kant believed that truth came down to an issue of the relation in knowledge of immediate to reconstructed experience, of intuition to reflection (di Giovanni 1992: 420). The importance that he accorded to intuition is reflected in the a priori. According to George di Giovanni (and others), Kant had staked the whole success of his critique of speculative reason on the utility of *understanding*. It was only through understanding, coupled with imagination and sensibility (seeing, hearing, etc.), that we could grasp the laws of nature, or objects. Truth, then, is only attainable through understanding which is a product of our thought alone and must be accommodated to the particularity of our experience (di Giovanni 1992: 42; Guyer 1992: 11). rather than being located in extrarational perception. These principles of understanding, Kant claimed, were to be found and certified in their a priori origin: i.e., in the structure of thought itself, and which gives them their universal validity. This, he

says, frees us from the overarching constraints of reason as determined by nature (Guyer 1992: 12). A priori knowledge is insight into the uniqueness and infinitude of space and time, both of which can be explained only on the supposition that space and time are the pure forms of our intuition of all objects originating in the structure of our own sensibility, not anything derived from the independent properties of objects as they are in themselves (Guyer 1992: 13).

Thus, for Kant, the propositions of mathematics and geometry can be known a priori or through our forms of intuition, ones that are linked to our structure of our senses. However, behind this realm of appearances, also lies the possibility of *freedom*, defined as the free exercise of rational agency (Guyer 1992: 16). This freedom can only be found in 'pure practical reason', in how we conduct ourselves as moral and practical agents through the exercise of scientific, or pure, reason. Speculative reason, while not entirely incompatible with freedom, could not prove the objective reality of freedom, according to Kant, because it could not establish the conditions for *moral law* (Kant 1956: 4-5)

The thematic of humanism

Taken by itself, Kant's doctrine of humanism constitutes a dense, intensely debated set of philosophical concepts. If one were to undertake a diagnostic of classical anthropological humanism, its constituent parts would include notions of:

A founding consciousness – anthropological humanism starts out from the presupposition that awareness of our experience is also awareness that experiences belong to a single self-consciousness: our own. And, what unites these two is not experience itself, but rather an a priori understanding of universal categories. As human beings, things are given to us in experience, but they are only apprehended by a unity of consciousness based on a priori concepts. This "pure original unchangeable consciousness" is what Kant opaquely described as the "transcendental unity of apperception" (Kant 1965). At its most basic and in its most banal sense of meaning, this maxim turns on the view that the individual possesses an interiority which contains both the *necessary* and *sufficient* conditions for an understanding of itself and the world around it.

Essence - the concept of essence is the epistemological correlate of anthropological humanism, whatever additionally it may be. From its origins in the early nineteenth century, human beings were thought to possess inherent rational qualities that would allow them to transcend, regardless of time, space and culture, social and political constraints that worked to hinder freedom and equality and progress. There is a type of hidden teleology at work here. The subject is in the first instance an epistemic subject, one who is considered to be in a natural relation to the world and has the capacity for perfectibility through the calculated use of inherent powers of rationality, or the ability to use reason as the final basis of understanding and communication with fellow human beings. Thus understood, individuals are thought to be *animales rationale* with an already established relation to nature, history and the world around them. It is this metaphysical appropriation of humanity, this certainty of determination of being, to which Foucault and the French poststructuralists most fundamentally objected.

Foundational Knowledge – epistemologically considered, anthropological humanism embodies the ascent to foundational universalism. Against the relativist, context-bound conception of knowledge associated with postmodernists, this sort of humanism is marked by a methodological rigor in determining the universality of scientific and epistemological “first principles.” Though not a humanist, Claude Levi-Strauss, for example, sought to establish the ultimate grounds for knowledge and truth-meaning by positing a series of ethnological considerations oriented around the rejection of the particularity of cultural contents; the conditions of the possibility of knowledge lay rather in their structural relation to one another and from this perspective, one can determine incorrigible (i.e., firmly fixed), self-evident, universal truths.¹ What is important for humanism in relation to foundations is that empirical knowledge ultimately rests on self-warranted beliefs, rather than on historically-specific, contingent modes of inquiry.

Existence – The notion of an individual’s conscious existence is at the ontological root of anthropological humanism. Principally, this entails the twin senses of *perception* and *reflection* about being in the world. And fundamentally, such abilities are tied to the notion of experience. This means that being is correlative with the reality of the world, and it is only with this indissoluble connection that one can speak of “being human.” Individuals thus interpret and experience the world in relation to one another. Ultimately, the creative energies of modernity are harnessed through practices of self-development towards the goal of unhampered freedom and unhindered intellectual and moral progress, including happiness and the highest fulfillment life has to offer.

Progress – the humanist programme emphasizes the idea of progress that arguably came out of the French and American revolutions and was given its most unequivocal formulation by the Marquis de Condorcet.² The humanist idea of progress forecasts the abolition of all of humanity’s ills through enlightened education (notably, progressive science), social reforms and the elimination of widespread oppression through the practice of humanitarianism.

Self-determination and Self-mastery – the humanist subject is seen as striving for self-mastery through the perfectibility of the human species. One of the central claims of Kant’s ethical theory is that intelligent adults are capable of being self-governing in moral matters. This is tied directly to Kant’s notion of “autonomy.” Autonomy means first for Kant the view that there is no external authority that is necessary in order for us to know what the demands of our morality are. We impose these demands on ourselves and by doing so, effectively control and master ourselves through our obligations to ourselves. So self-constituted, we can limit religious and political control over our lives (Schneewind 1992).

Emancipation – the anthropological or “pragmatic” humanism emanating out of Kant’s attempts to reconcile nature with reason (and in doing so, bridge the gap between excessive rationalism and unfounded skepticism) concludes with the assumption that, as human beings, we possess an inherent or “innate” right to

¹ For a more technical discussion on the distinction between classical foundationalism and modern foundationalism, A. Platinga’s “Reason and belief in God” provides a solid overview (Platinga and Wolterstorff 1983).

² *Sketch of the Intellectual Progress of Mankind* (1795).

freedom from constraint – whether social, political or economic – owing to the dictates of universal moral law (Kant 1956). According to Kant, this right is legislated in accordance with a God-given free will and self-determination which are the twin hallmarks of moral humanity.

It is these facets of modern humanism that French poststructuralism sought to discredit in the 1960s. The next section will indicate some of the highlights of this debate in an attempt to situate Foucault's anti-humanist views.

Section Two: The Ends of Man

Heidegger and The Poststructuralist Critique of Humanism

Since Kant, humanists have accepted as their fundamental epistemological assumption this subjectivist account of reason with its emphasis on the knowing, unitary subject regarding questions about human thought and human existence. As indicated earlier, among the many axes of humanistic reflection, this work is also about what has for many become an epistemologically and ontologically suspect term in academic circles: identity politics. It has become suspect because of its "essentializing" implications. In particular, French poststructuralism has defined since the late 1960s the lines of critique along which the concept of identity and the political implications that go along with it have been shaped. Central to the poststructuralist critique of identity is the notion that there is an inherent heterogeneity to identity that cannot be reduced to categories of the self (such as race and gender), that there are no identities outside language and the social construction of meaning, and that, indeed, such categorizations lead to arbitrary and objectivist conceptions of humanity.

The challenge to humanism has been coupled with the textual turn in the social sciences and humanities. This poststructuralist turn has prompted a sea change in the reception of the ways by which Western forms of representation and writing have typically sought to define and made sense of the world. The question of representation is seminal in anti-humanist critiques which draw on French poststructuralism, a tradition coming out of a shift in philosophical and literary thinking in the late 1960s and which stressed the importance of the role of language in the construction of meaning and identity. Among these thinkers Jacques Derrida, Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Gilles Deleuze figure prominently. Common to all of these critiques of structuralism was the sympathetic turn to Nietzsche and Heidegger for their critiques of modernity, the use of linguistic concepts, discourse analysis, theories of nomadic desire and power, critiques of humanism and the philosophy of the subject (i.e., the subject as the foundation of knowledge) and a rejection of any notions of "truth" (Pavel 1989: 5). The emphasis was thus on contingency, perspectivalism, pluralism, resistance and difference.

The 'death of Man' thesis has been a source of dispute over the issue of Foucault's stance on foundations and the notion of universal or "objective" truth. The resulting problems associated with Foucault's "unmasking" in its deconstructive form can be illustrated by assessing the alleged relativism in his work. Much of Foucault's work, as mentioned, is organized around a skepticism regarding the subject as the center of philosophical inquiry. This skepticism toward the notion of a transcendental

self – the ahistorical universal self which provides the ultimate epistemological foundations to which all humans can appeal in their search for truth and freedom – culminated in theses that were advanced by Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism'. Foucault's *The Order of Things* and Derrida's 'The ends of man' (Derrida 1982 [1972]-a) and which stand apart as the most influential twentieth century critiques of humanism or "homocentrism." What these thinkers are opposing to the view that the subject is the center of philosophical inquiry is the study of language through which human beings are said to be acted on in multifarious ways.

This critique of humanism was arguably the most important feature in the heyday of French poststructuralism. Poststructuralism's repudiation of humanism is grounded in the claim that the subject is nothing other than a function of language, and language is not simply the embodiment of binaries, such as 'good' vs. 'bad' and 'rich' vs. 'poor'. Language is a network of symbols and signs which are polyphonic and heteroglossic in their constitution. Poststructuralists are keen to point out that the self is a function of language, and not the other way around. According to Derrida, "there is no subject who is agent, author and master" of language" (Derrida 1981 [1972]: 28). Within the poststructuralist tradition, language and sign systems came increasingly to replace the transcendental ego as the foundation from which individuals relate to their outer world. Robert Dunn explains that

[p]oststructuralism ... wages war on the transcendental subject on two fronts. On the one hand, it attempts to displace metaphysical conceptions of consciousness with notions of textuality, power, and desire. On the other hand, it rejects grand teleological schemes in favor of heteronomous accounts of historical development. In place of historical agency, poststructuralism posits a series of particular discursive formations and practices in which linear progress gives way to historical contingency and incommensurability. (Dunn 1998: 183).

According to poststructuralism's anti-humanism, then, there is no single, rational trajectory along which social practices are transformed into an orderly fashion as humanity realizes its rational potential.

It was mentioned that the initial death blow to humanism was struck by Martin Heidegger with his essay "Letter on Humanism." Consider his summary statement regarding the need to rid philosophy of the conception of human existence as being founded on rational terms: "The humanistic interpretations of man as *animal rationale*, as "person," as spiritual-ensouled-bodily being, are not declared false and thrust aside. Rather, the sole implication is that the highest determinations of the essence of man in humanism still do not realize the proper dignity of man. To that extent the thinking in *Being and Time* is against humanism. But this opposition does not mean that such thinking aligns itself against the humane and advocates the inhuman, that it promotes the inhumane and deprecates the dignity of man. Humanism is opposed because it does not set the *humanitas* of man high enough" (Heidegger 1977). And,

Every humanism is either grounded in a metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one. Every determination of the essence of man that already presupposes an interpretation of being without asking about the truth of Being, whether knowingly or not, is metaphysical. The result is that what is peculiar to all metaphysics, specifically with respect to the way the essence of man is determined, is that it is 'humanistic.' Accordingly, every humanism remains metaphysical." (Heidegger 1977: 202).

It is Heidegger's aim, then, to redefine humanism from a metaphysics of subjectivity towards a doctrine which has as its locus the revalorization of human dignity centered on the individual's fundamental relationship to the temporal world. Heidegger's move to temporalize humanism is an explicit attack on the metaphysical assumption of a willful autonomous subjectivity and an attempt to recover an "indigenous world with a shared *ethos*" (Smith 1996: 292).

This thematic informs, to an important extent, the mood of post-war French philosophy. Jacques Derrida explains this mood as originating out of the debates surrounding Jean-Paul Sartre's reconsideration of humanism in the light of certain dominant Bergsonian theses that had as their theme "intellectualist or spiritualist humanism." Derrida's own response to the question of humanism is undoubtedly directed at the consequences of Foucault's structuralist method, the most important of which arises (according to Derrida) from a misreading of Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism." In "The Ends of Man," Derrida states that anyone who does not proceed, regarding the question of humanism, from Heidegger's notion of the genesis of the concept of "man" is, by definition, preordained to an interpretation which remains "historically regional, periodic and peripheral" (Derrida 1982 [1972]-a: 128). It is Derrida's considered view that "the unity of the anthropos" is a doctrine that owes its "faithful inheritance" to misunderstood (i.e., anthropologicist) readings of Hegel's philosophy of consciousness, the phenomenological ontology of Edmund Husserl, and Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Post-war French thought, Derrida tells us, misread these philosophical systems as the positing of "man" as a timeless entity, one without historical, cultural, and linguistic limitations. Furthermore, such a misperception was the result of the "dominating and spellbinding extension of the "human sciences" within the philosophical field" (Derrida 1982 [1972]-a: 115-18).

Far from conceptualizing philosophy as an autonomous discipline ordered around ahistorical reason and self-validating truths, Derrida sees philosophy as a kind of *writing* which contains multiple stratified layers of logic that necessitate careful reading if one is to understand how the power of philosophy affects institutional structures of power, knowledge and politics. This explains his relentless criticisms of those philosophers who have failed to read properly the central texts of their tradition (See Chapter Two in Norris 1987) Through the interrogation of texts, Derrida hopes to demonstrate that there is "nothing outside the text" that appeals to something like 'lived', much less unitary, experience. Hence, his principle assertion that differences are never absolute (*differánce*) and hence, there is no "subject" or "identity" about whom it is possible to write about in terms of an undifferentiated unity (Derrida 1978 [1967]) (Derrida 1981 [1972]) (Derrida 1982 [1972]-b).

The principal claim directed against such “misreadings” concerns the notion of the “essence” of humanity. It will be recalled that Foucault, along with all of those who label their views as “anti-humanist,” reject the unity of the subject as the self-constituting ground of all knowledge and the locus of humanity’s impending freedom. Derrida’s reading of Heidegger points, on the contrary, to the gravity of error in those who find in Heidegger’s ‘Letter on Humanism’ grounds for rejecting a humanist conception of the subject. Heidegger’s claim that “every humanism is either grounded in a metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one” is not, according to Derrida, a call for the erasure of man, nor is it an attempt to rid philosophy of all notions of a human essence. On the contrary, what is at issue is Heidegger’s “revalorization of the essence and dignity of man.” His denunciation of metaphysics has, coupled with the dehumanizing effects of technology and the dissemination of language, precisely robbed humanity of its proper essence, leaving man in a state of homelessness in which he stumbles aimlessly about (Derrida 1982 [1972]-a: 128).

It is a mistake, then, to view as kindred critiques Derrida’s anti-humanism with that of Foucault. As Derrida’s uncompromising critique of *Madness and Civilization* makes clear, Foucault’s all-out epistemological skepticism is ill-founded since he is merely borrowing concepts from the language of the classical philosophy of reason in an effort to discredit them, a move Derrida refers to as being caught in “the trap of objectivist naiveté” (Derrida 1978 [1967]: 34). What Derrida is questioning is Foucault’s ability to speak of “madness” as something existing outside of reason itself: “Since the revolution against reason...can only operate *within* reason, it always has the limited scope of what is called...a disturbance” (Derrida 1978 [1967]: 36). Moreover, Foucault writes a “history of madness” as though *he* has access to the *essence* of madness; he posits madness as an “*itself*,” as a totality or an “*Order*” about which it is possible to write a “history.” Madness is presented as a *theme* and as having a “first-person narrator”: that is, madness speaking about itself, under its own authority. Thus understood, madness is presented in Foucault as a unitary “logos,” one that is every bit as universalistic as reason itself (Derrida 1978 [1967]: 33-5).

Derrida’s work, and in particular his “Ends of man” thesis, is often seen as collaborating in the anti-humanism that marked the surfacing of French post-structuralism in the 1960s. To the extent that Derrida attempts to efface the Kantian notion of a unitary, authentic subject, such a perception has merit. However, it is a mistake to read Derrida as having found a way out of the language of philosophical anthropology, as he himself has variously noted. Perhaps his most compelling statement in this regard can be found in “The Ends of Man” thesis itself. A “radical trembling,” he says, “can only come from the outside.” But this is not within easy reach of those who refuse to “change terrain,” and who repeat “what is implicit in the founding concepts and the original problematic, by using against the edifice the instruments or stones available in the house,” i.e., in the language of humanism. This can only result in the “inhabiting more naively and more strictly than ever the inside one declares one has deserted, the simple practice of language ceaselessly reinstates a new terrain on the oldest ground” (Derrida 1982 [1972]-a: 135). There is not much doubt that his concluding statement that “such a blindness could be shown in numerous precise instances” includes Foucault’s death of man thesis, if it is not

squarely directed at him.³ That said, in spite of their differences, Foucault, like Derrida, sets out to so thoroughly rid humanism of its inherent subjectivism that the subject can not only not speak, it can barely summon a whisper.

Foucault's earlier writings are tied to the notion of "the end of representation." Signs are not fused with deep hidden meanings, as structuralism had asserted, but are already interpreted. Each sign, Foucault is held to argue, is "in itself not the thing that presents itself to interpretation, but the interpretation of other signs" (Ormiston 1990: 64). The critique of humanism and the role of language grew out of a dissatisfaction with "man" as the privileged historical object of philosophical inquiry. According to the modern humanist tradition, subjects possess a degree of autonomy and control over sources of meaning and identity. In the optimistic view of the Enlightenment, subjects will transcend constraints of scarcity and develop the rational capacity to conquer nature and gain control over their world. Foucault sees the "death of man" as the end of the ego-centered anthropocentric era in which "empirico-transcendental" man (humanism) is replaced with language-without-representation freed from a centuries-old "anthropological sleep" during which time all foundations of knowledge and truth resided with "man." (Foucault 1970: 340-2). Thus, it is perhaps Foucault who has gone farthest in rejecting humanist attempts to search for 'ultimate grounds' or foundations in the quest for an understanding of 'Man.' Foucault rejects Kant's central claim that understanding and reason - exercised apriori or independent of particular individual consciousness - can produce timeless, self-evident truths. He sees this a form of anthropomorphism, a radically subjectivist humanism that fails to take account of the historical contingency of reason. Foucault sets out, therefore, to debunk the "myth" of humanism which has pervaded modern thought to this day.

How we might assess - from this conception of humanism - what changes occurred in Foucault's thinking at the levels of epistemology, ontology and conceptions of what it means to be "human," whether such changes are incompatible with this earlier, anti-humanist stance, and what these ostensible changes might mean practically for the application of Foucault's insights into ethico-political practice are considerations that will comprise the corpus of issues around which this work will be organized and presented. It is to the original problematic of humanism in Foucault's thought that I now turn.

³In this essay, although Derrida does not name Foucault explicitly, his immanent critique of post-war French philosophy's mistaken engagement in a reductive reading of Heidegger is directed most obviously at Foucault. Derrida takes up the question of those who denounce humanism as having remained at the "first reading" of Heidegger, at the same time believing they have, through the development of "systems of thought" (the title of Foucault's chair at the Collège de France) surpassed humanism "in a great state of ingenuousness" (Derrida 1982 [1972]-b: 119).

Chapter Two

Humanism as the Will to Knowledge: Archaeological Limits

- Ought we not to remind ourselves – we who believe ourselves
bound to a finitude which belongs only to us, and which opens up
the truth of the world to us by means of our cognition
– ought we not to remind ourselves that we are bound to the back of a tiger?
(Foucault 1970: 322).

Introduction

A number of commentators have suggested that Foucault's thinking on issues of truth, ethics and freedom underwent significant changes with the last two volumes of *History of Sexuality*. In brief, whereas Foucault was previously engaged in exposing both the semiologically oriented origins of knowledge (archaeology) and the institutional conditions under which knowledge was produced (genealogy), his later work opens up the possibility of an ethic of social engagement. For some, this was the result of an easing off on the Nietzschean skepticism with regard to values and truth-claims that had informed his earlier analyses. One of the claims of this work is that underlying such shifts in Foucault's thinking was a reconstitution of the doctrine of humanism which led him to introduce, in the last instance, a minimalist conception of the philosophy of the subject.

This chapter seeks to situate Foucault's anti-humanist pronouncements within his historical analysis of human scientific discourse. The first section will sketch in a preliminary way the anti-humanist claims emerging from Foucault's 'death of man' thesis, claims originating in his earlier focus on the history of epistemology in the archaeological investigation of the human sciences (Foucault 1970). The dominant theme that binds this critique is an analysis of the "limits" of scientific discourse, an analysis defined by Foucault as an "analytic of finitude." In this section, I highlight some of Foucault's views on how knowledge underwent a fundamental reordering, from language-as-representation to language-without-representation in the modern era, further defined as the birth of humanism. Foucault's rejection of humanism is a rejection of the standard view that Enlightenment reason represents a universal form of reason. He attempts to demonstrate that Enlightenment reason is just one among many forms of reason which, by positing itself as universal and self-evident, undermines other, historically specific forms of reason and subjectivity.

In this context, I argue in the second section that Foucault's anti-humanism remains problematic chiefly because his model of archaeology itself fails to demonstrate in methodological terms what it purports to accomplish; namely, that it successfully stands outside existing historical configurations of knowledge in its attempt to discredit the scientific validity of the systems of knowledge and the resulting humanism that emerges from such a process of validation.

Section One: Humanism and The Limits of Scientific Discourse

Foucault works at the limit. Supplying his own entry for the *Dictionnaire des philosophes* under the pseudonym “Maurice Florence,” he states that his philosophical project consisted in determining that, if

what is meant by thought is the act that posits a subject and an object, along with their various possible relations, a critical history of thought would be an analysis of the conditions under which certain relations of subject to object are formed or modified, insofar as those relations constitute a possible knowledge [*savoir*] (Foucault 1998a: 459).

Foucault’s critique of transcendental humanism, though never abandoned, is most clearly presented in *The Order of Things* (Foucault 1970). Insofar as his archaeological method in this early work attempts to delineate the epistemological conditions under which such relations were formed in the nineteenth century, Foucault’s investigations initially appear unproblematic. He rejects the view that human emancipation will come about through the progression of human scientific reason and the removal of social domination, a logic embraced by Marx and the idealism of Kant and the Enlightenment. It is especially to Kant that one must look because Foucault’s analyses of how Western European social progress is said to be accomplished through the self-constituted, self-validating use of reason seek to redefine Kant’s philosophical critique of the limits of reason as a *political* problem (Simons 1995: 16). First, however, it is necessary to understand Foucault’s methodological approach to the human subject and its potential for freedom within the object domains of scientific knowledge.

The project of *The Order of Things* can be summarily described as the production of a “neutral” social theory designed to extrapolate the critical features of epistemological modernity and expose them as inauthentic language games. Foucault’s overall concern is to determine what is meant by “man” in the modern era. In his view, man has become – through certain arrangements in knowledge, beginning in the nineteenth century – a thoroughly anthropological figure. The humanism of modernity emerged, according to Foucault, from the consequences of Kant’s fourth question in his lectures on logic: “what is Man?” Tied to idea of humanism is the notion of a “finitude.” This era marked attempts to locate in man’s “finite existence” all foundations of knowledge. The notion of a finitude implies for Foucault the double bind of man as an experiencing subject through which the world is constituted and as an object of the empirical analyses of such experiences. According to Kant’s conception, the individuation of the subject is guaranteed in a process of self-cognizance; it recognizes itself as the site of active objectification and simultaneously returns *to* itself through the process of reflection upon such objectifications. This modern arrangement of knowledge has become dualistic, according to Foucault, placing limits on what we, as living, speaking, and laboring beings, can do and know. Foucault says that it was this question – what is Man? - which provided for the fusion of man as an empirical being and a transcendental subject, “even though Kant

had demonstrated the division between them” (Foucault 1970: 341). The result of this (con)fusion was the idea of an autonomous, perfectible subject - through the development of the human sciences - as the foundation of its own existence, at once the subject of knowledge and its own object.

Problems with Foucault’s method only become apparent when he employs the structuralist methods of French social theory in an effort to “step outside” the philosophy of the conscious subject and formulate a thesis of individual authenticity by resorting to the insights of psychology and ethnology. Unlike Sartre, who attempted to establish a thesis of authenticity through recourse to humanist, or individualist/essentialist presuppositions, Foucault’s method depends upon insights borrowed from Sigmund Freud and Claude Lévi-Strauss, a move to which I will return later. For the moment I want to specify how Foucault sees language as undergoing a fundamental reordering of things with the introduction of Kant’s critique of practical reason.

From dogmatic to anthropological slumber

The theme of representation introduces Foucault’s main concern in *The Order of Things*. He presents archaeology as being the methodological tool of analysis that can uncover what, since the sixteenth century, has been the axis around which knowledge has revolved, right up to our present day. That axis, in each *episteme*, is a conception of language and a concern with how it is “intimately linked with the fundamental problems of our culture” (Foucault 1970: 382). Foucault’s principle line of argument starts with the observation that, within the seventeenth century Classical era, words, for the first time, take on the task of representing thought. Language is thus directly interchangeable with thought; it is, says Foucault, “thought itself” (Foucault 1970: 78). Yet, language is not yet signification as it would become in the nineteenth century. For now, language has undergone a shift from language-without-representation, to *language as discourse*. By discourse, Foucault is referring to “the ideal dispersion at the center of which fields of knowledge are born and dissolve, objects crystallize and disperse, disciplines are drawn and erased” (Pavel 1989: 93). He describes discourse as “merely representation itself represented by verbal signs” (Foucault 1970: 81). What happens in the Classical era is that pure language ceases to exist; representation has undermined language as *the* grid for the tabling of experience. A sort of free play now enters into the structure of language; it now establishes a relation with itself *as* discourse. However, the uniqueness of language lies - as opposed to other systems of signs - in the establishment of a successive ordering of thought, an ordering Foucault describes as “similitude” (Foucault 1970: 82-3).

Foucault’s overall analysis of the Classical *episteme* may be summed up in terms of his analysis of subjectivity and reason. There is in this era no normative basis for the critique of reason since reason can be located in *practice*, not philosophy. Not Man, but Order, was the sole object of knowledge. On this schema, reason, or knowledge, exists on a grid; and language - the defining grid - was the basis of the knowledge of nature through the constitution of a representative network of identities and difference from which the subject was excluded (Canguilem 1994:83). This *episteme* - as with all *epistemes* - is a monolithic set of unconscious structural relations, one grounded in an historical *a priori* since individuals who lived within its

limits operated on an unconscious set of assumptions (i.e., without recourse to conscious, rational analysis); it provided the basis for individual practice based on desires, beliefs, etc. These fixed structures, not reason, defined individuals' concepts and practices, and thus their understandings of themselves in the world they inhabited. Moreover, these understandings are said by Foucault to be contingent, unstable and subject to disruptions in a given *episteme*. In the case of the Classical *episteme*, the intelligibility of concepts is grounded in a structural relationship devoid of the agency necessary for forming understandings and generating enabling practices on the basis of subjective reasoning. The subject is not an autonomous, rational agent; it must fall back on the codes – on the grid of Order – that have ordered experience in all of its religious, philosophical, scientific and practical dimensions.⁴

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault sees the close of this second phase of the modern era as a radical break in the epistemological order of things, as the beginning of the decline of *representation as identical to thought*. No longer, as in the Classical Age, were the sciences – biology, the sciences of language and economics – simply tabled as parts of a general discourse, thus according representation the ground for itself, but rather, as displaced and modified “positivities” they were spatially reordered by way of an *event*. What was this event of such magnitude that it displaced representation as the singular ordering of the cosmos? It was, in Foucault's view, the *structural mutation of knowledge*, “the constitution of so many positive sciences, the appearance of literature, the folding back of philosophy upon its own development, the emergence of history as both knowledge and the mode of being of empiricity” that emerged as only some signs of a “deeper rupture”. Categories such as words, classes, and wealth (i.e., representative elements) function, for the first time in history, *in relation to one another* and succeed in establishing a new order of things (Foucault 1970: 217-20). The three new dimensions of this new ordering of knowledge – mathematics, the “empirical” sciences (biology, economics and philology), and philosophical reflection – operate on a terrain that is fundamentally different from previous *epistemes*. From the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, these fields have become fragmented “archaeological mutations” and thus succeed in displacing the linear ordering of knowledge and the role of representation that inhabited the space of the Classical *episteme* (Foucault 1970: 312). Foucault points the finger at Kant who is, he says, responsible for inducing an ‘anthropological sleep’ into philosophical analysis by way of his ‘Copernican revolution.’ This rupture in knowledge had placed the question of ‘Man’ at the center of all inquiries about scientific knowledge, making Man both the transcendental subject of knowledge and the empirical object of all such investigations into knowledge.

Four dimensions of knowledge emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Foucault argues: mathematics, economics, philosophy and the human sciences, the latter of which is defined by a relation to biology, economics and philology. It is to this fourth category, the human sciences, that Foucault refers when he speaks of the “death of man,” for it is this dimension, so intimately bound up within the planes of the other three dimensions, that representation begins the process of fragmentation and results, for the first time in history in the constitution of the

subject as both the locus of representational knowledge and the object of analysis in these human sciences. The modern era, Foucault maintains, initiated the analysis of forms of knowledge as structures independent of one another, the consequences of which had the two-fold effect of breaking them off from representation and introducing to them a historicity. He clarifies this view further in an interview conducted shortly after the publication of *The Order of Things*. It is not that signs in the nineteenth century are based on a “resemblance without borders.” Rather, there is an infinite series of *interpreting interpretations*. With the emergence of the human sciences, the sign undergoes infinite dispersion with the analysis of the subject in its role as organism in the world, laborer in an economic market, and speaker of words which no longer denote something signified, but impose onto the subject *an interpretation* (Foucault 1998a: 274). From the beginning of the nineteenth century, life was conceived in terms of biological organisms who perceive and face death, labor was conceived in terms of economic agents who work, and language, through the creation of philology, all in terms of linguistic beings who can describe, and all of which introduce a historicity to Man’s being. Representations underwent a parallel shift; no longer did they correspond to an Order of things, but became detached from the mind in the process of their multiplication.

Foucault’s elliptical, if not oblique, pronouncement of the “death of man” is tied directly to this archaeological interpretation of knowledge and leads to his anti-humanist misgivings. “Man,” he quips, is a relatively recent invention.⁵ Before the beginning of the nineteenth century, nature and human nature, though based on opposite functions, were complementary to each other. Through language, the Classical episteme sought to create a common discourse of representation and things, “as the place within which nature and human nature intersect,” thus precluding anything resembling a ‘science of man’ (Foucault 1970: 308-11). What became essential is that

at the beginning of the nineteenth century a new arrangement of knowledge was constituted, which accommodated simultaneously the historicity of economics (in relation to the forms of production), the finitude of human existence (in relation to scarcity and labor), and the fulfillment to an end of History. History, anthropology and the suspension of development are all linked together in accordance with a figure that defines one of the major networks of nineteenth-century thought. We know, for example, the role that this arrangement played in reviving the weary good intentions of humanisms; we know how it brought the utopias of ultimate development back to life. [The] slow erosion or violent eruption of History will cause man’s anthropological truth to spring forth in its stony immobility [and] historicity will have been imposed exactly upon the human essence. The flow of development ... will be held within an anthropological finitude [and

⁵ As Gary Gutting points out, Foucault is using man to refer to human beings as those for whom representation exists. Second, when he speaks of man “existing” or “not existing” he means that the human power of representation is or is not an object of knowledge for that era (Gutting 1989: 198-9).

this finitude] with its truth, is posited in *time*; and *time* is therefore *finite*(Foucault 1979b: 262-3).

It may be helpful to demonstrate through example what Foucault means when he speaks of subjects as becoming “objects of knowledge” in the nineteenth century. Then, for example, pathologists analyzed madness as an object of knowledge to service the advancement of science. Similarly, whereas the analysis of wealth was straightforward in the Classical episteme, such a method was substituted in the nineteenth century with theories of production as *objects* of analysis, thus making individuals in their life, labour and language *the same objects*. The human sciences are caught in a “double obligation” as it were: one of hermeneutics or interpretation, in which a hidden meaning is to be uncovered (the theory of signs), and one of discovering the structural invariants that bind the system together (the constitution of empirical orders). The passage from the three Classical domains – general grammar, natural history, and the analysis of wealth – to the modern era constituted the birth of “man” because previously, there was, in the analyses of these domains, no need to pass through a “science of man” since such science did not exist. Rather, all representations were ordered through discourse (Foucault 1989: 4-5). Since the nineteenth century, philosophy has attempted to define man, as both subject and object, through recourse to subjective consciousness. Descartes, for example, had located the locus of consciousness in the *cogito*. Kant has similarly attempted to locate our knowledge about ourselves in transcendental thought. But all projects of modern philosophy have failed in their attempts explain how man became caught in a double bind as it were, as subject and object, because they did not explain how man was constituted as a coherent object of his own thought (Gutting 1989: 212-13). The way that Foucault sees the human sciences succeeding in doing so was their location of the subject in the “unthought.” As Georges Canguilhem (one of Foucault’s mentors) explains, the “unthought” is not only to think in the theoretical or speculative sense (as modern philosophy had done), but to “produce oneself while running the risk of astonishing oneself and even taking fright at oneself.” In Canguilhem’s view, nothing could distance Foucault further from Cartesian speculation than this notion of the “unthought” (Canguilhem 1994:89).

This “other” region of consciousness – the unthought – Foucault maintains, was what constituted the subject as an object of its own knowledge when *biology*, *economics* and *philology* introduced the concepts of *function*, *conflict* and *signification*. Through the use of these concepts, human sciences have been able, for example, to speak of *conflict* within the individual psyche in terms of the normal and the pathological, for instance (Freud), or to speak of *conflict* within a society in terms of economic relations (Marx). Second, the human sciences have succeeded in explaining how, for example, we as organisms and as members of society *function*. Lastly, philology, in one instance, has been able to make intelligible sense of hidden *meanings* in texts. But what is crucial to the development of these three concepts is that they are located outside of human consciousness about them. In typical elliptical fashion, Foucault asks why it is that “the human sciences have never ceased to approach that region of the unconscious where the action of representation is held in suspense?” (Foucault 1970: 361). For what precedes and organizes *function*, *conflict* and *signification* are *norms*, *rules*, and *system* which have their origins and take form

in unconscious representation. This has resulted in the transformation of the subject into what Foucault calls the “empirico-transcendental doublet”: “Where there had formerly been a correlation between a *metaphysics* of representation and of the infinite and an *analysis* of living beings, of man’s desires, and of the words of his language, we find being constituted an *analytic* of finitude and human existence, and in opposition to it...a perpetual tendency to constitute a *metaphysics* of life, labor and language” (Foucault 1970: 317).

Man is now finite or bounded in two senses. His subjectivity is circumscribed by his life as an organism which now occupies a space, by his desires which are thwarted by the burdens of economic conditions, and by the words he speaks, the significations of which he can no longer understand. As an object of the sciences, Man appears bounded by the “interior laws” of life, labor and language, by his place as an organism in the environment, his dependence on the forces of production, and by the internal laws of language (Foucault 1970: 312-13). Foucault’s grounding of modern Man in an “analytic of finitude” points to this finitude as providing its own foundation.

Foucault thus rules out man’s emancipatory potential in the configuration of reason that followed the Classical age because the human sciences themselves have become forms of representational knowledge: systems of complex signification that have at the same time become objects of knowledge. With the constitution of representation “as itself,” Man has become both constituting and constituted, is both an “enslaved sovereign” and “observed spectator,” both a knower and an object of knowledge himself. In Foucault’s view, the human sciences were based on disciplines that undermined the concept of man (Gutting 1994: 5). The humanist project of emancipation is an illusive one so long as “man” is caught in this ambiguous position. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, representation can no longer be seen as the locus of being or the “primitive seat of truth,” but acts rather as an exteriorization, something outside man, an “irreducible anteriority” that makes it impossible to access man as a human other than through this new epistemological role as “a living being, an instrument of production [and as] a vehicle for words which exist before him” (Foucault 1970: 312-13). We no longer speak for ourselves because signs speak for and through us, and this presents itself as a fundamental state of incompatibility.

Foucault sees no way out of the ambiguous position into which human beings have been placed via the human sciences. Above all, it was the retreat of mathematics, not its advance

that made it possible for man to constitute himself as an object of knowledge; it was the involution of labour, life, and language upon themselves that determined the appearance of this new domain of knowledge from outside; and it was the appearance of that empirico-transcendental being. Of that being whose thought is constantly woven with the unthought, of that being always cut off from an origin which is promised to him...that gave the human sciences their particular form (Foucault 1970: 350).

This resulted, says Foucault, in the creation of a warped, often reductionist set of conditions for the analysis of human finitude. There is more than a veiled reference to

Marxism here. Foucault dismisses Marx's insights into history as nothing more than one possible way of "examining the relations of anthropology and History as they are established by economics through the notions of scarcity and labor." Moreover, Ricardo's analyses had already demonstrated this. Far from being a positive advancement in knowledge, Marxism succeeded only in attributing to History

a negative role. Thrust back by poverty to the brink of death, a whole class of men experience, nakedly, as it were, what need, hunger, and labour are. What others attribute to nature or the spontaneous order of things, these men are able to recognize as the result of a history and the alienation of a finitude that does not have this form. For this reason they are able...to re-apprehend this truth of the human essence and so restore it (Foucault 1970: 260-1).

The upshot of this is clear enough. Foucault is rejecting the kind of philosophical anthropologism that was at the heart of Marx's sociology of knowledge. Marx posited the freedom of humanity and the resulting recovery of a human essence not by a set of doctrines said to enable humanity to overcome scarcity - as had Ricardo - but by positing a finitude or final destination, "a revolutionary promise" and so a constructed, but fruitless, humanism. But Foucault here is not simply reacting to Marx as a proponent of empirical humanism; his attack on theoretical Marxism - the 'hyper-Marxism' of the French left - is directed squarely at the existentialist humanism of Jean-Paul Sartre. From a theoretical point of view, Sartre "avoids the idea of the self that is something given to us" and yet he turns back to the idea that we must locate our "true" authentic selves, which, to Foucault's mind, postulates no more, and no less, than a humanist understanding of Man (Foucault 1997: 262). In his view, the type of phenomenology that was advanced by Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrongly set aside "the event" in the service of "meaning," at the center of which resides a "metaphysics of consciousness" (Foucault 1998a: 351).

Foucault is claiming that the reordering of the human sciences, based as it was on the intersection between man as a subject and object of knowledge, has changed the very humanness of humanity. As he sees it, the Classical age posed no problem in terms of representation. One could say that subjects engaged in this era in a legitimate process of self-representation. Our ontological states (life, labor, language) were not given to us from the outside; rather, subjects were self-constituting. Our natures were such that the free capacity for representation was an uncomplicated process since representation was not an object of knowledge. Previously, representation was co-existent with the individual cogito: the "I think." The individual was an "image" or a "reflection" who tied together all of the threads of representation "in the form of a picture or table," but was never part of that table itself (Foucault 1970: 308). There was thus no specific "nature" to individuals outside of nature itself and there could not be, therefore, a problem of their "existence." However, with the introduction of the human sciences, man suddenly becomes a finite being whose capacities for representation are curtailed by "existence," that is, by the environment, the forces of production, and the linguistic heritage that has made subjects what they are (Gutting 1989:199). The idea that the conditions of knowledge can be found in a reflection on man's finitude is rejected by Foucault in favor of a consideration of knowledge and

its conditions as being located in the emergence of anonymous bodies of discourse (Rajchman 1992: 112). This idea of a transcendental subject who defines the limits of reason through experience results in a fragmented form of knowledge. The only way to get out of this malaise, according to Foucault, is to smash the very foundations of the anthropological slumber in which we post-Kantians have found ourselves (Foucault 1970: 340-3).

Foucault is calling here for the end of the sort of fragmented representation that has existed since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The human sciences “are not an analysis of what man is by nature”; they are not an extension, interiorized within the human species [or] within its...consciousness” (Foucault 1970: 353). The human being, Foucault pronounces, no longer has any history. Each domain of knowledge has “folded over” on itself, leaving man “dehistoricized” (Foucault 1970: 368-9). Thus, man, as we know it, is a recent invention and this is due to fundamental arrangements in knowledge. Foucault dismisses the entire notion of modern subjectivity. The individual is *not* the self-constituting vehicle for its own foundations but is a type of anonymous abstraction in the self-constitution of the sciences and social structures themselves. If these arrangements were to disappear, Man, says Foucault, would be erased, “like a face drawn in the sand at the edge of the sea” (Foucault 1970: 387).

Foucault celebrates prematurely, I will argue, the prospect of what he calls the “counter-sciences” of ethnology and psychoanalysis as a way to get around metaphysical conceptions of the subject. For now, we can see that he goes beyond the type of subjectivism which places the agent at the epicenter of the purposefulness of history. This rejection of humanism is premised on a reconstruction of why and how scientific knowledge arises and circulates as so many modern technologies of control. For Foucault, the goal of philosophical inquiry should be situated around not a “will to knowledge,” but rather to understand how human subjectivity is constituted in and through various discursive formations. This early Foucault categorically repudiates the Enlightenment notion of a universal subject striving – through the faculties of reason and judgment – toward emancipation from the overarching constraints of power and politics and all outside forces. He is maintaining, in this early work and elsewhere, that there exists no subject, empirical or transcendental, that is prior to and constitutive of history. This anti-humanist understanding of the subject and its potentialities for freedom rests on a fundamental reordering of knowledge. For Foucault, freedom is not the instrument of reason; it became enmeshed in a web of darkness with the demotion of knowledge to the mere status of object.

How are we to assess Foucault’s claims that knowledge, after the seventeenth century, becomes entangled in a complex web of signs and representations, in a labyrinth of “infinite dispersion?” Certain critics might argue that the one obvious omission from Foucault’s account of Classical and modern philosophy is his neglect of how philosophy conceptualized the possibility of human freedom. Does his hyper-epistemologism, with its emphasis on the discursive organization of knowledge leave unanswered those questions about how freedom and self-determination might be possible if they are not to be found in knowledge? Or is it, on the contrary, that *The Order of Things* is Foucault’s first systematic attempt to rid philosophy of the anthropological conception of man, with its creation of a divided subject?

Section Two: Foucault's methodological aporias

At a fundamental level, Foucault is attempting to carve out a new role for philosophy. Even in the nineteenth century the form of reflection that made sense of the conditions of possibility of objects was philosophical. Today, he says, philosophy no longer exists as such. Instead it has become ambiguous by its dissemination into a wide variety of diverse activities: "today philosophy is every activity that makes a new object appear for knowledge or practice – whether this activity stems from mathematics, linguistics, anthropology or history" (Foucault 1989: 28). In what follows, I want to open Foucault's critique of the centrality of man in philosophy (humanism) to the following lines of criticism:

The unconscious episteme

The concept of the *episteme* in Foucault's classificatory schema is heuristic; it designates the conceptual conditions upon which an historical era rests. The modern *episteme*, as he defines it, is a system of concepts that makes sense of the cognitive status of the human sciences (Gutting 1989: 140). But an *episteme* is much more than that. It is, as Foucault describes it, the "unconscious of science," a set of historical apriori structures which are independent of individual and scientific consciousness in the space of order in which knowledge is constituted. This "unconscious of science" is, according to Foucault, comprised of the "counter-sciences" of (Freudian) psychoanalysis and ethnology, the two branches of knowledge dealing with precisely what he dismisses as the subject and object of knowledge: anthropological man. In their combination, psychology and ethnology constitute the cultural and historical apriori repository of "all the sciences of man": they form the unconscious nucleus around which all particular forms of knowledge revolve: "The privilege of ethnology and psychoanalysis...[is] directed towards that which, outside man, makes it possible to know...that which is given to or eludes his consciousness." They animate, says Foucault, the entire domain of the human sciences. But, despite their "quasi-universal" bearing, they do not specify a general concept of man. On his account, these sciences constitute "the double articulation of the history of individuals upon the unconscious of culture, and of the historicity of those cultures upon the unconscious of individuals" (Foucault 1970: 387-9). In other words, these countersciences, and especially psychoanalysis, do not purport to capture reality as do the human sciences, but rather propose that it is unconscious desire which offers a more valid appearance to representations of reality in defense against the impossible claims of the human sciences.

But, in spite of Foucault's claim that this cultural, collective unconscious space – which defines the limits of what individuals can say and think – unfolds in the "caesuras, furrows and dividing-lines which trace man's outline in the Western *episteme*," his location of the epicenter of the *episteme* in psychoanalysis places his method on the terrain of notions that are central to a psychoanalytic, humanist understanding of reality: a conception of reality based on subject-centered assumptions. In the case of Freud, these assumptions originate in the view that the unconscious is a process taking place within the *individual*, but yet is not accessible

to the individual on a conscious level.⁶ In Foucault's view, the *episteme* is a set of principles governing *collective*, empirical practices but which are constituted outside of collective awareness (a theory first articulated, in relation to the unconscious, by Carl Jung). It is clearly not Foucault's intention to bring, as Freud proposed, the "repressed contents" of the unconsciousness out in the open to attenuate disturbances in the psyche. However, his use of ethnology as a corrective "counterscience" has the unwanted effect of placing his own method under question.

The first of these aporias comes to light in the form of what I will call *epistemological pathology*. Foucault tells us that the intermingling of the epistemic unconsciousness and the collective consciousness of living, working, speaking beings is not necessarily an ambiguous relation. Indeed, the sciences that have determined man's finitude (as both a subject constituting the world and as an object living in the world) "move ceaselessly backwards and forwards between the conscious and the unconscious," between thought and the "unthought" (Foucault 1970: 372). Not that every element of an *episteme* - as an unconscious, apriori structure of conscious thought - must in the end become a conscious element; rather, the critical function of the *episteme* is to turn itself towards consciousness as a whole, towards the moment "at which the contents of consciousness articulate themselves, or rather stand gaping, upon man's finitude." The *episteme* is a region in which "representation remains in suspense" and yet in every way defines the very possibility of representation and in which the prospects of death, the foundations of desire and the laws of language-human finitude - inhere (Foucault 1970: 374-5). Thus, in the same methodological manner in which Freud's ego seeks to establish order and control over unconscious desires, Foucault's unconscious *episteme* seeks to establish order and control over the "living, working, speaking" being. In its attempt to do so, Foucault locates a type of epistemological pathology which is manifested in the human sciences. The fundamental problem, in short, is that the human sciences rob the individual of unfettered thought, and place restrictions upon its ontological state as a living, working, speaking being. It is not that psychoanalytic theory is a monolithic set of concerns or avenues of approach to the problem of individual versus collective psyche; but all psychoanalytic theory begins from the premise of the human experience and the unconscious mind as a source of knowledge and a perpetuator of action. These "man-centered" assumptions are reflected in Foucault's *episteme* through his claim that the centrality and importance of psychoanalysis lies in its ability to make the discourse of the unconscious "speak" through consciousness (Foucault 1970: 374). It is the only human science that can mediate between the unconscious *episteme* and our conscious forms of speech and action.

A second, related effect of Foucault's "neutral" method is that the *episteme* is unwittingly posited as a *scientific Weltanschauung*. It assumes the uniformity of the description of science within a given historical period, but does so as an unconscious programme, as an unconscious picture of the limits of discourse. Foucault rejects the reduction of cultural phenomena to their social, political and economic causes and instead locates them in the "positive unconscious of knowledge" or what he calls the

⁶ In Freud's analysis, there is always resistance to the repressed contents of the unconsciousness which can be traced back to "individual psychology" (Freud 1976: 247) Later, he extended this analysis to the neurotic relations between self and society.

“archaeological level,” a level at which it is possible to discern the “implicit philosophies” subjacent to consciousness, “the level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse” (Foucault 1970: xi). The avenues through which Foucault locates these “implicit philosophies,” the “counter-sciences” are psychoanalysis and ethnology. But, what is central to ethnology, as with psychoanalysis, is the study of *anthropological man*. Ethnology seeks to employ the data provided by ethnography, an enterprise oriented towards the observation and analysis of primitive human cultures. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, ethnology analyzes comparative data from the study of institutions (“considered as systems of representation”) or originates in a study of unconscious techniques which animate social life (Lévi-Strauss 1967: 2-3). He also points out that the basis for arriving at such invariables rests on the goal of understanding man in terms of the unconscious foundations of expressions of social life (Lévi-Strauss 1967: 18-19).⁷

The importance of ethnology for Foucault is that “it studies...the structural invariables of cultures rather than the succession of events” (Foucault 1970: 376). The concept of *episteme* is thus directed towards the understanding of the unconscious nature of collective phenomena, including beliefs, habits, customs, morals, etc. In this context, Foucault follows Durkheim’s privileging of ethnology as the superior human science. Ethnology’s special status comes from its ability to understand the deeper structures of consciousness “from the outside.” What is most problematic, however, is that Foucault finds in ethnology - “the historical a priori of all the sciences of man” - the key to understanding the origins of modern European knowledge. In a word, he elevates ethnology from its status as a form of objective, structuralist method which seeks to understand the unconscious presuppositions of primitive cultures to a *general* method by which to problematize, from the outside, the inauthenticity of the modern subject.

In order to erase man “like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea”, or effect an “end of philosophy,” Foucault had to rid both psychology and ethnology of their subject-centered contents, a methodological move which, in *The Order of Things*, he did not, and could not possibly, undertake. The burden of proof that falls on his research is to demonstrate how his method effectively distances itself from the cultural contents and normative rules of the very modern European civilization from which it is derived, one which Foucault admits is subject-centered and “humanist.” Hence, Derrida’s earlier criticism.

Foucault’s Formalism

Foucault’s archeological method was purportedly organized around a neutral or “external” assessment of what has constituted the human sciences since the nineteenth century. This assessment was predicated upon the view that the human sciences are constructs of particular arrangements in knowledge organized on an

⁷ As Lévi-Strauss defines the distinction, ethnography is the first stage in the analysis and synthesis of human groups. It includes observation, analysis and classification of particular cultural phenomena. Ethnology - the science of synthesizing data to provide accounts of the unconscious foundations of group formation - includes ethnography as its first stage and is an extension of it. Social and cultural anthropology represent the second stage of this synthesis, based as it is upon the conclusions of ethnography and ethnology in an effort to understand the human being in all of its dimensions. Combined, ethnography, ethnology and anthropology form three stages in the same line of investigation (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 352-3).

unconscious level by the *episteme*. Foucault rejects the view, however, that such sciences are “false sciences” or ideological illusions; they are in fact not sciences at all. The epistemological configurations that made them possible can be reduced to “an abuse of language”. In spite of this, the human sciences are said to exist “side by side” with the natural sciences, though they lack the formal criteria of a scientific form of knowledge. This is not a *negative* phenomenon; the human sciences are simply *another* form of knowledge (Foucault 1970: 365-6). Foucault leaves unanswered, however, the question of what exactly constitutes the “specificity” of the natural sciences. The limitations of his arguments are found in his inability to specify, other than the untheorized criteria of “objectivity” and “systematicity,” the grounds on which the human sciences can be separated out from the natural sciences. In one instance, the anthropological sciences are said to be valid in so far as their “positivity” or conditions of existence may be veritably traced. There is no denying that such “sciences” exist. On the other hand, however, they are said to be invalid in so far as these conditions of existence have their roots in a sea of overrepresentation or a fundamental mutation of knowledge. But Foucault can only resort to an argument which has as its defining point a non-anthropological epistemology. Since he does not elucidate the various forms and contents of the natural sciences, his rejection of anthropologism remains at a formalist (i.e., structuralist) level of analysis. Perhaps another way of putting this is to say that Foucault does not succeed in making the transition from an archaeology of pure reason to an archaeology of practical reason.

Quixotism and the residual subject

Quite apart from Foucault’s inability to free his method from the normative contents of modernity, his general structuralist approach discloses important methodological implications for both his theory of the subject and his historiographical method. The first of these concerns the notion of the subject itself. In the first instance, Foucault’s rejection of the Kantian self-constituting subject relegates the subject to a non-voluntaristic realm. He identifies structures - *epistemes* and the linguistic relations within them - as producing the subject, a move that has the effect of consigning consciousness (beliefs, desires, and reason) to the increasingly complex interplay of words and signs. In one example, if Don Quixote represents the transformation of historical modes of experience (“a negative from the Renaissance world”) from a world where the written word and things resemble one another to one that “makes endless sport of signs and similitudes,” then he is nothing other than a sign; a reality which resides entirely inside language. In the second part of Cervantes’ novel, Don Quixote wanders off, searching everywhere for similitude, only to become the object of his own narrative. His truth no longer lies in the relation of words to the world, but “in that slender and constant relation woven between them by verbal signs” (Foucault 1970: 48). In a similar fashion, the critique of modern reason is radicalized to the extent that man is a mere “invention”; there are no authentic discursive means by which the subject can express its beliefs, desires and intentions. Depending on the ways in which the *episteme* orders life, labor and language, the subject is always an object of analysis and is everywhere bound by the chains of representation.

There is no question that Foucault is attempting to make the claim that specific modes of discourse delimit what the subject can think or say. But a more important stake here is the question of whether he succeeded, in *The Order of Things*, in eradicating the subject as a ground for knowledge. In other words, did Foucault succeed in resolving the problem of humanism? The short answer must be that he did not. The question of humanism and the capacity for freedom is one around which Foucault continuously circles. The Foucault of the 1960s was a bitter opponent of the very idea of humanism which, in contemporary political terms, he believed, was really “a bid for ‘happiness’ by the radical left in France. And happiness, he said, “does not exist – and the happiness of men exists still less” (Miller 1993: 173).⁸ But to return for the moment to the question of freedom from humanism, it may be first argued, as Foucault did, that he is not describing the process of knowledge “towards an objectivity in which today’s science can finally be recognized” (Foucault 1970: xxii); nor is he a “missionary of modern culture” but rather an “explorer” who views “nineteenth-century History [as] eighteenth-century Progress, which replace seventeenth-century Order, but this emergence of Progress must not be considered, with respect to History, as an instance of progress” (Canguilem 1994:76). Rather, it is an instance of Humanism in its particular nineteenth century configuration of knowledge and the order of things. And it is this particular form of humanism that has since hampered our freedom. Language, for example, is no longer the mark of things as they existed, as in the seventeenth century; it no longer acts as a naming, decoding or signifying device for identifying elements of nature, but acts as an instrument for manipulating nature and reality in its new role as a self-referential structure of subjectivity. Foucault’s archaeology is, to be sure, “antihumanist” in that it explores the condition of an *other* history. As Canguilhem notes, archaeology retains the concept of ‘event’ but looks at how events affect *concepts*, and not men (Canguilem 1994:79). The basic notion surrounding a critique of humanism issues out of the denunciation of the unity of science in the history of concepts. Foucault seeks to uncover “discontinuities” in knowledge because the so-called unity and progress of science has succeeded only in making the subject an object of its own knowledge, robbing it of its freedom of expression, its freedom of will, and making it the unwitting slave of language in the proliferation of the human sciences. The subject, in other words, is the *structural, residual effect* of the human sciences.

Without a subject, Foucault cannot address the question of purposive social action and the means social actors might use free themselves from dominant modes of thought. He cannot, on Derrida’s reading of Heidegger, specify what it means, in ontological terms, to be human. And yet, Foucault cannot get beyond anthropology. His *de facto* conception of autonomy comes from his endorsement of what he calls the “counter-sciences” of psychoanalysis and ethnology, reductive forms of anthropology, as we have seen, in which consciousness is reduced to the unconscious level.

Historical causality

One of the major casualties resulting from Foucault’s structuralist method concerns the lack of historical causality as an explanatory mechanism by which

transformations are said to occur. His overall approach presumes that there is an underlying order – the unconscious *episteme* – in the complex interplay of empirical experience. This further assumes that these underlying structures can be decoded in the same manner as one can the syntactical rules of a language. The claim that *epistemes* have an abstract logic of their own means that Foucault must resort to an historical-conceptual apriori explanation in his reconstruction of the social phenomena he wants to explain: the appearance of discursive regularities within a given era. Particularly important is his view that the relation between the arrangements of knowledge beginning in the nineteenth century and the situation of man within both consciousness and nature has resulted in a constructed and futile, metaphysical humanism. But this takes Foucault's method to a nonexplanatory, abstract level; it is speculative not in the cognitive apriori sense, but in its specific historical apriori sense. As a result, he is not able to open his method to the domain of the social in terms of intentional, strategic social action, nor is he able to provide an explanation of the causal genesis of social phenomena. How is it that the rules underlying discursive transformations are embodied in the subjects of those transformations? Foucault cannot specify how the rules of discourse – as embodied in certain social arrangements - are internalized by subjects. The problem stems in part from his development of series of *epistemes* which do not have a synchronic relation with one another; they simply appear side by side, denying not only a continuity to science but to consciousness in general. But there is an even more serious problem which is that, by flattening out the discursive field, by presenting a given moment as belonging to one *episteme* which functions as the precondition for the production of all positive knowledge, Foucault closes off the possibilities for oppositional discourse. Or, at best, we can say that if any oppositional discourse does take place, it can only function at the level of the sociological, and not at the level of the epistemological (Miller 1999: 198-9). This further implies that the resolution of such differences would only take place under the auspices of a unified *episteme*. What this means is that the methodological framework used by Foucault lacks a diachronic motor for historical change. Indeed, as I will argue, this problem is resolved only when he moves to incorporate an ethico-political dimension into his analyses of what constitutes the modern subject.

Concluding remarks

Foucault's negative anthropologism

This chapter has attempted to follow the lines of Foucault's thinking on the emergence of humanism in the modern era by looking at his language-centric archaeology of knowledge in *The Order of Things*. Archaeology is designated by Foucault as a strategy for challenging the humanist assumption that the subject is the ground for all historical phenomena. It designates his attempts to uncover how the human sciences have located man's finite existence in the apriori foundations of knowledge. Foucault argues that the conditions for knowledge are not found here, but in anonymous bodies of discourse. He sought the roots of these conditions in the description of relations of coexistence among statements within a given *episteme*. Archaeology rejects the general thematic of the continuity of science which was necessary in order to safeguard the sovereignty of the subject. For this reason, the

anonymous discontinuity of knowledge was excluded from discourse and it is this that archaeology strives to recover.

Through the concept of *episteme*, Foucault attempts to undercut standard histories of ideas and show how what we call “man” was born at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the emergence of the human sciences. These sciences, which for the first time introduced a historicity to notions of the species, economic practices and language resulted in the construction of a new form of subjectivity. This anthropological turn, initiated by Kant, locates the foundations of knowledge in man’s finite existence. This involves Foucault in a radical skepticism regarding the notion of an ahistorical, transcendental subject which can, through the apriori structures of the mind, provide the foundations of all knowledge. His critique of humanist foundationalism takes us into the realm of the “unthought,” leaving the unified Cartesian cogito behind. Foucault wants to locate finitude not in the transcendental subject, but in corporeal, speaking beings in their concreteness as humans in the world and in history. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault sees knowledge as closing in on itself, as shutting out those forms of unthought which are not identical with “the self,” and which do not challenge the totality of the system, a system in which knowledge has become weary and falls into an anthropological slumber.

By traversing the arrangements of knowledge in successive *epistemes*, Foucault wants to show how the human sciences have created the yawning, subjectivist trap in which we, as moderns, are still caught. The self is not the self anymore; it is a series of complex representations of representations of the self. This failure, moreover, lies at the doorstep of Kant who failed to take into account the possibility that subjects are historically asserted, and not given apriori. Kant’s discovery of a transcendental field placed the subject above the realm of its own concreteness and outside the realm of historically situated knowledge. And the human sciences have made life, labor and language “appear as so many transcendentals” too, but with one difference; the conditions of knowledge are not only situated with a knowing subject, they are now situated with the object, doubling the burden of the subject. The problem occurs when, in the relations between the empirical and transcendental realms, the empirical is suspended in order to provide validity for transcendental forms of thought (Foucault 1970: 247). It is this form of humanism which Foucault says must be washed up with the sea in order to return the subject to its unity.

This chapter has argued, however, that Foucault’s notion of the apriori *episteme* implies that his analyses of the modern era cannot escape altogether the language of anthropologism. But it is a *negative* anthropologism in that Foucault seeks recourse to ethnology and psychoanalysis to undercut the metaphysical presuppositions of all other human sciences with their central motif of subjective consciousness. But both ethnology and psychoanalysis issue out of reductionist hypotheses, making the unconscious the sole arbiter of conscious thought. In addition, the *episteme* is posited as a set of “unconscious” structures that are independent of the consciousness of individuals. These structures “speak through” consciousness much in the same way that Freud’s unconscious is said to find expression in the consciousness of individuals. The *episteme* is the unconscious arbiter of all our

thoughts; it operates on a terrain independently of our perceptions. Foucault finds in psychoanalysis one of the principle “counter-sciences” through which to shake modern thought out its transcendental malaise. For him, psychoanalysis confronts the unconscious in a direct manner, the result of which will illuminate that which is hidden – the unthought – and by doing so will reveal the space in which the contents of consciousness articulate themselves. But it was pointed out that the language and method of psychoanalysis is that which is inscribed in the individual and collective personality, negatively reframing the very anthropological individual which Foucault renounces as a constructed myth. By placing his method on the terrain of psychoanalysis - or, at the very least, accepting the fundamental premises of this ‘counter-science,’ - Foucault implicitly adopts a nominalist, psychologistic method which moves to the level of cognitive developmentalism. In either case – whether it is Freud’s super-ego or Foucault’s *episteme* - what is targeted is a restructuring of the relationship between the unconscious and the consciousness. If such a restructuring could be shown to be successful, it might liberate Foucault from the apriori preconditions upon which consciousness is said to rest. But, at a minimum, Foucault constructs a negative epistemology in his reconstruction of the subject without positing the internal *negativism* necessary for dynamic, significant historical change. This does not place him at the epistemological transcendental level of Kant, nor does it situate him in Freud’s structures of the mind, but it does follow the methodological lines upon which both Kant and Freud respectively sought the ground for knowledge in universal and depth psychological apriori structures.

Aside from his methodological affinities with psychoanalysis and ethnology, Foucault undertakes an anthropologistic reading of Heidegger’s view of humanism, one which Derrida claims arose from the mistaken conflation of phenomenology – the science of the experience of consciousness - and anthropology. Heidegger’s point, Derrida reminds us, is that metaphysical humanism continuously circles around humanity without questioning the historical, cultural and linguistic limits of “man.” The anti-humanistic understanding of man as an “epochal” being does not question whether man actually exists; it responds to questions concerning the establishment of an ahistorical, human essence. As Derrida points out, it is this metaphysical essence that needs to be addressed, not the existence of man as a “mediating and caring” human being (Derrida 1982 [1972]-a). And, as Ian Hacking notes, it is not that we should see in Foucault a pessimism about “man”; it is just that “he has given no surrogate for whatever it is that springs eternal in the human breast” (Hacking 1986a: 40).

The novelty of Foucault’s method is that, rather than seeking stable equilibria and secular continuity in the history of science, he eschews linear successions by introducing epistemological ruptures in both science and consciousness. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault continues to reject this nineteenth century view of human subjectivity as the central premise of modern thought. “What is being bewailed,” he writes, “is that ideological use of history by which one tries to restore to man everything that has increasingly eluded him for over a hundred years” (Foucault 1972). Foucault draws the conclusion that, within German Idealism, humanistic ideals such as “the subject” are grounded in relations of domination and that the dualism of subject (the rational and moral self) and object (power) is a false

one since “the individual is not the “vis-à-vis of power,” but rather its effect. And, since it is power that constitutes the subject, it therefore cannot be separated from the subject. The “subject,” Foucault declares, must be “dispensed with,” in order to arrive at a historical account of these domains of objects (Foucault 1980b: 117).

In conclusion, Foucault’s subject is a causally inert, epiphenomenal one. The subject possesses no consciousness or capacity for self-determination and hence, does not possess the capacity for either freedom or the contestation of external forces of power which alone possess causal productivity (Weberman 2000). Using the arguments he makes in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1979a), the next chapter will look at how Foucault’s anti-humanism becomes subject to a wider, political critique in his genealogical analyses, ones which introduce a critical- historical approach to power and knowledge.

Chapter Three

Humanism as the Will to Power: Genealogical Conditions

How are we to explain the fact that once repetition bears upon repetitions, once it assembles them all and introduces difference between them, it thereby acquires a formidable power of selection?(Deleuze 1994 [1968]: 295).

Introduction

In this chapter, I look at how Foucault's misgivings about the "humanist episode" shift to a social-theoretic diagnostic of the institutional conditions under which modern formations of power have individuated subjects in the name of humanist ideals. In this period – Foucault's "middle phase" – there is a decisive move away from an analysis of discourse based on a location of the genesis of cultural systems of knowledge in the internal relations among linguistic elements towards an analysis which has as its object domain the order of social power. Accompanying this shift in methodology and object domain is a corollary change in the ways in which humanism is said to undermine forms of subjectivity. Humanism still retains its essentialist impulse, but it is less a matter of the internal functioning of statements and more the strategic effects of "games of truth" played out on the social body by contingent, yet ubiquitous, power formations. Foucault's task here is to explain how regimes of domination emerge out of the power struggles among competing actors apart from juridical judgment and the regulation of norms. Against a (noticeably Marxist) reductive conception, he theorizes power as a microphysical contestation between opposing forces. By conceptualizing power as something other than the contest between competing normative claims or the outcome of strategic violence between opponents (Foucault 1979a: 23-6), he is rejecting ideology critique as the social-theoretic means by which to explain the underlying mechanisms that supply glue to the social order. Power, Foucault proclaims, *produces* knowledge; it shapes the modern soul, one which is not merely an "ideological effect," but is a historically real effect. For this reason, we must abandon the violence-ideology opposition. The domains of analysis that have been constructed around this modern soul – psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness – are games of "truth" played out on the social body under the auspices of "the moral aims of humanism" (Foucault 1979a: 27-30).

In the first section of this chapter, I explore Foucault's critique of modern humanist political rationality with a view not to situating his work in its entirety, but to establishing selectively the methodological trajectories of his understanding regarding how the humanism of modernity has defined subjectivities through various processes of objectification. In the second section, I put forth the suggestion that what Foucault substitutes for transcendental humanism is a doctrine of *embodied humanism* in which real subjects are situated on the battlelines of their own histories, though they are still hidden, as it were, behind the curtain of agency. In the third section, I intervene in the debates surrounding the question of Foucault's anti-humanism, debates which are oriented around how his genealogical account of the

contingent structures of power - structures which are said to exclude juridical standards of judgment and moral affiliation - are theoretically capable of stepping outside the humanist context from which it purports to distance itself. In the final section, I suggest in a preliminary way some of the ways in which we might see Foucault's work after *Discipline and Punish*⁹ as containing the seeds for a pragmatic form of humanism.

Section One: Modern power and the genealogical conditions of humanism

From Semiology to the Theory of Power

We saw earlier that Foucault vigorously rejected the notion of "the subject" as the possessor of arduously-won capacities for self-determination and autonomy through the progressive realization of reason. He rejects such a conception as a bedrock of transcendental illusion brought on by Kant's three critiques. The "sciences of man," thought to be the "apotheosis" of the subject, succeeded only in bringing about its disappearance. The result of man's death, in Foucault's view, has made it impossible for our own culture to pose the problems of the history of its own thought because of so many representations "folding over" on themselves. The flourishing and self-reconciliation of the subject in reason that was the promise of Kant's critique of metaphysics has not unfolded in self-determined emancipation; rather man has been washed up in a sea of multiple representations. Foucault's overall purpose in exposing the human sciences as being founded on a false claim of scientific validity was to demonstrate that "man" could be neither the center of the universe nor the sole arbiter of truth, but was rather a fabrication which could, through neutral archaeological analysis, be "unmasked." It was stated, however, that Foucault runs into problems when he specifies what counts as scientificity without providing a clear scientific ideal for his arguments and when he remains on a formalist footing with regard to what constitutes the human sciences.

With the publication of *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault moves from a semiological analysis of discourse to the theory of social power. His previous analyses of knowledge contained neither the necessary ground to encompass meanings between subjects, nor did they take into account other non-discursive formations that would have given his theory access to the realities of a social world. In *The Order of Things*, his anti-humanism is instanced in his account of how, in the nineteenth century, "man" can be viewed as a fictive reduction of contingent discursive practices. The theme that brings Foucault's analyses within the vicinity of a monological subject only becomes apparent when he leaves behind his analysis of discourse as a series of contingent linguistic events and introduces the institutional conditions of the production of knowledge. The socio-historical genesis that was absent from his previous analyses, and which was necessary if he wanted to enter the ground of social analysis, is initially presented as the double-sided problematic of "power" and "desire."

James Miller's study on the "passion" of Foucault contains a commentary on Foucault's anti-humanist stance worth relaying. The 'events of May,' 1968, says

⁹ For this, I rely on selected interviews and *The History of Sexuality*, Volume I (Foucault 1980a).

Foucault, were in response to something entirely practical, though they were framed around dissenting views on the nature of knowledge. "As the events of May showed convincingly," he says, "knowledge always entailed "a double repression" in terms of what it excluded, and in terms of the order it imposed. For example, in French history texts, "popular movements ... are said to arise from famines, taxes, or unemployment; and they never appear as the result of a struggle for power, as if the masses could dream of a full stomach but never of exercising power." For Foucault, the crux of the problem was humanism. "Humanism," Foucault now says, "is everything in Western civilization that restricts *the desire for power*." (Miller 1993: 199).

Foucault borrows on the twin conceptions of power and desire first from Nietzsche who prophesied that Man was bound to "die" from the signs born in him, and second, from Saussure, Freud and Hegel, all of whom recover the problem of meaning and the sign after a century of multiplication and the 'thickness' of representation. The reconstitution of representation in terms of the incompatibility of the order of man and the order of signs signals - between the "vague humanism" and "the pure formalism of language" - says Foucault, "the first deterioration in European history of the anthropological and humanist episode that we experienced in the nineteenth century" (Foucault 1989: 6-7). The current era is thus characterized by a critique of humanism which, to some degree, existed in all of the projects of modern philosophy, but provided the primary ground for the post-Kantian era. Beginning with Nietzsche and Heidegger, the late modern is characterized by a radical break with all things Western: the primacy of reason, notions of "humanity," tradition, technology and ultimately, the goal of emancipation itself. Such grounds for emancipation served only to distort and do violence to all notions of being. Foucault credits Nietzsche with taking "the end of time and replacing it with the death of God" and it was Nietzsche "who burned for us, even before we were born, the intermingled promise of the dialectic and anthropology" (Foucault 1970: 263).

Flight from Hegel

Framing the discourses of an entire philosophical era is an arbitrary matter, but it is nonetheless necessary if we are to make sense of the *why?* Why do we care what Foucault thinks about this or that? How are his concerns connected to wider post-Kantian themes? From what point can we say: all of the great philosophical questions of modernism and postmodernism begin *here?* We have seen that Foucault accords Kant perhaps the greatest place in light of the consequences of Kant's three critiques. But there is also a profound sense in which we might say that Foucault's anti-humanism begins with a flight from Hegel. Of all the philosophical narratives of modernity, Hegel's 'Owl of Minerva,' in which history is said to unfold in a timely, Absolute manner, stands out as the one of the most influential critiques of Kant and anything resembling a "philosophy of origins." Hegel was the first to attempt to historicize the self following Kant's notion of a self-referential, self-enclosed subject. Hegel's understanding of the subject was that there was "something beyond" the subject which is different. Through a process of reflection, the world can be understood historically by apprehending "the Other." On the face of things, this seemed to reconcile Kant's separation of thought and reality, or thought and object. The apparent surpassing of all of Kant's dualisms - subject and object, finitude and

infinity, reality and ideality, sensuous and supersensuous – was said to rest on his rejection of Kant's apriori understanding of the difference between appearance and reality (Guyer 1993 : 178-9).

On Hegel's understanding, Kant erroneously conflated thought and being, a methodological move that served to undermine knowledge of things in themselves. His attempt to overcome Kant's "subjective idealism" (or, as he put it, Kant's "attempt to swim before getting into the water") was one which sought to fill in Kant's "empty" concepts with real, historical substance (Guyer 1993: 198-202). As many commentators have noted, however, Hegel did not succeed in replacing Kantian idealism since he did not surrender the idea of a *telos*; the dialectical interplay between the subject and the other that is posited as a possible reconciliation of subject and object is nothing other than the self recapturing its foundational preeminence. And, it is this non-recognition of the other that has informed much of French poststructuralist anti-humanism, including that of Foucault. For him, Hegel's philosophy is one of absolute discourse, a subject standing alone, awaiting an epiphany of sorts. According to Foucault, "our age, whether through logic or epistemology, whether through Marx or through Nietzsche, is attempting to flee Hegel," (Foucault 1972: 235). Of course, Foucault did not exclude Marx from engaging in what he called "the anthropos," for Marx, along with Kant and Hegel, has merely perpetuated and embellished the story of "man."

Foucault sees Georges Bataille as first thinker to disengage Western philosophy from the standpoint of the Absolute and engage the other. This might be best explained by situating Foucault with Bataille in relation to the notion of transgression. Bataille, the French Nietzschean, sought to rid the subject of its (Hegelian) individual sovereignty through a "philosophy of eroticism." This Dionysian quest was tied to the search for the "inner experiences" that lay outside rational understanding. Foucault admired Bataille's understanding of erotic transgression, a violent breaching of the limits of sexual behavior, the elemental impulse to engage in the "negative experiences" of sado-masochism, and turning them into something positive (Miller 1993: 86-7).

A second important influence on Foucault's formative thinking was Maurice Blanchot, a prominent and influential "philosopher of death" during the 1930s and 1940s in France. From Blanchot, Foucault borrows, as he does from Nietzsche and Bataille, the idea of a "limit-experience," a rejection of phenomenology's reflection on the everyday "lived experience" of the subject, and a desire to decenter the subject through transgression: "The idea of a limit-experience that wrenches the subject from itself is what was important to me in my reading of Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot" (Foucault 2000: 241). These thinkers are important for an understanding of Foucault's earlier anti-humanism as well as the humanist political rationality which he subjects to critique in *Discipline and Punish*. As he says,

the experience through which we grasp the intelligibility of certain mechanisms (for example, imprisonment, punishment, and so on) and the way in which we are enabled to detach ourselves from them by perceiving them differently will be, at best, one and the same thing. That is really the heart of what I do (Foucault 2000: 244).

Thus, it is the transgression of given, anthropological limits issuing out of the work of Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot that furnishes Foucault with his overall orientation to the philosophy of the subject and rejection of the “anthropos” of humanism. Foucault explains that they represented

[first] an invitation to call into question the category of the subject, its supremacy, its foundational function. Second, the conviction that such an operation would be meaningless if it remained limited to speculation. Calling the subject in question meant that one would have to experience something leading to its actual destruction ...its conversion to something else.

The renouncement of phenomenology and existentialism that Bataille and Blanchot found in reading their way through Nietzsche thus gave Foucault his one-way ticket, as it were, for the flight from Hegel. In his view, anthropology invented a region in which the self advanced unhindered, and in the name of humanism, toward progressive reason, but in the process of doing so, converted the “other” into the “same” (Pefanis 1991: 17).

Humanism, the Human Sciences and the Invention of Knowledge

Foucault’s central claim in *Discipline and Punish* is (Foucault 1979a) that the humanist political rationality that paraded as the moral justification for criminal law in the nineteenth century must be conceived as a historically contingent strategy on the part of monolithic wills to power in their attempts to effect disciplinary power. There are, according to him, two “histories of truth.” The first of these consists of an “internal” history of truth found in the natural sciences. By this, Foucault appears to mean that the natural sciences establish truth through principles of self-regulation which originate in “inquiry”: the establishment of paradigms, constant internal revision and hypothesis-testing. The second history of truth is an “external” history originating in the human sciences in the nineteenth century. This form of truth arose out of “examination” which gave birth to sociology, psychology, criminology, psychoanalysis, etc. These forms and contents of knowledge are not, therefore, something inscribed, or derived from, human nature; they are invented and imposed upon subjects.¹⁰ The relation of knowledge and things known, Foucault says, is a relation of “power and violence” (Foucault 2000: 10).

Broadly speaking, Foucault’s overall project is to investigate the conditions under which subjects are made into objects. In *Madness and Civilization* (Foucault 1965), *Birth of the Clinic* (Foucault 1975), and *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1979a), these investigations have as their aim the discovery of “the formation of the subject as he may appear on the other side of a normative division, becoming an

¹⁰ According to Foucault, the “great break” with Kantian transcendentalism came with Nietzsche’s observation that there was no connection between knowledge and “the things that need to be known.” Whereas Kant had established as identical the conditions of experience and the conditions of objects of experience, Nietzsche claims that “between knowledge and the world to be known there is as much difference as between knowledge and human nature. Foucault goes even further: “Knowledge can only be a violation of the things to be known” (Foucault 2000: 8-9).

object of knowledge – as madman, as patient, or as delinquent, through practices such as those of psychiatry, clinical medicine, and penality” (Foucault 1998a: 461).

Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* is not merely a historiographical investigation into the birth of the modern prison system; it is an excursus on the proliferation of the human sciences within modernity itself. Genealogy’s point of departure is to determine whether

there is not some common matrix or whether they do not both derive from a single process of ‘epistemologico-juridical’ formation; in short, to make the technology of power the very principle both of the humanization of the penal system and the knowledge of man (Foucault 1979a: 23).

The problematic of humanism is no longer to be located in the epistemological order of things, but in the specific institutional contexts of their existence. Foucault’s understanding of humanist political rationality derives from an account of social power as a “strategy,” as so many instances of “dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques [and] functionings (Foucault 1979a: 26). The “humanization” of penal law and the human sciences, he claims, are two constituent elements of the same “epistemological-juridico process that have as their very principle the “technology of power” (Foucault 1979a: 23).

In Foucault’s usage of the term, genealogy is a methodological tool designed to examine the origins of power formations and the forms of rationality underlying specific power constructs. Genealogies are historical studies which lie outside the traditional aims of the history of ideas in that their findings are intended to produce critical effects in the present. The point of genealogy is not to judge on a moral basis whether this or that power formation was the right one, but to show that the conditions under which specific power formations developed are, or are not, suitable for the conditions of our own present purposes. Perhaps the most useful account of genealogy comes from John Ransom (Ransom 1997). He delineates genealogy into its “historical” and “political” functions since, as he says, Foucault himself did not offer a clear picture of the techniques and goals of genealogy (Ransom 1997: 85). Historical genealogy works to uncover not an ideal progression of civilization, but instead locates the origins, or the emergence, of certain relations of forces [*Entstehung*]. This type of historical genealogy attempts to disclose that the “battle lines” between the dominators and the dominated are not created out of necessity. In this context, Foucault borrows Nietzsche’s insight that if the genealogist “listens to history, he finds that there is “something altogether different” behind things: not a timeless and essential secret but the secret that they have no essence, or that their essence was fabricated in piecemeal fashion from alien forms. Examining the history of reason, he learns that it was born in an altogether “reasonable” fashion – from chance (Foucault 1998a: 371).

According to Foucault, humanist political rationality is based on the false antinomy of individualization and totalization. In terms of contemporary struggles against the “excessive power of political rationality,” he asserts that such struggles have at their core the questioning of the status of the individual (Foucault 2000: 330). On the one hand, contemporary power “categorizes the individual, marks him by his

own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects” (Foucault 2000: 331). On the other hand, modern humanist regimes exercise a totalizing power that “can produce as much acceptance as may be wished for. [Power] operates on the field of possibilities in which the behavior of active subjects is able to inscribe itself” (Foucault 2000: 341). Referring to this antinomy as the “dividing practices” that create both individualization and totalization, Foucault conceptualizes two, antinomous forms of subjectivity: one “subject to someone else by control and dependence, and [one] tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to” (Foucault 2000: 331).

Foucault is suggesting here that current political struggles are taking the form of struggles against *the ways in which the modern state has fashioned us as subjects*, as opposed to the (more or less) straightforward struggles against forms of domination and exploitation that took place in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The power of the modern state, he claims, is “ a tricky combination ... of individualizing techniques and totalizing procedures” (Foucault 2000: 332). In the modern humanist regime, this power technique – Foucault later calls this ‘pastoral power’ – is exercised with one goal in mind: the production of truth in the individual himself ((Foucault 2000: 333). How such power is effective can be demonstrated by the means through which this ultimate goal is to be achieved. It is, says Foucault, a form of power that “looks after not just the whole community but each individual in particular. It implies a knowledge of the [individual’s] conscience and an ability to direct it” (Foucault 2000: 333). In Foucault’s view, this is the double bind of subjectivity or the ‘trap’ of humanism; modern pastoral power shapes and encourages the rational and autonomous potential of subjects, but in doing so, seeks to curtail the “desire for power” itself (Foucault 1977: 221). Thus, while the modern human subject is empowered by advances in reason, truth, freedom and destiny, these advances are corroded by the increased subjectifying powers of humanist, pastoral government.

Section Two: Embodied Humanism?

Cutting off the King’s head: Foucault’s non-juridical critique

As a point of departure, Foucault’s critique of humanism may be organized around the notion of legislation. In *Discipline and Punish*, he develops an argument based on the ways in which disciplinary power – operating under the guise of humanism – developed as so many techniques for the judgment of bodies. “The whole penal system,” he writes, “has taken on extra-juridical elements ... in order to make them function within the penal operation as non-juridical elements” (Foucault 1979a: 22). These forms of “biopower” thus have their origins in a “new power to judge” outside traditional juridical institutions. Non-juridical judgments are thus linked to power. The power to incarcerate is not only to be found in laws; it is to be additionally located in the development of the human sciences themselves. These extrajudicial, humanist disciplines (such as psychiatry, medicine and sociology) have succeeded in molding the modern subject into objects of knowledge through disciplinary techniques of individuation. What we need, says Foucault, is “a political philosophy that isn’t erected around the problem of sovereignty ... or law. We need

to cut off the king's head. In political theory that has still to be done" (Foucault 2000: 122).

A number of commentators have suggested that Foucault's position is "nihilistic" because of his desire to abandon the traditional juridical model of critique. Gillian Rose, for example, claims that Foucault's aim is to destroy the Kantian juridical model of transcendental legislation, but that this only results in the substitution of "a new law disguised as beyond politics" (Rose 1984: 173). There is at least one aspect of this debate to which I would like to draw attention. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault does not so much change the terrain of his investigations, i.e., the origins of modern knowledge and the anthropologism, that he (and others) claims is the hallmark of modernity as he does shift the ground of analysis to a distinction between traditional juridical power and modern disciplinary power. The image of Damiens' torture which confronts us in the first pages of the book - where, upon committing parricide, Damiens was to have "the flesh torn from his breasts, arms, thighs and calves with red-hot pincers...burnt with sulphur...his body drawn and quartered by four horses and his limbs and body consumed by fire" (Foucault 1979a: 3) - represents the Classical age of juridical power. We are abruptly invited to witness, a mere eighty years later, the introduction of disciplinary power with the birth of the modern prison and the introduction of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. But, while each represents a form of penalty for Foucault, he does not exclude juridical forms of power from operating alongside disciplinary power. He is merely claiming that this new disciplinary power operates on a system of "constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions" rather than on the "spectacle" principle of Classical juridical penalty.

While I agree with Rose that Foucault avoids anything resembling "a politics," that would operate on a traditional state/civil society dichotomy, I do not think he is attempting to formulate a new form of legislation based on the construction of a new law. He is simply rejecting the traditional conception of the legal system as being the sole bearer, arbiter and judge of all forms and sites of power. He must also reject, on this account, the model of juridical judgment as *the* defining instrument in questions of power, one based on a system of punishment and reward. But he is not claiming that the law is not one important site of power; it is just that the question must be recast in terms of a new relation between law and knowledge. Foucault recasts this directly in terms of a union between productive disciplinary power, humanism and the human sciences. The consumption of knowledge has been, since the sixteenth century, a fundamental humanist ideal directed, through all of the various forms and contents of knowledge, at the guarantee of liberation. But this consumption of knowledge is not merely state-directed; it is associated rather with the myriad power mechanisms that work in and through existing societies (Foucault 2000: 290-1).

Foucault's goal of understanding through genealogical analysis the construction of the modern subject is premised on his view that the discourses of humanism and the human sciences which posited the individual as a self-determined autonomous agent capable of self-reflection are a thorough-going liberal and "humanist" illusions. The whole corpus of humanitarian reformers (the "masked agents" of "the age of sobriety") - from judges to psychological experts to

educationalists – have, in his view, “fragmented the legal power to punish” (Foucault 1979a: 21). Humanism has resulted in “a gentle way in punishment” through ritual recoding from the spectacle of public execution to an “ever-open book” where children take lessons in civics and grown men relearn the laws (Foucault 1979a: 111). Foucault’s point here is that freedom, critique, and resistance are not to be found in the realm of self-legislation; they are only to be found and exercised where sites of power relations exist. In short, he is rejecting a strictly juridical ground for the realization of freedom and self-legislation.

Humanism as the Inhuman

There is more than a hint here that Foucault’s diagnostic of humanism and the human sciences has undergone a shift from what he called in his archaeological period the “*nouveau roman*” humanism of modernity (Foucault 1998a: 265) - a study which had as its object the analysis of signs and signification, and the structural mutations of knowledge in the nineteenth century - to a critique of what might be called *embodied humanism*. His rejection of metaphysical humanism now rests on the distinction he makes between an “essence” of humanity and the embodied individual who belongs to a contingent, socio-historical order. The point that he is trying to make here is that modern humanist rationality, with its emphasis on absolute standpoints and the transcendental subject, is far removed from the concrete, historically situated, and embodied subject. In both Descartes and Kant, the subject stands above all things corporeal. The Cartesian ego is separated from the world of things; the subject relies on the dictates of the mind alone to verify its existence outside of all things concrete, experiential, and worldly. Kantian humanism seeks to resituate the subject in the world, but its embodiment is merely phenomenal; what truly is the mark of the subject is its ability to prevent reason from going beyond the limits of what is given in experience through recourse to the transcendental ego. But this ego is constituted outside all historical contexts, rising above the fray of matter and the sway of all things worldly, and the happiness and radical autonomy of the subject is secured by this transcendental state.

Foucault rejects this kind of metaphysical humanism on the grounds that it does not take into account our forms of existence as finite, historically situated, and embodied beings. Humanism is everything that is inhuman; it denies us the capacity for active agency in the world in which we live. When Foucault says that a “soul inhabits [man] and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body” he means by this not the Christian or humanist soul, but an embodied, historical soul that has been born out of tangible methods of “punishment, supervision, and constraint” (Foucault 1979a: 29). Thus, in Foucault’s middle phase we see on the one hand a genealogical *explanation* of how modern humanism has shaped social and political processes and, on the other, a *rejection* of this humanism as a doctrine by which to understand the embodied modern soul. For Foucault, modern humanism has misinterpreted the relation between knowledge and power by drawing a line between them (Foucault 1980b: 52). It posits knowledge as being invested in the transcendental subject, severed from the world of political realities and free to develop without constraint. Foucault’s repudiation of the metaphysical subject thus aims to leave behind a conception of humanity, reason, and human nature that is already interpreted, timeless, and ahistorical.

On a basic explanatory level, Foucault's conception of humanism as everything that is inhuman can be fastened onto Heidegger's views in *Letter on Humanism*. Foucault's critique of anthropologism, like that of Heidegger, rests on what Derrida has described as "a revalorization of the essence and dignity of man" in Heidegger's move to remove metaphysical conceptions from any philosophical discussion of "man" (Derrida 1982 [1972]-b: 128). While Heidegger's reevaluation of humanism is, arguably, de-limited by attaching itself strictly to the metaphor of Being,¹¹ Foucault wants to de-mystify the conception of man altogether by getting rid of all notions of idealist subjectifications and foundational knowledge that are said to lead to the moral freedom of all mankind. It is not that he is denouncing everything that is human, but rather that, following Heidegger, the abstract essentialism that is the mark of humanism robs, in his view, the individual of its very humanity. And, like Heidegger, he wants to write about the present, about the facticity of human beings in the world. Comparisons between Foucault and Heidegger must, however, end here. In Foucault's view, by making Being-in-the-world the highest determination of truth, Heidegger is caught in a strange "transcendental-empirico" contradiction which fails in its attempt to separate metaphysics from the truth of Being. (Caputo 1993: 125).

Section Three: The Politics of Theory

Two Views of Humanism

Foucault's microphysical conception of power oscillates, in the minds of some, between what Stephen Best and Douglas Kellner call "totalizing and detotalizing impulses." In their view, Foucault is at times the ultimate skeptic while at others he aligns himself with the emancipatory aims of the Enlightenment (Best and Kellner 1991: 73). I want to suggest, using Foucault's view on humanism as a focal point, that this seemingly ambiguous oscillation supports two views of his understanding of humanism depending on what frames of reference one brings to the reading of his texts.

On the first view, Foucault's anti-humanism is detotalizing in the very specific sense as regards his renouncement of fixed meaning, determinacy, certainty, and order: in other words, his rejection of essentialism and representational epistemology. This view is coextensive with Foucault's Nietzschean claim that "there is something altogether different behind things: not a timeless and essential secret but the secret that they have no essence, or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms" (Foucault 1998a: 371) and his insistence that "the final trait of effective history is its affirmation of a perspectival knowledge" (Foucault 1998a: 282). This Foucault is seen as giving up all claims to humanism in light of his pronouncements that "what we need to do is not to recover our lost identity, or

¹¹ Heidegger's basic essentialism is instanced in this very critique of humanism. As John Caputo points out, Heidegger's attachment to a historical form of Being rests on his claim that the human body itself is the only repository of "truth," and the true dwelling place of Being, but that this claim, interesting as it may be, merely succeeds in "reproducing the classical gestures of metaphysics." Caputo's observation rests on what he calls the classical *ordo essendi*: a metaphysical hierarchy of divinities, human beings and animals that "borders on a Cartesianism which treats animals as little more than machines" in view of Heidegger's creation of an "abyss" between animals and humans (Caputo 1993: 124-6).

liberate our imprisoned nature, or discover our fundamental truth; rather, it is to move toward something altogether different” (Foucault 2000: 275) and that “one has to get rid of the subject...and [write] a history which can account for the constitution of knowledges...without having to make reference to a subject which is...transcendental” (Foucault 2000: 118). Finally, this reading of Foucault emphasizes his assertion that modern technologies of power are “the very principle both of the humanization of the penal system and of the knowledge of man” (Foucault 1979a: 23). This reading of Foucault sees him as a Nietzschean perspectivist and epistemological relativist. Such interpretations lament the Nietzschean apathy and impotence which constitutes a theory founded on the ubiquity of power/knowledge relations.¹²

A second reading of Foucault’s anti-humanism places his method on the terrain of totalizing critique. According to this view, Foucault, *pace* Habermas, makes techniques of social domination the focal point of his social theory when he asks “isn’t power a form of warlike domination?” (Foucault 2000: 123), or makes the claim that what is necessary is “to detach the power of truth from the [various] forms of hegemony” (Foucault 2000: 133). This Foucault is seen as making short work of reason and the spirit of the humanist Enlightenment with his view that “the history that bears and determines us has the form of war...not relations of meaning [in some] calm Platonic form of language and dialogue” (Foucault 2000: 116). Finally, this reading understands Foucault’s theory of power as devoid of normative foundations, as anarchic, as betraying the promise of the Enlightenment, and as portraying the history of societies as steered by strategic rationality.

In what follows, I take a closer look at the commitments that are brought to this debate. I want in short to expose the stakes which focus on the question of whether, in Foucault’s middle phase, his targeting of humanism is a rejection of the ideals of humanism on philosophical, strategic or normative grounds. The impetus behind such an exposition lies in a determination of the extent to which Foucault’s critics and commentators have succeeded in capturing precisely what it is about humanist political rationality he rejects. The point of departure for this discussion is a debate initiated by Nancy Fraser on the subject of Foucault and humanism. Its nexus, as mentioned, can be located in Foucault’s “power/knowledge” phase in which humanist disciplinary and normalizing power undergoes a genealogical diagnostic. I take each of these commentaries in turn and attempt to condense them into their more salient features, followed by my own brief comments concerning the efficacy of such a debate.

Section Four: Stakes of the Debate

In her essay “Michel Foucault: A Young Conservative?” (Fraser 1994) Nancy Fraser addresses the shortcomings of both Foucault’s critics and sympathizers who question the grounds on which Foucault rejects the foundational ideals of modernity. One of his harshest critics, as Fraser points out, is Jürgen Habermas, who questions Foucault’s repudiation of modernity as being fraught with contradiction and inconsistency. It is Habermas’ contention that Foucault’s rejection of universal norms

¹² For a fuller discussion of Foucault’s debt to Nietzsche see, for example (Thiele 1990).

amounts to a wholesale rejection of modernity and its associated presuppositions. In his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Habermas 1987), Habermas devotes two lengthy chapters to the unresolved contradictions or “aporias” in Foucault’s critique of modernity. These aporias originate, according to him, in Foucault’s criticism of the constitutive norms of modernity and the concomitant rejection of the very constituent elements that constitute critique: truth, rationality, and freedom. Habermas thus questions the exact nature of Foucault’s stance towards the political ideals of the Enlightenment, concluding that Foucault is caught in a performative contradiction:

In his basic conception of power, Foucault has forced together the idealist idea of transcendental synthesis with the presuppositions of an empiricist ontology. This approach cannot lead to a way out of the philosophy of the subject, because the concept of power that is supposed to provide a common denominator for the contrary semantic components has been taken from the repertoire of the philosophy of the subject itself (Habermas 1987: 274).

On the one hand, Habermas takes Foucault’s genealogy to task for its hidden transcendental aspirations towards explaining how, through analyses of technologies of power, scientific discourse about man is possible *at all*. He thus sees Foucault’s project of critique as totalizing and trading on the very presuppositions against which he set out to reject in the first place. On the other hand, Habermas is charging Foucault with borrowing from the semantic repertoire of the philosophy of the subject by way of a methodological “operation of reversal” in which power’s dependency on truth is reversed so as to render power subjectless; Foucault’s move to make truth dependent on power amounts to a conception of power in which the success of individuals’ actions is not dependent upon judgments of truth. Instead, argues Habermas, Foucault makes truth dependent on the impersonal forces of foundational power, resulting in what Foucault supposes is “true objectivity of knowledge” (Habermas 1987: 274-5).

Aside from approaching this thorny question from the point of view of Foucault’s method, what, we might ask, are the stakes in Habermas’ relentless critique of Foucault’s method? To begin with, as Fraser points out, Habermas’ criticisms are “too tendentious to permit a fair adjudication of the issues” (Fraser 1994: 186). He assumes, she says, that Foucault is undertaking a wholesale critique of modernity when, in reality, the target of Foucault’s critique may centered on one particular component of modernity: anthropological humanism. In Fraser’s view, Habermas fails to ask the relevant questions; on what grounds does Foucault reject humanism? Does he reject the metaphysical notion of a self-sufficient Cartesian ego? Or, does he hold to the view that humanism is intrinsically undesirable, etc. (Fraser 1994: 187)? While I agree with Fraser’s view that Habermas is to be faulted for not asking such questions, I would add that she herself fails to ask what the stakes are for Habermas in his rejection of Foucault’s “operation of reversal” with regard to the reciprocal relationship of truth and power. Such an exposé is an impossible task, given the confines of the present chapter. However, there is at least one important point to be made which may be posed in the form of a question: is there an “agenda” in Habermas’ own critique of Foucault’s “operation of reversal?” The short answer

must be that there is, if we take into account Habermas' own presuppositions regarding the philosophy of the subject.

In the first instance, it is Habermas' intention to overcome a philosophy that posits an autonomous subject as merely acting on objects, including other individuals, existing in the world around it. He wants in principle to leave behind the traditional subject/object relation which Kant first posed as a transcendental reconciliation of subject and object, or the ideal and the real. This is not to say that Habermas does not follow through on the Kantian quest to identify the universal foundations of morality, law, and art through the public use of reason. Such a project in fact comprises the corpus of Habermas' conception of the Enlightenment as the 'unfinished project of modernity.' However, Habermas wants to eliminate all metaphysical presuppositions (i.e., subjectivism) from such an undertaking, seeking instead a reconciliation of the ideal and the real in intersubjective, communicative, and rational social relations. Such a program, (one he calls 'universal pragmatics') is premised on a concept of mutual understanding among individuals which aims at bringing about an agreement "that terminates in the intersubjective mutuality of reciprocal comprehension, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another" (Habermas 1979:). Habermas' project of critique, then, rests on the very premise from which he criticizes Foucault: that the success of individuals' actions (i.e., power) is dependent upon certain truth claims that are validated through intersubjective speech acts. Such are the grounds for Habermas' own emancipatory ideal and thus, it is not surprising that he would offer up Foucaultian genealogy for sacrifice based on his own presuppositions regarding what constitutes critique, truth and justice.¹³ In any case, Habermas' concerns are those of justifying objective science and the validity of truth claims and are thus quite opposite from Foucault's concerns which are oriented around a questioning of the very claims that Habermas invokes as *the* ground for universal justice.

A second, related point to be made concerns Habermas' charge that there can be detected an underlying "cryptonormativity" in Foucault's genealogical analyses of power. He elaborates this charge as an "arbitrary partisanship of a criticism that cannot account for its own normative foundations" (Habermas 1987: 276), thus linking Foucault to the project of the Enlightenment. He identifies in Foucault's thought an "unholy subjectivism" that borrows on humanist ideals, even though "he understands himself as a dissident who offers resistance to modern thought and humanistically disguised disciplinary power" (Habermas 1987: 282). The crux of Habermas' argument is this: Foucault cannot escape the appeal to *some* normative foundation given his assumption that biopower extends its normalizing tendencies to subjugated bodies. Habermas charges that Foucault does not answer, though he invites, the questions: "why fight at all? Why should we muster any resistance at all against this all-pervasive power circulating in the bloodstream of the body of modern society, instead of just adapting ourselves to it?" (Habermas 1987: 284-5). Like the Knight of the Looking Glass who has vanquished the hapless Don Quixote, Habermas concludes that Foucault cannot adequately supply normative justification for his critique because he does not resort to a hermeneutic understanding of meaning and

¹³ For an extended and insightful analysis of Habermas' critique of Foucault's genealogical method, see (Conway 1999).

validity claims. Quite aside from how one might go about addressing Habermas' concerns (a task which has been venerably tackled; see (Kelly 1994) (Ashenden and Owen 1999), the point to be made about his criticisms is that, at the time of this writing, he did not have access to Foucault's final writings on the aesthetics of existence and the ethic of the care of the self and therefore confined his critique to Foucault's archeological and genealogical methods as they were deployed up until the end of *The History of Sexuality*, volume I.¹⁴ Had he had access to these later writings, he would have undoubtedly softened his critique based on Foucault's inclusion of a minimal normative ground for his analyses of "the subject of the present," a theme that will be taken up in greater detail in the next chapter. In any case, Habermas' solution of consensus as a ground for progressive political action is as equally inherently unethical as Foucault's belief that transgressing existing limits is necessary for challenging hegemonic ethical, social and political practices. As one commentator notes, neither transgression nor consensus is "good" or "bad"; their relevancy only becomes apparent in the particular historical situations in which they occur (Schubert 1995: 1007).

Fraser goes on to identify what she perceives in David Hoy's assessment of Foucault's anti-humanism as a more sympathetic understanding of Foucault's rejection of humanist ideals. On this account, Hoy is said to expound a philosophical rejectionist argument which has Foucault eliminating the strictly Cartesian elements of humanism while preserving some of values of modernity. Such a rejection consists in discarding the universal and ahistorical foundations of the subject/object dualism. Hoy's claim is that Foucault is attempting to "de-Hegelianize" humanism by ridding it of its ahistorical formalism while at the same time "preserving its efficacy as an instrument of social criticism" (Fraser 1994: 194) much along the same lines that Heidegger undertook his pathbreaking critique of humanism, i.e., as delimiting the dominance of subjectivity over objects, including the other. Foucault's political project aims, according to Fraser's interpretation of Hoy, at a posthumanist rendering of humanity in which subject and object are placed on the same ontological, level playing field and should be conceptualized as entities equally dependent on one another within the discursive formation of modern humanism (Fraser 1994: 192).

Fraser finds this philosophical rejectionist argument equally unsatisfactory since, in her view, it fails to spell out fully the tasks that would be required of Foucault if, indeed, this was his methodological intent. Such tasks would include specifying: to what type of anti-foundationalist justification can such values lay claim? Does Foucault's nonhumanist rhetoric distinguish on a normative level worse regimes from better ones, acceptable from unacceptable forms of resistance to domination, etc.? And, while indeed these are questions that Foucault did not address given his refusal to deal in normative questions up to the end of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, again, at the time of his commentary, Hoy did not have access to Foucault's later work which worked toward filling the normative void that characterized his earlier studies.¹⁵ In the next chapter, I will argue along the same

¹⁴ *The Philosophical Discourses of Modernity* (1987) was born out of a series of lectures given by Habermas at the University of Frankfurt and the Collège de France during the course of 1983-4.

¹⁵ Hoy's commentary was published in 1982.

lines as does Hoy in his assessment of Foucault's anti-humanism, while simultaneously taking account of his nonfoundational ethical imperative.

The next of Fraser's targets is a reading of Foucault as rejecting humanism on strategic grounds. With the replacement of premodern, despotic forms of domination by modern technologies of control (i.e., normalizing-disciplinary power), the humanist emancipatory force is left in a void from which it cannot emerge since these modern forms of domination (e.g., the penal reform system) aimed at the creation and control of autonomy, subjectivity and selfhood. Thus, a sort of new humanism was born, but it was one that resulted in a totalizing control of the social body. It is unclear as to whether the humanist penal reform project of restoring the juridical subject was a movement to provoke a process of self-change and self-reflection on the part of prisoners, or whether it was a project of "cognitive reconditioning," or some combination of both. Whereas a process of self-change would initiate new forms of dialogical communication, one of cognitive reconditioning would be to effect technological control over the objects of its forms of punishment. It follows from this that what is being discredited is not humanism proper, but rather "some hybrid form of utilitarianism" which was itself ambiguous. Fraser's line of argumentation here is confusing, not least because she neglects to cite which, if any, commentators have interpreted Foucault along such lines. In addition to this, we are left wondering whether it is *Foucault* who is supposed to be rejecting this hybridized utilitarian force behind the penal reform system, or whether it is his *commentators* who have confused the two sets of doctrines.

One brief point may be made here. First, to claim that humanism was rejected by Foucault on the grounds just described by Fraser is something of a non-issue. The point of genealogy is to reject traditional historiographical approaches that attempt to capture the "essence of things." Genealogy seeks to uncover these "carefully protected identities" by exposing the contingency around which things such as institutions and morality are constructed. Included in this contingent order of things is the notion of the strategic replacement of old forms of rationality. Humanist political rationality is not something that is given to us in a priori consciousness; it is something that is specific, constructed and inflicted on the entire social body. Genealogical analysis shows, Foucault writes in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," that

there is something altogether different behind things: not a timeless and essential secret but the secret that they have no essence, or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms. Examining the history of reason [the genealogist] learns that it was born in an altogether "reasonable" fashion – from chance (Foucault 1998a: 371).

Thus, to say that Foucault rejects humanism on strategic grounds is merely to confirm that he believes that the humanist political rationality that paraded as *the* moral justification for criminal law in the nineteenth century must be conceived as a historically contingent strategy on the part of monolithic wills to power in their attempts to effect disciplinary power. To say that *Foucault* rejects humanism on "strategic" grounds succeeds only in confusing the issue. Perhaps this reading of

Foucault could be better put as his rejection of the instrumental and strategic grounds upon which humanist political rationality succeeded in creating new, subjugated knowledges.

The fourth and final reading that Fraser finds inadequate is one which suggests that Foucault's rejection of humanism is a rejection on strictly normative grounds. Commentators such as Paul Rabinow and Herbert Dreyfus are cited as examples of those who see Foucault as rejecting *tout court* a type of subject formation which lies at the heart of the humanist project, one whose autonomy purportedly lies in intersubjective communication. This form of subjectivity can be subjected to scrupulous genealogical analysis as the "fabrication of the hermeneutical subject" who, in reality, is simply a casualty of subjectifying practices (Fraser 1994: 201-2). Even if, it is claimed, disciplinary norms had become so thoroughly internalized through hierarchy and asymmetry so as to make society truly autonomous, Foucault would argue that the goals of autonomy and reciprocity gained through the exploration of common meanings are the very goals of humanist disciplinary power. Fraser finds in Dreyfus' and Rabinow's interpretation an implausibility based on her claim that a "sophisticated Habermasian" could demonstrate that Foucault invites the "genetic fallacy" by introducing the notion of "real" autonomy as the outcome of a "historical process of hierarchical, asymmetrical coercion wherein people have been, in Nietzschean parlance, "bred" to autonomy." Fraser, however, goes on to commit the genetic fallacy herself by supplying what she perceives to be a corrective to Foucault's conception of the origins of autonomous practices. Why not see it, she asks, as "a form of life developed on the basis of new, emergent communicative competences, competences that, though perhaps not built into the very logic of evolution, nonetheless permit for the first time in history the socialization of individuals oriented to dialogical practice?" (Fraser 1994: 204).

The point here is not to exhaust the fallacious thrusts underlying either Foucault's or Fraser's line of argumentation, if indeed they can be exhausted, but simply to note that by following through on Habermas' highly subjectivist conception of agency and intersubjective communication, Fraser is not illustrating in any useful sense how such a normative rejectionist argument is or is not endorsed by Foucault himself; she is merely equivocating by resorting to a form of *ad hominem* argumentation which, at best, illuminates that for her, the stakes of the debate are driven firmly into the ground of communicative rationality. Not only this, but it is questionable as to whether Dreyfus and Rabinow are indeed offering such an interpretation of Foucault. In their own words, they are simply attempting to show how Foucault concentrates on demonstrating how the *social effects* of certain technologies owe their status to the force of humanism's normative grounds (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: xxvi-xxvii). In any case, Fraser rightly concludes that ultimately, Foucault would have to appeal to a posthumanist ethical paradigm if indeed he were rejecting humanism on normative grounds, something resembling a new paradigm of human freedom, and something to which Foucault most decisively does not resort. (Fraser 1994 : 204-5).

In many respects, the debate surrounding the question of the grounds on which Foucault rejects humanist political rationality is a sterile one. In answer to the question: did he reject humanism on philosophical, strategic or normative grounds,

the stakes of the debate need, on Foucault's terms, to be relocated in the forms of humanist political rationality themselves, not in what he might call, in a moment of genealogical irony, the victims that accidentally dwell within their confines. Another way of putting this is to say that, for Foucault at least, the critical purchase of genealogy resides not in determining whether power (humanist political rationality) is on the wrong side of morality; its efficacy lies rather in determining the conditions under which subjectivities have been manufactured, maintained and, ultimately, manipulated.

More theoretical aporias

A standard line of argument is that, even if one abandons the search for universals, a human nature, and foundationalist first principles, one still must fill the gap with an ontology organized around *some* type of substantive ethic regarding our own specific era and culture. If this gap is not filled, it is argued further, then the theory in question must either a) contain a "hidden" foundationalist agenda or, b) be theoretically incoherent. Of Foucault's most outspoken critics, Habermas, as we have seen, represents the first form of critique, while Axel Honneth can be said to represent the second, although, to a significant extent, these overlap.

In his essay, "Foucault's Theory of Society: A Systems-Theoretic Dissolution of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," Honneth points to Foucault's statement that "Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination" as the premise from which Foucault undertakes a genealogical diagnostic of power (Honneth 1994: 157-8). Foucault's presentation of the history of institutions as being inexorably tied to the conceptual history of the subject is, he says, theoretically incoherent for the following reasons: a) it is not clear what kind of functionalist analysis Foucault is employing in his explanation of the historical development of punishment; b) he disregards the dimension of social struggle, in spite of the fact that his theory of power is conceptually grounded in a model of strategic action, and; c) there are elements of Foucault's argument that "bear the traits of a crude behaviorism" which tend toward a mechanistic conception of society (Honneth 1994 : 174-5).

These three points of criticism, have, *prima facie*, some merit and are, in fact, interrelated concerns. It is true, for example, that Foucault does not specify the various forms of social struggle with which actors can avail themselves to counter the effects of domination. In Honneth's view, Foucault omits one crucial form of struggle from this "coercive model"; he neglects to incorporate the shared normative convictions and cultural orientations that social groups use to maintain relations of social power, i.e., as forms of participation in the exercise of domination. Because of his "structuralist beginnings," Foucault portrays subjects "behavioristically, as formless, conditionable creatures" (Honneth 1994: 179). What Honneth objects to, then, is the lack of social interaction in Foucault's theory of power, or the mechanistic manner and the "positivistic indifference" by which disciplinary power is said to function on the social body and, indeed, on individual bodies.

There are a number of avenues that one might pursue in response to Honneth's criticisms, but I will limit myself to one. The point to be made concerns

Honneth's own assessment of *Discipline and Punish* as combining a history of institutions with the conceptual history of the subject. Unhappily, Honneth limits his concerns to addressing only the first of these histories. His focus remains rooted in the aporias inherent in Foucault's theory of power, such as his attempt to analyze the means of social coercion solely from the point of view of the non-corporal disciplining of the body (Honneth 1994: 179). But, what is absent is the recognition that Foucault is attempting to open up the possibility for new forms of human experience, perhaps even liberty, through his critique of modern power. In particular, he is criticizing the illusory humanist rhetoric of progress as instanced in the birth of the prison. One can point to the many instances in which he reiterates his claim that modern forms of power cannot be divorced from the humanist ideals that have comprised the history of Western philosophy:

[for] a long time, [the reduction in penal severity] has been regarded in an overall way as a quantitative phenomenon: less, cruelty, less pain, more kindness, more respect, more 'humanity.' (Foucault 1979a: 16).

[This study determines] in what way a specific mode of subjection was able to give birth to man as an object of knowledge for a discourse with a 'scientific aim' (Foucault 1979a: 24).

[How] are the two elements which are everywhere present in demands for a more lenient penal system, 'measure' and 'humanity' to be articulated upon one another, in a single strategy? (Foucault 1979a: 74).

[The] emergence of a new strategy for the exercise of the power to punish [was] coextensive with society; not to punish less, but to punish better...to punish with more universality and necessity; to insert the power to punish more deeply into the social body (Foucault 1979a: 82-3).

'Humanity' is the name given to this economy and to its meticulous calculations. 'Where punishment is concerned, the minimum is ordered by humanity and counseled by policy' (Foucault 1979a: 92).

As an overall schema, Foucault is attempting to demonstrate that humanist emancipatory projects have been misguided in their liberatory aims in so far as they have been mired in a stream of dominating tendencies. Thus, while I do not disagree with Honneth's claim that Foucault's theory of power lacks a *general* mechanism for social interaction (such as norms, language, cultural orientations, etc.), it is to his genealogy of knowledge and the scientific humanization of the penal system that one must look, for it is here that one finds the (re)constitution of humanism in terms of a corporeal status: i.e., humans as active, embodied forces who make the world

intelligible through struggles, strategies, and tactics (Foucault 1980b: 114). What is being replaced is humanism as an abstract, collective will rooted in fixed identities. And, just because Foucault does not specify the forms of agency and social interaction that are part of the relations of social power does not mean that his theory of power issues in a blanket denial of agency; on the contrary, resistance is set up as strategies that are “free of the sterilizing constraints of the dialectic”(Foucault 1980b: 143-4) just as his genealogies are formulated to underscore the limited, contingent character of some Enlightenment ideals, notably humanism.

Section Five: Towards a Pragmatic Humanism

Pragmatism and Postmodernism

In spite of these purported aporias, Foucault’s rejection of society as being conditioned by a transcendental unity of humanist forces does not mean that we must see his anti-humanism as a sterile renouncement of humanity or a call to nihilism. His genealogical analyses are designed to recapture, reconstruct and reinterpret past forms of human experience in order to better understand the present. His understanding of the social order as contingent, fragmented, and ordered around the illusory aims of humanism does not mean that he assumes a nihilistic or anarchic position in relation to power and the social body. Foucault presents us with a social order that is masked in a metaphysics of consciousness; such an order is made up of various *forms* that are organized typically around austere and repetitive rituals, and, it is this reinscription of the juridical in non-juridical systems of knowledge to which he objects.

As is often the case in French poststructuralist thought, there exist implicit alternatives to universalism, foundationalism and metaphysics. Implicit in Foucault’s thought in this period is an alternative form of humanism which, while somewhat undertheorized, has its guiding principles rooted in a pragmatic understanding of experience. This does not mean that Foucault on any level embraces philosophy in this period as a means of critique, but as John Stuhr points out, Dewey consistently held that a pragmatic reconstruction of experience need not do so in the name of philosophy (Stuhr 1997: x), i.e., in the name of a general theory, including a theory of the subject. In this section, I rely on the insights of pragmatism - and particularly those of Dewey and Stuhr - to illuminate what connections, if any, exist between (non-Rortian) American pragmatism and Foucault’s genealogical anti-humanism.¹⁶ These questions will be framed, strictly on exploratory grounds, in such a way as to determine whether there can be found in Foucault’s power/knowledge phase a positive way for him to leave behind the certainties of transcendental humanism without succumbing to the nihilist position of which he is so often accused.

Stuhr’s understanding of the relation between pragmatism and postmodernism is one that does not rely on the traditional concepts of identity and difference. In his view, *either* postmodernism and pragmatism are seen as conceptual bedfellows in light of their common historical and philosophical rejection of the traditional “priorities” and “dualisms” of modern philosophy (identity), *or* they are presented as

¹⁶ As Stuhr rightly notes, the connections between American pragmatism and postmodernism have been largely ignored, and certainly not answered in any depth, even though both traditions are concerned with “the Other” (Stuhr 1997: 87-8).

antithetical academic disciplines in view of their differences regarding questions of philosophy and method (difference) (Stuhr 1997: 87-8). While Stuhr's sympathies lie with those more nuanced understandings of the affinities between pragmatism and postmodernism,¹⁷ he nonetheless seeks to "radicalize" pragmatism through a richer understanding of postmodernism, i.e., one which does not, as in the case of John Ryder¹⁸ and others, result in an overly generalized account of "postmodern sensibilities" (Stuhr 1997: 91).

Stuhr starts out by rejecting the idea that pragmatism aims to dispense with the *subject*, arguing that it is more accurately the vanishing *self, substance* or *consciousness* that is in fact the target of postmodern deconstruction and differentiation. It is, in other words, the foundational, ahistorical subject that is to be replaced by an historically situated and constituted subject (Stuhr 1997: 98). One need not look far to find confirmation of this in Foucault's work: "My objective...has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made into subjects" (Foucault 2000: 326). Similarly, as we saw in *The Order of Things* and *Discipline and Punish*, the overriding aim was to determine how modern subjects are made into objects of knowledge. Foucault's archeological and genealogical analyses are directed toward a reconstruction of the different modes by which subjectivation has occurred:

The history of subjectivity was begun by studying the social divisions brought about in the name of madness, illness, and delinquency, along with their effects of the constitution of a rational and normal subject. It was also begun by attempting to identify the modes of objectification of the subject in knowledge disciplines...such as those dealing with language, labor, and life (Foucault 1997: 89).

When Foucault says that "we need to dispense with the subject," he is not claiming, then, that an entity such as the subject does not exist, but that we have to look more closely at the contextual and historical contingency of subjects and of human agency rather than attributing to them a strong foundational status (Foucault 1980b: 117).

Stuhr makes three basic connections between pragmatism and postmodernism: 1) that both schools of thought do not *dissolve* the links between language and reality, but rather seek to *transform* them, dissolving "only a transcendent, self-identical, self-present, and language-independent reality"; 2) that both pragmatism and postmodernism *affirm* rather than deny the possibility of agency in relation to "particular cultural productions, formations, and self-understandings" and; 3) the agency that is repudiated by both pragmatism and postmodernism is a rejection of "traditional metaphysical accounts of agency" (Stuhr 1997: 99). Stuhr's insights are admittedly aimed at "disrobing" pragmatism itself so that its goals are directed toward "disrupting," "eventalizing," and "problematizing." He is thus calling on pragmatism to become more self-reflexive by critically examining its own methods (Stuhr 1997: 112). He also proposes that pragmatism focus on the present by writing a history of that present, and in doing so leads us back to Foucault's project: writing a

¹⁷ According to Stuhr, these affinities consist primarily of a common rejection of metaphysics and representational and foundational epistemology.

¹⁸ (See Ryder 1993).

history of the present by disrupting conventional historiographies of the subject, by “eventalizing” practices that have resulted in the formation of subjects, and by “problematizing” these practices to arrive at a historical account of how we have been made into subjects.

“Problematization,” is what Foucault calls his approach to understanding the totality of past discursive and non-discursive practices whose starting point is the present situation. The task of the present is to utilize the legacy of history so that we may better understand the present (Castel 1994: 238).¹⁹ By “eventalization,” Foucault means dispensing with historical constants by rediscovering the complex play of forces that have subsequently counted as self-evident, universal, and above all, necessary (Foucault 2000: 226). It may be added, however, that in rejecting necessity *tout court*, Foucault makes the error of failing to distinguish between degrees of contingency. Certainly, some things are more contingent than others, and even if he wants to reject absolute standpoints, there remain those phenomena whose outcomes are constituted through degrees of practical certainty, as well as others whose certainty is not so guaranteed. In any case, I want to suggest the possibility that Foucault’s project increasingly aims to de-anthropologize humanism through a pragmatic reconstruction of forms of subject-experience. The humanism that emerged in the nineteenth century is an impossible project as a foundational anthropologism that governs “from above.” Thus, conceived in a pragmatic fashion, which recognizes as well as problematizes the various practices of subject formation, humanism is not discarded but reformulated and revitalized by giving up its transcendental form through the genealogical reconstruction of experience.

One of the central postulates of pragmatism, “radical” or otherwise, is a stress on the relation of theory to praxis, taking the continuity of *experience* as revealed through the outcome of directed action as the starting point for reflection. In addition, cognition is seen as a developmental and historically contingent process. According to Stuhr, pragmatists offer only one certainty: human finitude. Death does not mean, however, “a passage to salvation [because] there is no salvation outside experience.” Pragmatism, moreover, does not celebrate a metaphysics of permanence or an epistemology of certainty, but is rather “melioristic” in emphasizing future possibilities, as opposed to future deaths (Stuhr 1997: 289-94).

Foucault’s critics have consistently argued that his power/knowledge writings result in an overtheorized account of power’s totalizing effects on the social body. They paint his genealogical analyses as resulting in the omnipresent and inexorable march of disciplinary power over forms of the social order. And, while it is true that disciplinary and juridical power are said to constrain, even order relationships of the body, norms, and knowledge, there is also a more enabling, or, if one likes, melioristic agenda at work in his denouncement of humanist political rationality; post-Kantian humanism needs to break free of foundationalist metaphysics and be pragmatically reinterpreted as the capacity for embodied agency in the practical world. Perhaps unwittingly, Foucault backs into a form of pragmatism when he eschews the cognitive fixity of anthropologism which places the humanist subject in complex power relations related to madness, illness, death, crime and sexuality. The

¹⁹ Castel views the mode of problematization as problematic in that, among other things, it represents a form of “presentism,” or a fastening onto the past concerns that hold true only for our own time.

“anti-authority” struggles that he claims are necessary for the recovery of individuality are, he says,

struggles that question the status of the individual. On the one hand, they assert the right to be different and underline everything that makes individuals truly individual. On the other hand, they attack everything that separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself, and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way. They are a refusal of a scientific or administrative inquisition that determines who one is (Foucault 2000: 330-1).

In particular, Foucault denounces current forms of power that form individuals - subjects - through techniques of individualization and totalization. Such forms of pastoral power imply “a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it” (Foucault 2000 : 332-3).

Just as Foucault believes that it is not more medicine or psychiatry that needs to be injected into the penal system,²⁰ but that instead what is necessary is a rethinking of the penal system in itself, so he wants to rethink humanism in all of its metaphysical manifestations. It is only through resistance and the harnessing of human forces that can result in the transgression of fixed, humanistically defined limits that the *humanitas* of embodied, living beings will be within sight. Thus, he is not asking: is there such a thing as a timeless, essential nature?, but instead asks: how has the doctrine of humanism in its various forms and guises, functioned to create subjectivities in and throughout modern societies? Taking modern forms of discipline and punishment as two examples, Foucault historicizes and contextualizes the institutional practices that have paraded as so many “humanitarian” reforms, but that were in reality ways of producing docile subjects. As Paul Rabinow points out in his introduction to the *Foucault Reader*, Foucault consistently “decapitalizes all of the great concepts, first principles, and fundamental grounds that our tradition has produced” (Rabinow 1984b: 14), and this is no less true of the doctrine of humanism.²¹

Both postmodernism and pragmatism seek to illuminate the practices, discourses, and institutions in and through which embodied agents make practical decisions. In Stuhr’s view, both forms of criticism may be labeled as “criticism without foundations” (Stuhr 1997: 102). The apparent antinomy between pragmatism and postmodernism lies not so much in differing views on nature, reason, and

²⁰ Here, Foucault is responding to a question regarding the efficacy of the increasing medicalization of justice: i.e., the legal subject giving way to the “neurotic or psychopath who is not responsible” (Foucault 2000: 392).

²¹ In addition, it must be remembered that Foucault is adopting a polemical stance which is undoubtedly directed against Marxist conceptions of power: that is, power as issuing out of the relations of production. He does not deny that disciplinary power is linked to the rise of capitalism, but that these disciplinary techniques were in fact *preconditions* for the success of capitalism (Rabinow 1984b: 18) In any case, his polemics are arguably intended to displace the theory of the subject which had been the preoccupation of French intellectuals since Descartes.

subjectivity as it does in differing temperaments. Postmodernism is a “will to oppositionality” or a will to difference compared with pragmatism’s “will to intimacy.” Stuhr quotes William James as expressing pragmatism’s utmost conviction:

This is the philosophy of humanism in the widest sense. Remember that ... the all-inclusive form [of absolutism] gave to it an essentially heterogeneous nature from ourselves. The all-form or monistic form makes the foreignness result, the each-form or pluralistic form leaves the intimacy undisturbed (Stuhr 1997: 105).

The first connection that can be made between pragmatism and Foucault’s humanism, then, is a common refusal to abide by the rules of essentialist discourse. In the doctrines of both, absolutism represents a limit to experience. This is not quite the debt of “irrationalism” and “unreason” that Foucault owes to Bataille’s reading of Hegel and Nietzsche (Pefanis 1991: 16), but a common emphasis on the reconstruction of experience serves, in both cases, to short-circuit the absolute standpoints of Western rationality as embodied in the subject.

Issues of truth

A second point of convergence between the aims of pragmatism and Foucault’s critique of humanism during this period concerns the connection between truth and inquiry. One of pragmatism’s central tenets is that the search for truth be inexorably linked to an open-ended process of inquiry. If that link is severed, it is argued, absolutism results. “Truth,” understood by pragmatism, is non-metaphysical. The founder of American pragmatism, C.S. Peirce, argued that truth is that property of beliefs which continue to be warranted, no matter how far our inquiries might go (Misak 2000: 65-6). Foucault’s notion of truth in this phase of his career is a largely discredited one. Truth does not reside outside power; neither is it something that the liberated, humanist subject is rewarded with. Truth is, Foucault says, “a thing of this world.” It is “produced and transmitted under the control, dominant, if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses” (Foucault 2000: 131).

But this conception of truth as will to power undergoes a discernible shift toward the end of *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*. In this work, Foucault begins by asking: how are the discourses of truth that have “taken charge” of sexuality (particularly confession), used to support relations of power? He seems to suggest that there is no way to escape the relations of power that are instantiated in Western sexuality; the codification of sex has, since the early days of Christian confession, become the discourse of “*scientia sexualis*,” a “set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations by a certain deployment deriving from a complex political technology” (Foucault 1980a: 127). In the closing pages of the book, however, Foucault appears to offer a way out: “the rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures. We need to consider the possibility [of becoming] dedicated to the endless task of forcing [power’s] secret, of exacting the truest of confessions from a shadow” (Foucault 1980a: 157-9). The “limit-experience” that Foucault urges us to engage in applies equally to the search for truth through continuous inquiry into the forces that

have constituted us as subjects so that one day, we will look back and see the arbitrariness of scientific and humanist conceptions of "truth."

The connections between pragmatism and Foucault's views on humanism become more pronounced with the introduction of the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, as well as his essays "The Subject and Power" and "What is Enlightenment?" For now, we are presented with a skeletal sketch of that connection, but it is one which nonetheless foreshadows an ontology that will be filled out when Foucault introduces the notion of "agonism" as a "way out," as the contest between the will and power, and thus, as the establishment of normative premises. It was stated in the preface that it was perhaps time to put the insights of high theory to the test by "problematizing" concrete, historically informed practices. In the next chapter - I undertake my own diagnostic of Foucault's "force of flight."²² Specifically, I attempt to demonstrate how Foucault's introduction of ethics in his final work locates him closer to Kant and witnesses, in a somewhat ironic twist, his own intellectual Copernican revolution.

²² (Bernauer 1990).

Chapter Four

Pragmatic Humanism as the Will to Truth: Ethical Possibilities

I cannot exclude the possibility that one day I will have to confront an irreducible residuum which will be, in fact, the transcendental
(Foucault 1989: 79).

Introduction

This chapter seeks to situate Foucault's later thinking on the margins of a philosophy of the subject and to develop some of his central themes on the possibilities of resistance to forms of modern political rationalities. For the present purposes, I want to indicate where some of Foucault's insights into how we might productively engage in practices of self-invention as positive forms of resistance take asylum in the language of an embodied, ethico-political; and ultimately, pragmatic, humanism. The reason that I do so is that there is an overwhelming consensus that Foucault did not supply his later overall project with normative grounds. I argue that such readings miss a crucial set of arguments he makes concerning the efficacy of liberation movements as ethical practices that seek to transgress present limits through practices of self-mastery and interaction with others who share certain historical experiences. I also argue that this gives Foucault's subjects the means to be active agents in the construction of their own meaning. Through an examination of *The History of Sexuality*, Volumes II and II, related essays and interviews, I set out to establish possible parameters for what I have called Foucault's pragmatic humanism by looking at the possible links between John Dewey's pragmatism and Foucault's ethics. Foucault, I argue, turned in the end to a pragmatic and (a qualified) non-cognitive ethics to supplement the epistemological and power axes along which subjectivity was previously said to be formed.

Section One : Foucault's Turn to Ethics

With the publication of the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, there ensued much controversy about the change of direction Foucault seemed to have taken, even among his staunchest supporters. How could it be that the anti-humanist, power critiquing Nietzschean who wanted to bury the subject could turn to Hellenist individualism and sexual asceticism in a style that verged on humanist didacticism? Why would Foucault, who had previously confined his historical analyses to relatively short periods of time within modernity, now turn to diary writing, dietary manuals, the examination of self and conscience, servant masturbation, epilepsy and convulsions, and sexual practices in the early Greek and Hellenistic eras, as well as early Christian monasticism and asceticism and finally, to individual practices in the late Roman empire? In *The Use of Pleasure*, volume two of Foucault's trilogy on the history of sexuality, he states that he

wanted to dwell on that recent and banal notion of “sexuality” : to stand detached from it, bracketing its familiarity, in order to analyze the theoretical and practical context with which it has been associated (Foucault 1986: 3).

The “desiring subject” was now at the root of Foucault’s studies, and he sought to understand how an “experience” came to be constituted in Western societies, one which led individuals to recognize themselves as subjects of “sexuality,” a term which did not come into use until the nineteenth century. “Experience,” as used by Foucault here, “is understood as the correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture” (Foucault 1986: 4). He opted, he says, for a “hermeneutics of the self” as a methodological strategy to understand the moral and ethical dimensions of sexual behavior. What were the “games of truth” by which humans came to see themselves as desiring subjects? Why this ethical concern - this moral solicitude - with sexual conduct (Foucault 1986: 6-10)?

I want to summarize very briefly the main themes of *The History of Sexuality II* and *III* because it is only when we take these works in tandem with his essay *What is Enlightenment?* as well as important, related essays, lectures and interviews that we can see the emergence of a more general ethics of engagement. Contemporary critics of Foucault tend to draw on the shortcomings of his aestheticization of ethics in *The History of Sexuality*, Volumes II and III, but are at the same time curiously silent about how these latter writings work toward redressing some of those very shortcomings.

The use of pleasure as rapport á soi; the care of the self as empimeleia heautou

In Volumes II and III of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault abruptly turns to the problematization of how we fashion ourselves as ethical subjects independently of wider scientific and moral codes and modes of subjectification. An “ethic of sexuality” is not merely an instance of morality; it is a whole series of experiences that are constituted through diverse practices [Rajchman, 1985 #542a; 88]. Foucault thus understands ethics to be one aspect of the study of morals and focuses on how the *sexual* ethics of the Classical Greeks and later Hellênists²³ was modeled on an “economy of pleasure” that was later adopted by the Christian hermeneutic of the self. Foucault’s genealogy of ethics begins with the assumption that it is not necessary to relate ethical problems to scientific knowledge since such mutations can be shown to be historically contingent (Foucault 1984: 348-9).²⁴ His turn to ethics does not, therefore, mark a fundamental departure from his earlier view that the modern humanist “regime of truth” collapses moral and legal values into scientific “truth” through normalization, and that this process of normalization causes us to be constituted as subjects of scientific knowledge. It is possible to speak, he claims, of

²³ The classical Greek era is known as “Periclean Athens” which existed roughly from 450 to 325 B.C. The Hellenistic and Roman eras came into existence around 325 B.C. and lasted until approximately 450 A.D. Xenophon, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates and Herodotus were some of the heralded poets and philosophers of the Greek era, while Seneca (the younger, tutor to the young Nero), along with Pliny, Cicero, Diogenes (Cynicism), and Epicurus (Epicurean) were among those living in the Hellenist era.

an ethics that is related to an “aesthetics of existence” which - in his view - to some degree, defines our own culture. Since the self is not given to us in some essential form, we must create *ourselves* as “a work of art” (Foucault 1984: 350). According to Foucault, ethical behavior in classical antiquity – beginning with Socrates and ending, roughly, with Seneca and Pliny in the Hellenistic period – was identified with an aesthetics of existence (“arts of existence” and “techniques of the self”) that combined the problematization of sexual activity (*aphrodisia*) and sexual pleasures with practices of the self. Foucault makes it clear that he is departing from traditional conceptions of morality as a set of ascetic codes. For him, morality and ethics are roughly the same; morality, as he redefines it, is “a set of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies such as the family ... educational institutions, churches, and so forth ... a moral code.” But it also refers to the “real behavior” of individuals in their culture (*askesis*). This is the ethical work that one does on oneself (Foucault 1986: 25-7). Yet, a third dimension of morality is specified: how one “ought” to conduct oneself in relation to the “prescriptive elements” that make up the code. Different ways of acting morally in different eras bear on four elements, according to Foucault: a) the “ethical substance” of the individual (the “prime material” of moral conduct); b) the mode of subjection (the way in which the individual recognizes the obligation to practice ethical behavior according to rules); c) the elaboration of ethical work (how one transforms oneself into the ethical subject of one’s behavior), and; d) the *telos* of the ethical subject (the ways by which ethical conduct work towards the establishment of a permanent ethical character) (Foucault 1986: 26-8). In order to understand how pre-modern forms of ethical self-cultivation differed from one another, Foucault turns to the radically diverse texts of Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle to determine the common “fields of problematization” in their ontological, deontological, asceticist and teleological dimensions (Foucault 1986: 36-7).

The upshot of Foucault’s study is that the diverse forms of ethical self-formation in Greco-Roman antiquity were part of the elaboration of code oriented ethics, but that, unlike early Christian ethics, self-formation, or practices of the self, had ascendance over prescribed moral codes. This theme is picked up in *The Care of the Self*; practices of self-formation were founded on the cultivation of oneself and care for others. In short, existence was considered to be both an art and a form of labor designed to preserve both body and soul. Through physical and mental education, the art of “truth telling,” virtue, austerity and care of the body, individuals developed ascetic lifestyles, which were, however, unlike Christian asceticism, not founded on a self-renouncing “evil” of desire (Foucault 1988a: 39-68). According to Deleuze, although Foucault sees Greek subjectivity as *derived* from scientific knowledge and power relations, their independence guarantees subjectivity a power to *affect itself* (Deleuze 1988: 100-1). Greek ethics were not tied to self-knowledge and thus their “ethical substance” led in many instances to excesses of pleasure.

Foucault sees in the late Hellenist and imperial Roman era a tightening of the relations between ethics and knowledge, a move refined by Epicurus and resulting in the advocacy of a life of austerity, something that would become the hallmark of Stoicism. But such a union did not mean that ethics excluded the political; “politico-aesthetic” techniques such as care of the body, how one ran a household, eroticism

(love of boys), etc., all were political forces to be mastered. The nature of these techniques may change, but the ethical substance (*aphrodisia*) remains constant (Foucault 1997: 267-8). This new era is characterized by the ethic of self-mastery that held sway in the classical period, but there exists a different set of isomorphic relations between personal, domestic and political structures of power (Miller 1999: 185).

The change in the first centuries had to do with the *manner* in which the individual formed himself as an ethical subject. It is noteworthy that, for Foucault, this increased individualism meant not a retreat from society; on the contrary, the care of the self was a process which led to the *intensification* of social relations and a continued devotion to public and political life. It constituted

not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice. It often took the form within more or less institutionalized structures. [This] attention to the self ... found a ready support in the whole bundle of customary relations of kinship, friendship, and obligation (Foucault 1988a: 51-3).

One should not think of the subject as falling into “decadence, frustration and sullen retreat,” but rather as no longer being controlled so much by others. One recognized oneself as the subject of one’s own actions, but not through a system of signs denoting power over others (Foucault 1988a: 84-5). Thus, the care of the self allowed for the construction of self-power over and above dominating social and political relations. Above all, it concerned “the manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject in the entire sphere of social, political, and civic activities” (Foucault 1988a: 94).

According to Foucault, sexual pleasure continues to be governed by relations of force, or domination (as in the Greek era), but the place allotted to self-knowledge becomes more important and desire becomes unlinked from pleasure (Foucault 1988a: 67-8). All of these changes had to do with a weakening of the political and social framework within which individuals’ lives had previously unfolded (Foucault 1988a: 41). Things begin to change with the Stoics who began to recognize themselves as “universal, rational beings.” There still existed in the Stoic age an obligation on the part of the self to live an exemplary life, but such a life was ordered by an obedience to universal moral codes. Marriage, for example, was a duty that was derived from a universal rule (i.e., as something ordained by Nature) as was devotion to political life, religion and the family (Foucault 1988a: 155). But whether it was in the Greek era, the Hellenist and Roman era or under conditions of Stoic austerity, self-mastery and care of the self were the guiding principles of existence. But, as self-mastery and self-formation came to be more and more closely tied to knowledge, ethics came to be more closely tied to universal rationality. Foucault, however, does not prefer the Greek ethics of domination over that of the increasing universalism of the Hellenist ethics of existence since there existed in that period less nonreciprocity and thus more autonomy for individuals outside of the larger political structures that had formed the landscape of ancient Greece (Foucault 1997: 267). One of the clearest examples is the legal sanctioning of marriage as an institution and the growth of internal, reciprocal relations within marriages as the relations between husband and

wife were no longer modeled on one's status, or on the political authority that one had to exercise in the city (Foucault 1988b: 176-84).

This growth in individualism and interiorization is said to have provided the basic framework for Christianity's concern with the salvation of the soul and emphasis on sexual austerity. According to Foucault, the Christian consignment of pleasure to the realm of evil, its promotion of conjugal fidelity, its condemnation of homosexuality, and the preaching of sexual abstinence were all models found in Greco-Roman texts (Foucault 1986: 15-20). What is important here is that Foucault sees in Christianity for the first time *the problematization of the subject*. The constitution of the self as subject was not a problem in antiquity because there was no overall external moral system that oriented modes of subjection. Individual modes of subjection were dependent upon either the political system or aesthetic choice (Racevskis 1988: 29). With the advent of Christianity, morality took on a normalizing effect, leaving little room for individuals to effect their own aesthetics of existence.

More methodological aporias

To be sure, Foucault's historical writings are beset by a number of problems. To begin with, his privileging of the (male) subject's relation to itself and others as a positive normative model excludes all other forms of subjectivity that constituted the discursive field in the Hellenist and Roman period.²⁵ By excluding negative and conflicting forms of representation of the subject's relation to itself, Foucault ultimately presents a synchronic view of history that cannot account for historical change. His sudden move from fourth century Greece to the first centuries of imperial Rome is attenuated by a lack of what comes in between. (Miller 1999: 187). Such a view is also voiced by Frederic Jameson who takes Foucault's historical accounts as belonging to that tradition advancing a "monolithic model of the cultural unity of a given historical period" in which change and development are relegated to the contingent and "nonmeaningful" (Jameson 1981: 90-1). However, it should be recalled that Foucault wanted to avoid positing, at all costs, anything resembling Hegel's dialectical movement of change with all of the teleological implications that were inherent in such a doctrine. So, to move from the fourth century B.C. to the first centuries A.D. without positing the idea of the perfectable individual who would reach its ultimate essence after successive historical stages is not such a surprising move for Foucault to make.

A related problem emerges with Foucault's account of life in the Greco-Roman states as relatively unproblematic: that is, as not being subject to processes of normalization and constraint. He paints a picture of life as one characterized by a relatively unfettered stylization of existence. But, as certain classical historians have pointed out, Greek non-democratic forms regulated the private lives and sexual conduct of individuals. Foucault, they say, homogenizes Greek thought, taking Athens as the sole representative of social and political organization. Foucault claims that ethical self-fashioning was unconstrained by a larger moral code and practices of

²⁵ A number of critics have pointed out that Foucault's studies in the ethics of sexuality are problematic primarily because they are androcentric. But, to be fair, Foucault's proposed Volume 5 of *The History of Sexuality* was tentatively entitled *Woman, Mother, Hysteric* in which he proposed to discuss the ways in which sexuality had been invested in the female body.

disciplinary authority, but he fails to take into account the many “extra-legal” normalizing forces that regulated individual conduct (Cohen and Saller 1994: 36-41). Rainer Rochlitz likewise takes Foucault to task for “advancing a free-floating aesthetics of existence, a “lucid universe of pleasure and knowledge [*savoir*] which disregards all social activity and economic constraints; he cannot therefore question the existing social system in any real way.” Rochlitz concludes that, ultimately, Foucault is preaching the anarchistic equivalent of a “post-conventional ethic” (Rochlitz 1992: 255)

Foucault borrows on Pierre Hadot’s claim that ancient philosophy was an art of living, a lifestyle oriented towards care of the self. Upon reflecting on Foucault’s “techniques of the self,” Hadot finds that this care of the self is “too much centered on the ‘self,’ or at least on a certain conception of the self.” It is Hadot’s view that the cultivation of the self was oriented towards belonging to the human community, or belonging to “the cosmic Whole,” as he puts it. Hadot points to Seneca’s twenty-third letter (an important source for Foucault’s ancient ethics) where Seneca states that care of the self is “plunging oneself into the totality of the world” (*‘Toti se inserens mundo’*) (Hadot 1992: 225-7). Hadot also admonishes Foucault for paying scant attention to the Epicureans whose ethic *was* an autonomous one based “on chance” which is, Hadot suggests, more suitable to the modern mentality than that of the Stoics. He concludes that Foucault was correct to claim that the practices of the self in Stoicism and Platonism were movements of conversion toward the self, but that such movements towards interiorization were accompanied by a desire to raise oneself to a “higher psychic level,” where “one discovers another type of exteriorisation.” As such, one identifies with the “other,” which is Nature “as a particle of universal Reason” (Hadot 1992: 229-30).

Conversely, Arnold Davidson claims that Foucault’s history of ethics has been widely misinterpreted. It is not so much a problem with his *conceptualization* of ethics as it is a possible “*defect of interpretation.*” Foucault’s ethics, he argues further, does not depend on a modern understanding of subjectivity; it is “writing a history of the self”; and the ancient theme of self-knowledge was regularly associated with the care of the self. What Davidson is arguing is that critics are misinterpreting Foucault’s care of the self as a “psychologization” that “shrinks the world to the size of oneself” (Davidson 1994: 76-80). It may be added here that Foucault is not undertaking a history of individuality here; he is attempting to reconstruct the experience of the subject, a concept that cannot be so easily subsumed under the opposed rubrics of “individual” and “collective” (Miller 1999: 188-9).

Dare to know, but know how to act: Foucault’s pragmatic ontology

This brief discussion hardly does justice to the complexity of Foucault’s work on ethics and its related problems in *HS II* and *III*. But, it may be asked: what is really at issue here? In other words, what specific changes can be detected in Foucault’s approach to truth, subjectivity and freedom? There is in his later writings a backing off from at least two central claims made by him in his Nietzschean phase: 1) that the subject is a mere epiphenomenon bound and conditioned by limits within various humanist discursive regimes of knowledge and power, and; 2) that “games of truth” are confined to scientific discourse and the institutions that represent and produce it. What was the nature of this reversal on Foucault’s part?

First, if the subject is no longer a mere effect of knowledge and power, wherein lies its autonomy? Foucault now conceptualizes the subject as possessing the *potential* for autonomy in practices of self-mastery, which means, among other things, acquiring knowledge about oneself. Simons makes the claim that, for Foucault, unlimited freedom is “thought itself.” Going back to an antecedent set of arguments, he glosses this claim as emanating out of Foucault’s epistemological bias in *The Order of Things* where freedom through thought was said to reside not in the “deep interiority” of subjectivity, as the humanist tradition would have it, but “on the outside” (Simons 1995: 88). But, as Foucault says, the care for the self is a precept which comes from the Greek term *epimeleia heautou*, a term meaning not only the attainment of knowledge of oneself through thought, but through everyday practices: “it describes a work, an activity; it implies attention, knowledge, technique” (Foucault 1997: 269). Foucault’s point here is that knowledge in the Hellenistic era was not confined to theoretical knowledge; it was in fact subordinated to the *practical* end of self-mastery. So, it was a kind of praxis that combined epistemology, ethics, and a way of being in the world. Foucault calls this *askesis*, a type of training of oneself by oneself, and it is this that has been lost with the rise of Christianity where “the self was no longer something to be made, but something to be renounced and deciphered” (Foucault 1997: 274).

What is at stake for Foucault here is, in the last instance, a subject who is no longer a passive dupe in the humanist regimes of power and knowledge, but is attributed a *creativity within* such regimes. This is a crucial change for it admits of an ontology that he was previously unwilling to grant in his analyses of modern culture. Moreover, this has an important bearing on how one can link up with Foucault’s ethics a pragmatic understanding of humanism. If we begin from the premise that ethical theorizing starts from assumptions about how we ought to live or be in the world, it is clear that such an understanding has been established by Foucault. The problem appears to be, at least in so far as his critics are concerned, that such an ethics does not answer the “why” question: why is it important to revolt? Where are the grounds or criteria for legitimation for resistance?

There are two ways to approach this important set of criticisms. First, the “why” question must be seen from the perspective of a set of arguments Foucault makes regarding “agonal” subjectivity and the transgression of limits. Agonal subjectivity is perhaps best explained as the apposite of Kant’s definition of freedom as law-obeying autonomy: that of heteronomy. In Kant’s schema, when we accept the categorical imperative, we accept a principle or a universal law whose content is determined by that which is essential to all human beings: namely, pure practical reason. If we do not accept such a principle, we risk the danger of falling subject to *heteronomy*, in which case, we allow forces independent of our essential nature (i.e., the radical Other) to determine what the content of such and such a principle will be. In the place of Kant’s categorical imperative, Foucault appropriates Nietzsche’s notion of “agonism,” as a way to transgress political limits. In “The Subject and Power,” he says that he finally sought to study

the way a human being turns him – or herself into a subject. Thus, it is not power, but the subject, that is the general theme of my research. The relationship between rationalization and excesses of political

power is evident. What to do with such an evident fact? Shall we try reason? To my mind, nothing would be more sterile. [Nowadays], the struggle against forms of subjection – against the submission of subjectivity – is becoming more and more important, even though the struggles against forms of domination have not disappeared. The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our day is not to try to liberate the individual from the state ... but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for centuries. Rather than speaking of an essential antagonism, it would be better to speak of an “agonism” – of a relationship that is at the same time mutual incitement and struggle (Foucault 2000: 327-8).

This agonistic form of subjectivity is, I would argue, a “second order” ontological claim about what it is like to be in a particular socio-political world, and thus supplies Foucault with a purpose for resistance. To posit subjectivity as “agonal” is a statement about human existence in particular historical configurations. Mark Okrent explains the difference between first and second order ontological assertions as resting on the distinction between claims about “being” (first order) and claims about “beings” (second order). In his view, pragmatism does not make claims about being, but rather is a form of “verificationism”; in other words, there is no apriori or metaphysical “evidence” concerning an understanding of being, but rather hypothetical assertions regarding what it is like to be in different social and linguistic contexts. And, according to pragmatism, relativism is not a problem since such claims are not assertions about being; it is a contingent position which must be demonstrated (Okrent 1988: 286-9).

Agonism is a form of contestation that is intended to give fuller expression to differences in public life. It works towards exposing the essentialist character of identities by challenging existing distributions of power and encouraging contingent forms of identity.²⁶ Foucault’s later work on the self as a work of art is indebted to Nietzsche’s view that struggle is essential for an aesthetic life of continual self-overcoming (Thiele 1990: 916). Foucault maintains, along with Nietzsche, that only an agonal form of subjectivity – as “permanent provocation” – can work to counter the entrenched ideals of humanism and the insidious forms of power that have issued out of such a doctrine. Politics does not have to be grounded in liberal and humanist notions of emancipation. Politics is something to be *practiced*; it is not a game where the stakes between competing factions – whether they be individual or collective – is an abstract freedom. Liberty, says Foucault, is never absolute; it is something that must be exercised: “I think that it can never be inherent in the structure of things to guarantee the exercise of freedom. The guarantee of freedom is freedom” (Foucault 2000: 354-5). So, freedom itself is not inherent in the humanist order of things, but rather is to be found, as far as possible, in agonistic, ethico-political practice.

²⁶ (See Connolly 1991b) (Honig 1993b) (Honig 1993a)

Foucault's answer to the "why fight at all" question is found in the valorization of struggle itself. The purpose of our actions is to legitimate struggle through a perpetual challenge to the humanist ethico-political order. We should not have to accept the limits of our own subjectivity, limits that have been imposed on us by humanist regimes who mask their intentions as so many humanitarian measures designed to further the progress of "man"; we must "refuse who we are" by engaging in what Simons calls an "ethic of permanent resistance" (Simons 1995: 87). But, this ethic is neither universal nor necessary; it does not hold true for all notions of being in every linguistic context, but is rather meaningful only in the context of modernity. And, struggle, as Foucault conceives it, is not always a negative construct. In other words, we need to struggle *for* the ethico-political conditions under which self-invention is possible. It means that there are always possibilities for changing the situation (Foucault 1997: 166). Foucault does not ask "why be ethical" since to pose such a question first would take him beyond the effective reach of ethical concern. He rather investigates the different *ways* by which individuals cultivate care for ethical identity (Connolly 1991b: 10).

The second point to be made concerns the lack of criteria that Foucault's critics point to as evidence of a lack of legitimation for resistance. But such critics fail to distinguish between a *critical* moral theory and one that merely *employs* criteria following a process of deliberation. Most ethical theories are *critical*; that is to say, the criteria employed about how we ought to live are logically prior, complete, fixed, and directly applicable. Pragmatic ethics, on the other hand, may employ criteria, but they are not *critical* (LaFollette 2000: 400-1). The pragmatic rejection of fixed and directly applicable criteria rests on a rejection of absolutes, or the fixed rationality that lies beneath the *critical* view of morality because it places primacy on practice, rather than on epistemological foundations. And, criteria, even if they are applied after deliberation, are subject to revision in accordance with changing behaviors in changing circumstances. Pragmatic criteria, on Dewey's account, are minimalistic heuristic tools we use in making informed judgments; pragmatism does not decide in advance what is "good" or what is "bad," but takes into account a process of continuous formation. Foucault proclaims that the subject is not a "substance" but a form that is shaped in different ways, depending on differential historical experiences (Foucault 1997: 290-1). As with Foucault, the self, in Dewey's ethics is not a "substance" but is a form, or an organization of habits that are relatively enduring, but subject to change (Pappas 1998: 110-11). Simply because Foucault does not employ the criteria of good, virtue or duty as a source of moral justification for resistance, does not mean, as his critics charge, that his analyses are without some normative content, even though he does not have an ethical *theory* per se. Foucault's pragmatism is premised on a theoretical/ empirical (i.e., thought and everyday practices) union of concerns, as two interrelated elements of ethics, and as such, neither demands, nor articulates a universal moral theory.

Habermas' charge that transgression does not supply us with a basis for determining the direction for progressive political action (implying that Foucault's notion of transgression is inherently unethical) is misguided in that it does not make sense to say that *either* transgression *or* communicative consensuality are, in themselves, inherently ethical. What makes them ethical are the concrete historical

situations in which practices of transgression or consensus occur (Schubert 1995: 1007). Foucault's notion of transgression sits, I would argue, in the interstices between transgression as a dangerous (but necessary) practice and transgression as ethical self-formation. What remains constant is that transgressive practices are a strategic means by which to uncover the relations between truth and power. But the change that occurs can be located in the implication that ethical transgressive practices open up a space for enabling forms of *self-power*, as opposed to merely laying bare the constraining power of institutions. This is not quite the processual ethics advocated by Habermas, or even Pierre Bourdieu,²⁷ but it does arguably lay the basis for the practice of a pragmatic form of ethics in which not institutional relations of power, but subjects themselves, identify and act on the boundaries that delimit their social and cultural fields. In this sense, transgressive practices open up a field for self-invention and the identification of the "evil" that tacitly underlies Foucault's earlier location of power and knowledge as mutually constitutive. There is, contrary to the view of some, no need for Foucault to supplement his ethical stance with a rigorously prescriptive scientific method, since his (now) quasi-nominalism prevents him from asserting such a strong ethical "program."

Section Two: What is Enlightenment?

Enlightenment and the Historicization of Kantian Ethics

The theme of anti-humanism, so prevalent throughout the corpus of Foucault's thought, undergoes significant modification with his essay on Kant's *What is Enlightenment?* Foucault - who increasingly concerned himself with the questions of ethics, freedom and truth - cautioned that one need not be "for" or "against" the Enlightenment since, historically, the Enlightenment has had a formulative effect on us all (Foucault 1984: 43). He believed humanism to be in a state of *tension* with the Enlightenment; the Enlightenment was a specific set of *historical* events constituted by specific power relations and epistemological presuppositions ordered around reflections on the limits of experience and the possibility of transcending these limits. Conversely, humanism for Foucault had been for centuries conceptualized as a *metaphysical* theme which has recurred throughout history in different forms and has been propelled by different sets of assumptions. Thus, "the humanistic thematic is in itself too supple, too diverse, too inconsistent to serve as an axis for reflection" (Foucault 1984: 44). This statement notwithstanding, the following quotation indicates the shift in Foucault's stance on humanism as early as the late 1970s:

When I speak of the "death of man," I mean that it's a matter of fixing a rule of production, an essential term, to this "production of man by man." In *The Order of Things* I was wrong to present this "death" as something that was already in progress more or less during our time. I was confusing and mixing two aspects together. The first is a

²⁷ Bourdieu argues for a form of ethical reflexivity, given that subjects are afforded an enabling, self-creativity through existing power relations. His reflexivity thus calls for a constructivist view of social reality in that reflexivity enables us to identify the socially constructed boundaries that delimit our view of the social world. In this context, Bourdieu argues that we can participate in the construction of alternative ontologies of ourselves (Schubert 1995: 1010-11).

phenomenon at a reduced scale: the evidence that in the various “human sciences” as they were developed and in which man had invested his very subjectivity even while transforming it, man had never found himself in the presence of his own “nature.” At the heart of the human sciences was not to be found the “human essence.” If the promises of the human sciences had been to allow us to discover man, they certainly hadn’t maintained it. But as a general cultural experience, it was a matter rather of the constitution of a new “subjectivity” through the operation of a “reduction” of the human subject into an object of knowledge (*connaissance*). The second aspect that I mixed up and confused with the first is that in the course of their history, men had never ceased constructing themselves, that is, to shift continuously at the level of their subjectivity, to constitute themselves in an infinite and multiple series of different subjectivities that would never reach an end and would never place us in the presence of something that would be “man.” By speaking of the “death of man” in a way that was confused, simplifying, and a bit prophetic, I wanted in substance to say these things; but it’s not that I believe I touched them thoroughly. (Foucault 1991: 123-4).

Foucault’s rejection of humanism was based on a repudiation of the abstract, “metaphysical subjectivism” central to humanist standpoints regarding absolute foundations of knowledge. As Christopher Falzon notes, Foucault here is effectively replacing the ahistorical foundational subject with the notion of a concrete, corporeal being who, through dialogue, recovers a sense of true humanity, implying that dialogue is not to be apprehended as something standing above the real world in transcendental readiness [Falzon, 1998 #378: 25-6; 43-6]. Such a reading of Foucault is focused on Foucault’s earlier view of the subject as a passive entity caught irrevocably in the tentacles of power and domination. However, what is left out of Falzon’s reading is how Foucault’s views on humanism shift from a strictly political, embodied humanism to an ethico-political, embodied form of humanism.

Foucault’s essay *What is Enlightenment?* calls upon philosophy to “take aim at the heart of the present”²⁸ and thereby inaugurate a new era in which thought takes the full measure of itself in the form of criticism. Critique must ultimately seek, he says, “to give new impetus...to the undefined work of freedom” (Foucault 1997: 315-16). It must do so if we, as inheritors of the legacy of the Enlightenment, are to arrive at a historical analysis of what we are and speak to the limits that have been self-imposed upon our subjectivities. Of crucial importance in this essay is Foucault’s understanding that Kant departed from philosophy as the search for universals to critique as the search for an understanding of the present “immature” state in which philosophy had found itself. It is also important that Foucault locates the cornerstone of Kant’s critique in the use of public reason. The importance of Kant’s question “what is man?” is that each individual is responsible for questioning the process of enlightenment and for undertaking attempts to go beyond the current limits of what is given in history. For Foucault, the work of critical ontology is both to reflect on the

²⁸ (See Habermas 1994)

contingent nature of limits in all of their historicity and simultaneously make one's life a work of art. Both of these imperatives speak to the capacities of individuals for non-transcendental self-legislation. It is an "ethos" to be cultivated, an ethical relation to the self and, as such, brings Foucault closer to Kant's own project of making freedom the condition of possibility of both judgment and action.

In spite of this, Foucault's summary statement regarding what constitutes critique marks his departure from the Kantian transcendental ideal of freedom. Critique, he says, should be

[a]rchaeological – and not transcendental – in the sense that it will not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge or of all possible moral action, but will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as so many historical events. And this critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do or think.

The goal of critique, then, turns not on the transcendental, but on the ethical imperative to *construct* the widest notion of freedom possible, one which affirms the *desirability of struggle* against limits [Cutrofello, 1994 #630: 26; emphasis added]. Here, we can see that Foucault is entering upon the ground of Kantian normative theory, for this is precisely the goal of Kant's transcendental philosophy. Had Habermas had access to Foucault's practical ethics, his observation that Foucault has "forced together the idealist idea of transcendental synthesis with the presuppositions of an empiricist ontology," would have had some merit. Foucault explicitly rejects Kant's view that critique must be governed by transcendental legislation. As some commentators have pointed out, however, the relationship between Foucault's transgressive limit-surpassing and Kant's transcendental critique is at times an ambivalent one (Rajchman 1985) (Hacking 1986b) (Norris 1993). As Ian Hacking notes, Foucault "was a remarkably able Kantian" who, like Kant, believed that we need to *construct* our ethics within the context of freedom (Hacking 1986b: 238-9).

At least up until the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault believed that either systems or political techniques of rationality framed the possibilities for experience. This was distinct from ideology which constructed sets of *beliefs*. What changes with his work on ethics is the idea that subjects can construct their own possibilities for experience through *self-legislation as an aesthetic ideal*. Whereas previously, the idea of human emancipation was said to be a thorough-going illusion of would-be humanitarian reformers, Foucault now opens up the possibility for emancipation by following on Kant's notion of critique. What makes this possible is a move from a rejection of a Kantian "analytics of truth" to a working out of a Kantian "critical ontology of ourselves." The emphasis changes from viewing anonymous power as working its way through subjectivity to the idea that subjects construct their own truth through self-creation. That is the significance of Foucault's study of Ancient Greek and Roman practices. In a seminar entitled "Technologies of the Self," he describes this process as "[permitting] individuals to effect by their own

means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thought, conduct, and a way of being, so as to transform themselves” (Foucault 1997: 225). What he means by this is that normative principles emerge not out of a humanism bound to self-determination through transcendental legislation, but through historically determined, embodied human practices. With this historically determined, embodied humanism, ethics becomes instrumental in opening up the space for practices of freedom. Moreover, individuals succeed in creating this space “with the help of others,” lending the view that short shrift be given to those who claim Foucault’s ethics are nothing but a form of individualistic “dandyism.”

In her work entitled *The Kantian Subject*, Tamar Jeparidze makes the controversial argument that the Kantian aesthetic subject in *The Critique of Judgment* is not, as is commonly supposed, one premised on an extreme subjectivism or self-identity, but rather is constituted through identification of the other. In this original and seemingly “paradoxical if not perverse” interpretation, Jeparidze argues that it is through this relation to the other, this “intrinsic dislocation” that gives rise to the constitution of the transcendental self (Jeparidze 2000: 2-3). What is strikingly similar in Foucault’s aesthetic self is that freedom does not mean freedom from the other, but freedom from the realm of *necessity*. In the case of Kant, this realm of necessity is grounded in a egoistic self for whom the relation to the object can only be a utilitarian one, a means-ends relation. In other words, the self-sufficient ego protects itself from empirical and sensuous influences (heteronomy) in the service of gratification of needs. Jeparidze argues further that it is *outside* this means-ends relation that the autonomy of the subject is construed (Jeparidze 2000: 8). In Foucault’s case, I would argue that freedom from necessity is freedom not from the other, but from humanist universal objectification and subjectification. But to make a claim about what a subject *should not be* is to make a statement about what a subject *is* or should be. As we have seen, Foucault’s subject is a creative, agonal one, but not one whose ego affirms itself by excluding the other. It is one whose autonomy can only be achieved through historical, ethical practices, self-creativity, and the help of others.

I will return below to the important question of the other in Foucault’s ethics, but for now, the question to be asked is: does it present itself as intellectual heresy to claim that Foucault offers a way out of the impasse between postmodern and modernist epistemologies? Ironic as that may seem, this is where his reassessment of the concept of enlightenment may be seen to lead. In an engaging discussion of how an “ethos” of enlightenment, *the Enlightenment* and modernity might be characterized, Foucault orients his own problematic towards Kant’s conclusion that there exists a “way out” of the immature state in which we - as “moderns” - have positioned ourselves. Referring to this impasse as the “blackmail of the Enlightenment,” Foucault turns to “problematization” and “permanent critique” as the requisite means by which to formulate a “critical ontology of ourselves” and, by doing so, overcome our infantilism and create new pathways to freedom. The Enlightenment may be seen, he says

as a set of political, economic, social, institutional, and cultural events on which we still depend in large part. Yet that does not mean that one has to be “for” or “against” the Enlightenment. It even means precisely that one must refuse everything that might present itself in the form of

a simplistic and authoritarian alternative: either you accept the Enlightenment and remain within the tradition of its rationalism...or else you criticize the Enlightenment and then try to escape from its principles of rationality. We must try to proceed with the analysis of ourselves as beings who are historically determined, to an extent, by the Enlightenment (Foucault 1997: 312-13).

The “ethos” that Foucault calls upon us to create for the realization of our freedom and autonomy consists in the somewhat fuzzy dictum of engaging in a “historico-practical test of the limits we may go beyond” (Foucault 1997: 316). But this “limit-testing” does not mean for him the task of choosing between “modern” rationalism and “postmodern” irrationalism. There is in Foucault’s writings no hint of the postmodern celebration of permanent difference (Osborne 1999: 50), for this would amount to an operation of reversal on his part; it would in other words exhaust itself in a political teleology through which the “end of history” is “affirmed.” Foucault speaks in this later phase not of *finalities*, but of *beginnings*. His refusal of the blackmail of the Enlightenment is a refusal to accept the limits of subjectivity within which we are presently bounded, but more to the point, it is a refusal to be on the side of “rationalism” or “irrationalism.” He urges us to speak not of an “essential freedom” but to engage in processes of ever-renewed “agonism.” And, while he consistently eschews Kant’s move to a transcendental legislation of (practical) reason in all of its universalist manifestations, he stays close to Kant’s project of reflecting on the limits that knowledge has placed upon our subjectivity. In this context, John Rajchman’s observations are worth quoting. Foucault, he says,

invents a new historical way of doing Kantian philosophy of knowledge. And yet it is with quite peculiar intellectual aims. It is critical rather than foundational, and as much ethical as epistemological; it raises problems about *freedom* with respect to our participation in the realms that constitute knowledge. Foucault is a most paradoxical Kantian – one who has managed to gain notoriety as an irrationalist. Foucault’s philosophy of knowledge is as much ethical as epistemological since it is applied primarily to “moral sciences” – knowledge that is about us or that provides us with certain kinds of conceptions of ourselves. In particular it is applied to cases where the objectivity of knowledge raises ethical or political questions about our freedom (Rajchman 1985: 103-4).

For Foucault, a “limit” is any given form of subjectivity which is conscious of itself as a thinking, acting, speaking subject. This subject, says Foucault, must not be conceptualized in apriori terms, but must be thought of in all of its historically constituted and socialized forms. And, this subject is everywhere a “free” subject since, where there are relations of power, “there is freedom everywhere” (Bernauer and Rasmussen 1988:12).

According to Foucault, humanism is a political discourse that is ineluctably tied to the forms of power it attempts to limit. Humanism, however, must not be confused with the Enlightenment since there have been, throughout history, many different forms of humanism. But it is modern humanism that has at once succeeded

in creating modes of individualization and totalization through dividing practices. Foucault now believes it is possible to transgress humanist limits through “permanent critique” and thereby create new forms of subjectivity. Permanent critique must begin, he says, with a “critical ontology of ourselves.” By this, he means an analysis and reflection upon humanist limits that, in the end, can be take the form of a “practical critique” that “seeks to give impetus ... to the undefined work of freedom” (Foucault 1997: 313-16). But practical critique, Foucault now says, must “put itself to the test of reality”; they can be only partial and very specific forms of critique since any attempt to effect either global or radical change can lead to “dangerous traditions” (Foucault 1997: 316). In his view, the transgression of humanism must begin with a historical analysis of who we are and end with “experimental” (i.e., partial and local) practice in order to grasp the precise forms change should take. But would not partial and local limit-testing lead to the potential for disorder and contingency? And, if it does, why would not Foucault, champion of contingent social practices and of transgressing political orders, embrace such a prospect? In the next section, I address these questions by suggesting possible parameters for what I have called Foucault’s “pragmatic humanism.”

Section Three: Foucault’s Pragmatic Humanism

Foucault, Dewey and Pragmatism

Foucault starts from the assumption that human beings are not Kant’s detached “rational beings” or “autonomous agents” who seek emancipation from corporeal constraints and overcome those constraints through self-legislation and self-sufficiency. Kant’s anthropological humanism depended on the “autonomy of the will” for the realization of universal moral law. He dismissed particular, embodied beings as significant for the realization of autonomy, arguing instead for the presocial, ahistorical being who is “prior to” all individual forms of existence. Foucaultian humanism, on the other hand, seeks to situate individuals within an ontology of lived experience. His turn to aesthetics, ethics and the importance of Kant’s fourth question, “What is man,” was a move that enabled him to demonstrate the possibility of a meaningful, creative and sensuous world, a move that is similar in aim to Dewey’s pragmatic theory of aesthetics (Joas 1993: 84).²⁹ Neither pragmatism nor the later Foucault offer guarantees about the future; all we can do is act intelligently in the present on behalf of the future, and in light of the past.

Foucault’s ethical “subject” corresponds more closely to the basic ideas of pragmatism in the following ways:

(i) first, a general claim - although Foucault does not refer to the philosophical current of pragmatism, the affinities between his attempt to ground knowledge in historically contingent practices and Dewey’s concern to overcome transcendental philosophy provide convincing evidence that Foucault made a turn toward pragmatism, though he did not in any systematic way apply it to his own genealogies

²⁹ Arguably, the impetus behind Foucault’s letting go of the notion of self-transcendence had its origins in a surrendering of the Marxist conception of self-transcendence of (bourgeois) reason and the adoption of a critique of instrumental reason with regard to the human sciences (See Wellmer 1991: 62-3).

of power and the ethical self-construction of the subject. It is true that many points of divergence can be found between Foucault and Deweyian pragmatism. For instance, Dewey's "instrumentalism" was one avenue in the process of inquiry that was designed to show how logic had an empirical subject matter: in other words, to show that thought had an instrumental function in establishing the consequences of actions. Instrumentalism is thus a theory of the general forms of conception and reasoning that can be applied to everyday actions and their consequences (Thayer 1981: 168-9). Nothing, perhaps, could be farther from Foucault's later views on the Enlightenment and ethics than the establishment of a theory of logic. But it would be inaccurate, if not unfair, to characterize Dewey's theory of pragmatism as a work of logic. His overall project was to determine the relations between knowledge and practice, and he took many routes aside from logic (notably, ethics and social psychology) in his attempt to formulate answers to questions of subjectivity. Because they take different routes to reach an understanding of the relations of knowledge and practice does not mean that the projects of Foucault and Dewey must be seen as mutually exclusive.

(ii) *"Inquiry" and "Problematization"* – One of the particular ways by which we can link Foucault with Dewey is to make an analogy between Dewey's "pattern of inquiry" and Foucault's notion of "problematization." The first stage in Dewey's pattern of inquiry is to set up a problem in order to determine its "warranted assertability." "Warranted" denotes an outcome that is based on the experience of some past action(s), while "assertability" is forward-looking; together, they make up something potentially applicable as a guideline for how to act. Dewey does not deny that knowledge issues in some form of action, but wants to inquire about the consequences of those actions. Is it not rather true, he asks, that "knowledge is instituted and framed in anticipation of the consequent issue?" (Dewey 1982: 278). Dewey insists that the only true object of knowledge is completed action. Knowledge is a process of activities which takes into account the problematic nature of present acts, focuses on the successful aspects of those acts, and creates a new synthesis as a non-apriori guide for the present (Shook 2000: 178). Earlier, we saw that for Foucault, both theoretical knowledge and practical activity were essential for ethical conduct. Foucault says that thought

"is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it meaning; rather, it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem (Foucault 1997: 117).

Inquiry for Dewey and problematization for Foucault are not given to us apriori, but are tools that allows for reflective activity, though the particular avenues through which this form of activity are said to accrue differ.

(iii) *self-aestheticization as ethics* – Making one's life a work of art is, in both Dewey and Foucault, cognitively-based, yet non-discursive. Richard Shusterman points out that, for both thinkers, there is a close connection between philosophical thought and the conditions of one's life-as-living. Dewey's pragmatism emphasizes

the practical, “life-enhancing” function of philosophy. Philosophy in this context is a form of criticism oriented around an appreciation of meaning present in experience (Shusterman 1997: 21-2). Similarly for Foucault, a critical ontology of ourselves “must be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them” (Foucault 1997: 319). In his later writings on ethics, he repeatedly stresses the politically relevant nature of philosophy as critique and links this with aesthetic, self-forming activity. (Foucault 1997: 264-5). Philosophy must not be conceived, he says, as having “dominant” or “sovereign” strands, but rather must be activity itself. In “The Masked Philosopher,” he justifies this claim as the need for “displacement and transformation of frameworks of thinking ... to become other than what one is” ; it is “a way of reflecting on our relationship to truth.” And, this has taken place in the social movements of recent decades; it is “the very life of philosophy” (Foucault 1997: 327).

For both Dewey and Foucault, the philosophical life is not simply a thirst for more knowledge, but is also aimed at the practice of living a better life based on the Socratic injunction “take care of yourself.” In the case of both thinkers, a continued commitment to an aesthetically based philosophy is grounded in a desire to integrate aesthetic forms with the actual contents of life. “Doing” philosophy thus becomes a process of self-transformation which must have coherence, unity, and possess meaning. For Foucault, this does not mean that “making one’s life a work of art” through self-mastery is a nonreciprocal project; we are related to other people who have also become masters of themselves. The question, says Foucault, is one of an “attitude,” a “mode of relating to contemporary reality; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task” (Foucault 1997: 309). Philosophy should thus be pragmatic in its aims; it should be a permanent critique of our historical era. He thus wants to reinvigorate philosophy’s importance for finding, for human beings, new pathways to freedom. Similarly for Dewey, philosophy had long hidden itself in “smug, scholastic professionalism” ; it thus needed to be more closely connected to the actual conditions of contemporary living to become an effective force for change (Shusterman 1997: 22-4).

(iv) *embodied humanism* – Shusterman makes the point that Dewey’s conception of experience was intended to displace the metaphysical dualism of mind and body and apriori conceptions of humanism with the substitution of a “naturalistic humanism.” The mind, according to Dewey, was not removed from the natural world, but was emergent with it (Shusterman 1997: 158-9). This is grounded in Dewey’s pragmatic view that the validity of truth-testing must correspond to some conception of physical reality. Dewey’s naturalism rests on the argument that experience, both cognitive and non-cognitive, is necessary for continuity. Cognitive justification is entirely linguistic, while non-cognitive experience is, suggests Shusterman, somatic. On Dewey’s account, immediate somatic experience, or the importance of the body in playing a crucial role in cognition and action serves as a guide for cognitive experience and theoretical knowledge. By placing emphasis on the non-discursive, non-cognitive aspects of subjects, Dewey believed he had carved out a new

dimension for philosophy, one that worked toward a reconciliation of the ideal and the real (Shusterman 1997: 168-72).

Foucault's anti-humanist considerations have analogical import here. The validity of truth-testing must arise, according to him, from experiential, historical contexts. It must come from a historical ontology of who we are as embodied beings searching for a relationship to truth. In *Discipline and Punish*, we saw that Foucault believed humanist political rationality to consist in the controlling of bodies. In these later works, his concern is with a history of sexuality, with how the care of the self was ultimately a set of practices concerned not only with the cultivation of the mind, but with the care of the body. Attending to oneself is a form of living and a form of experience which serves as one mode of relation to the self and to others. Foucault points out that the relationship between body and soul was of considerable importance in ancient times, but more to the point, his rejection of humanism rests on the repudiation of Kant's disembodied, all-knowing subject who must rise above all things corporeal in order to attain autonomy.

In more typically cryptic fashion, Richard Rorty makes the claim that Dewey and Foucault are not split over any theoretical issue, but differ over "what we may hope." Dewey and Foucault, he claims, make exactly the same criticism of the modern tradition; both agree about the need to abandon traditional notions of rationality, objectivity, method, and truth: "we should see Dewey as having already gone the route Foucault is still trying to reach" (Rorty 1982: 207). Because Rorty wrote these words without access to Foucault's work on ethics, his subsequent statement that "Dewey seems to me to have done it better, simply because his vocabulary allows room for unjustifiable hope, and an ungrounded but vital sense of human solidarity" (Rorty 1982: 208) is all the more prophetic given that Foucault's pragmatic humanism arguably may be defined in precisely these same terms. For Foucault, a sense of human solidarity could only be achieved by abandoning notions of a metaphysical self, substance, and consciousness and start to live our lives according to experience and criticism in "complex, but temporary, historical circumstances" as opposed to "inevitable anthropological constants" (Foucault 1988c: 156).³⁰ This was Foucault's optimism: that so many things can be changed for the betterment of humanity as a whole.

The above considerations can be seen as possible points of convergence between Dewey's pragmatic naturalism and Foucault's pragmatic humanism. There is on both accounts a recognition of *the experience of embodied human beings* as crucial for an understanding of subjectivity. In addition, the anti-foundationalism that is common to both positions goes back to the view that inquiry or critique is not intended to be simply criticism, but a practical necessity. Like pragmatism, Foucault wants to claim that there is not just one way of seeing things; ways of being are neither true nor false, but are a matter of a practical working out of *better* ways of being. And both Foucault and pragmatists eschew the notion of autonomy in favor of heteronomy. The disembodied (male) ego that is the cornerstone of humanist autonomy has been challenged by deconstructionists, feminists and pragmatists alike with the suggestion that emphasis on the body, on context, and the concrete be given

³⁰ From the interview by Didier Eribon initially entitled "Is it really important to think?" for the French newspaper *Libération*, May 30-1, 1981, later entitled "Practicing Criticism."

more serious attention. See, for example, (Benhabib 1987; Hekman 1990; Seigfried 1993).

Despite its erstwhile claims, then, the concept of humanism *can* be mapped on to local discourses. One does not have to deny the historico-cultural specificity of humanism, but nonetheless, one can reject the notion of a paradigm human being. To abjure Kant's dutiful, paradigmatic human one need not abjure a sense of solidarity among humans "as such," to use Rorty's term. Rorty's view is that humanism, stripped of its necessary and essentialist features, offers the best inventive way of co-existence among a diverse pool of cultural world-views. The wrong way to think of solidarity-as-humanism is to urge us to recognize it as something that exists antecedently to our recognition of it (Rorty 1989: 195-8). And, although Rorty thinks that Foucault's views are "useless" politically, he does believe that Foucault was attempting to recover something "deep within human beings, which [has been] deformed by acculturation" (Rorty 1989: 64).

Foucault's Nominalist Anthropos

One could reformulate Rorty's basic view and suggest that Foucault's strong anti-humanist stance does not mean that he does not take human beings to be unworthy of the *ideals* of humanism *per se*. However, instead of the transcendental humanist subject, Foucault's anthropology defines human beings as contextually situated and concerned with developing the widest notion of freedom possible, one that is not construed as abstract autonomy. Unlike traditional philosophy, Foucault starts with a conception of human beings as being created through differential historical experiences, as possessing powers of self-creation, as forming themselves in relation to others, and as emergent powers. There is nothing given to human beings when they are brought into the world; freedom, for example, is not a guaranteed state, but is "undefined" and must "put itself to the test of reality" (Foucault 1997: 316). Freedom for Foucault is both the beginning and the end of critique.

For Foucault, being human means having capacities to be liberated and improved upon. It is this growth of capacities, disengaged as far as possible from power relations, that informs his later writings on ethics. What is at stake is our very existence as meaningful beings living in a world, in a culture that should not be considered, as it was in *Discipline and Punish*, a prison from which we cannot escape. We need to get our act together, as it were, and fashion ourselves as ethical creatures faced with unfamiliarity and the contingency of history. Foucault makes this an *active* imperative, a *political obligation* on the part of humans; it is something that humans owe to themselves. In short, his genealogy of ethics is not confined to a critique of democratic institutions, but suggests an opening for new ways for self-creation; it is a questioning of the terms of democracy and suggestions about how we can better fashion ourselves within existing political configurations. We are only "free" when we can identify – through the pragmatic reconstruction of experience – the limits that shackle our subjectivity. Formalist anthropology is premised on a renunciation of the idea that, as humans, we possess an inner nature that must be brought to light in the face of alienation and other social and political constraints. In this sense, Foucault's anti-humanism is a strict rejection of anthropologism (and, hence the importance of his rejection of Marxism). But his own brand of anthropology starts from the nominalist assumption that human beings are both

particular and practical and that “truth” is not something that is external to our experience, but is something to be ever concretely achieved in the light of our experience. Seen from this perspective, it may be said that Foucault is never far off from Nietzsche.

Section Four: Force of Flight

Foucault's Declaration of Human Rights

In spite of the fact that most of Foucault's commentators claim that his later views yielded anything resembling a philosophy of the subject, they are at the same time curiously silent about what might be called his later “declaration of human rights.” The occasion for this statement “Confronting Governments: Human Rights” was the announcement in Geneva concerning the creation of an International Committee against Piracy. To think of Foucault as a champion of human rights seems fraught with contradiction, if not downright perverse, but in itself, this statement indicates just how far Foucault had circled back to Kant. There exists today, he says, an “international citizenship that has its rights and duties” who are “members of the community of the governed and [who] are thereby *obliged to show mutual solidarity*” by speaking out against abuses of governmental power. In response to governments that “arrogate themselves the right to pass off as profit or loss the human unhappiness that their decisions provoke...it is the duty of this international citizenship” to bring light to bear on the unjustness of this *collective suffering*, grounding “*an absolute right* to stand up and speak to those who hold power” (emphasis added). The shift from a will to power to a will to transgression is evident in his final statement that “the will of individuals must make a place for itself in a reality of which governments have attempted to reserve a monopoly for themselves”(Foucault 2000: 474-5).

What is to be made of Foucault's shifting of ground from radically nominalist conceptions of subjectivity to categories of meaning, duty and, above all, *human rights*? Or, to put it differently, how does Foucault's late appeal to a normative ground sit within a philosophy of the subject? In the first place, whereas his investigations into modern practices of power rest on a reductive principle that conceives of subjectivity as fully constituted and structured by the ubiquity of power, his call for the internationalization of rights based on subject solidarity introduces a hermeneutic element into his analysis by acknowledging, if tacitly, that subjects are endowed with self-reflexive, self-determined capacities that allow for an understanding of the abrogation of individual, as well as collective, moral rights. That is not to say that such an understanding is transcendental-collective in the Kantian sense. It is to say, however, that the quasi-universalism that creeps into Foucault's later writings rests on a thematic which has as its guiding assumption the notion of humanity as being commonly governed and possessing *mutual understandings* regarding their inherent rights and obligations as weapons with which to fight governmental abuse. At a minimum, by introducing the notion of a self-understood “international citizenship,” Foucault has led his critical theory into the backyard of a hermeneutic theory of subjectivity.

Another way to go about this is to put forth the suggestion that Foucault was in the end attempting to rethink the notion of individual versus (Kantian) collective rights. His pragmatic humanism might then be framed around the suggestion that collective rights cannot be claimed or accorded without first acknowledging individual rights. In other words, collective rights are nothing but an extension of individual rights. In the work of John Rawls one can find an elaboration of Kant's view that cultural rights – the foundation of individual rights - are important for the facilitation, sustainment, and exercise of individual rights. This seems to resonate with Foucault's later view that the exercise of universal reason (outside private ends) is "the business of the subject himself as an individual" (Foucault 1997: 307).

In addition to this, Foucault's insistence that we, as a human collective, have duties and obligations, places this late neo-Kantianism onto a deontological terrain. For Kant, the categorical imperative rested on the use of non-instrumental reason: that is, reason independently of personal gain or happiness. Duties are understood as requirements that rational individuals impose on themselves, and by doing so, are understood to be self-governing (Hill 2000: 228). The claim that Foucault entered the ground of deontology must be tempered with caution, however, since Kant's categorical imperative ultimately rested on the presupposition of the autonomy of the will in order for rational agents to understand and carry out this noninstrumental form of reason, an understanding to which Foucault did not subscribe.

Foucault's overall defense of human rights is precisely that; human rights *are* defensible, but the grounds upon which they may be defended need clarification. Humanism defends free speech and other rights as residing in the subject, as intrinsic to what it means to be a moral, politically responsible human. Foucault, on the other hand, defends human rights as something to be preserved through the construction and creation of the conditions under which agonal individuals and groups can contest and change those conditions which hamper self-creativity, non-essentialist forms of embodied identity, and struggle itself. For Foucault, then, "human" rights need to be historically determined; they arise out of revolutions, social movements, and other social constructions in which individuals and groups make demands on governments.

Foucault's new domains

Foucault, ever the *bricoleur*, stated that all of his books were "toolboxes," implying that he was always in the process of constructing, but also that academics and activists alike were free to use his ideas to further the work of the subject, truth, and freedom. His search for answers to the question of what it would mean to think, speak, and act critically with respect to ourselves when we do not have guarantees or rules that can be applied to all of us across time and space is answered by another question: what are the forms of rationality that secure our identity and remove restrictions on our possibilities? What, he asks, is the cost of reason? The great majority of Foucault's commentators have read his later work as pointing to a type of self-absorbed, individualistic apoliticism. These interpretations have, frankly, misinterpreted his analyses of the relations between subjectivity, freedom, truth and power. Even more frankly, such readings of Foucault are selectively biased. He does not believe that the only useful point of resistance to political power is in the relationship of the self to the self. He is merely saying that "governmentality" implies a relationship of the self to the self and that this covers

a whole range of practices that constitute, define, organize and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other. Thus, the basis for all this is freedom, the relationship of the self to itself and the relationship to the other (Foucault 1997: 300).

There is a rejection here of a strictly legal conception of the subject, arguing instead for an *ethical* subject who is constituted through practices of self-invention and in interaction with others. An agonal form of politics is a positive form of politics. One can defend human rights, but one first has to contest the ground upon which humanism defends such rights. It is a matter of redefining the battle lines, as it were; rather than relying on antiquarian doctrines of Being, we must engage in the act of becoming and create the social and ethico-political conditions under which individuals have the right to change the direction of those very conditions. That is where our dignity as human beings resides. One must not be for consensuality, for this would minimize the conditions under which struggle can flourish. But, one must also be against *nonconsensuality* since asymmetrical power relations can result (Rabinow 1984a: 379). The point is to free ourselves from such power relations by acting ethically, by respecting oneself and acting in concert with others so as to maximize freedom. Why should we tolerate present conditions and limits? Can we not invent new “games of truth” outside of those imposed on us by the various episodes of anthropological humanism? Were we not, in fact, in the process of doing so? How, finally, can the growth of our capacities be separated from the intensification of power relations? These questions are, for Foucault, the crucial questions of enlightenment. Such questions are directed at the heart of philosophy; thought itself should be experimental rather than secure, transgressional rather than representational, and ethical rather than juridical. As Thomas Osborne notes, it is a mistake to see Foucault as a “knee-jerk” anti-humanist; he is asking rather that, because humanism is given to us as an *obligation*, it is asking for the perspective of the critique of enlightenment to be brought against it (Osborne 1998: 135). It is the argument of this work that this problem, for Foucault, was an ethical problem. It is an aesthetic responsibility, if one likes, one that Foucault saw as a defining feature of enlightenment. And to act ethically is not to act according to a set of regulative rules and principles that we are all subject to; it is more a question of the constitutive role of ethics.

Foucault’s work is not something that can be appropriated in any straightforward manner. Osborne claims that Foucault’s problematic was not society: that “he had nothing to say on the subject of societies, on identity, or on selfhood (Osborne 1998: 127). But, just as he says it would be patently “absurd” to appropriate Foucault to the project of sociology, it may be said that Osborne’s remarks are similarly “absurd,” for there is, as we have seen, ample evidence to suggest that society, identity and selfhood are the very constituent elements of Foucault’s philosophy of freedom. Above all, Foucault was an able, if somewhat idiosyncratic, empiricist who urged others to build on the work he had undertaken. The relationship between philosophy and politics, he says, is fundamental (Foucault 1997: 293). And though he admits that he had not gone very far in the direction of thinking about the

care of the self as a solution for current political problems, he does make the assertion that it is possible, in the order of politics, to

criticize on the basis ... of the consequences of state domination caused by an unjustified political situation, [but that] one can only do so by playing a certain game of truth, by showing its consequences, by pointing out that there are reasonable options, by teaching people what they don't know about their own situation, their working conditions, and their exploitation (Foucault 1997: 295-6).

These "games of truth" do not, however, exist outside power relations. Foucault is not claiming that there exist states of communications that would allow such games of truth to circulate freely without constraint. As Jon Simons, notes, Foucault's desire to "unhinge" the analytical link between ethics and other social or economic structures needs to be "carefully qualified" since, in spite of his attempt to conceive of the care of the self apart from juridical and scientific constraints, transgressive aestheticism is deeply embedded in political processes which involved constraints (Simons 1995: 80). To say otherwise would require, says Foucault, a "utopian" vision more consonant with Habermas' high road of communicative rationality. Ethico-political practices and the transgressive arts of the self are more a matter of pedagogy, of teaching new skills and transmitting knowledge to minimize state domination. It is a "political struggle and respect for rights, of critical thought against abusive techniques of government and research in ethics" that is the ground of freedom (Foucault 1997: 299). I can think of no better statement to describe Foucault's pragmatic humanist vision of ethical practice in politics.

Displacing contingency: the forms of Foucault's self-legislative, ethico-political practice

Although Foucault "prefers" the specific transformations of recent social and liberation movements as opposed to the "potentially dangerous" and humanist global or radical ones that have taken place throughout the twentieth century, he now says, in a striking posture of reversal, that the work to be done need not be accomplished in disorder and contingency: that all ethico-political transformative practices have their generality, systematicity, homogeneity and stakes. The fact that Foucault specifies the presence of both specific (historical location) and universalist (the self-constitution of freedom through critique) aspects that constitute a critical ontology does not so much indicate a tension in his work as it suggests an overcoming of the Enlightenment dualisms that he problematizes. Critical ontology is legislative, but it is not grounded transcendently or anthropologically. I want now to turn to the four aspects of self-legislation that inform Foucault's politics of critique.

Stakes – Foucault says that the stakes of the work to be done are indicated by the "paradox of the relations of capacity and power." The great promise of the eighteenth century was the proportional growth of individual capacities something premised on the simultaneous growth of autonomy. However, these humanist promises have not been borne out by the subsequent history of Western societies; in fact, "the acquisition of capabilities and the struggle for freedom have constituted permanent elements" (Foucault 1997: 317). In other words, along with the growth of

capacities, there has been an increase in one-sided power relations, the goals of which may be economic, social control or techniques of communication, and that it is the intensification of these power relations that must be severed from the growth of capacities. In the context of identity movements, this may be seen as the creation of new skills and the transmission of knowledge outside the normal channels of the state. They may be upwardly mobile social minority groups attempting to go beyond the state and objective science but at the same time carving out a sense of status in a global, postmodern world. The growth of capacities disconnected from larger power relations may be seen as a culture-based solution to instances of domination. Such an approach is grounded in a process of self-invention and may be considered ethico-political practices which attempt to carve out a small, heteronomous space in society. Often, such movements must work *within* the juridico-legal system, but just as often as not, the entitlement of rights, including the right to self-determination, is clearly lip service on the part of the state, as we shall see in the case of the Maya in Guatemala. In such instances, identity groups must work for ethnic autonomy from within their own cultural revitalization movements to overcome existing constraints.

Homogeneity – Foucault is perhaps best known for his nominalist approach to history. This means that he has an anti-realist understanding of history in the sense that he is “singularizing” historical events as opposed to claiming that there is a one, essential way to classify history, whether it be the history of science, forms of rationality, or power. Because neither history nor transformative practices can be universally grounded, he cannot then formulate rules for the practice of critique. However, he now offers a new category – homogeneity – as a quasi-prescriptive frame of reference from which to negate disorder. The homogeneity of what he calls “practical systems” refers not to the representations that people give of themselves, but to the forms of rationality that organize practices: what people do, how they deploy rules and modify them, etc. (Foucault 1997: 317). In other words, he is suggesting that practices of freedom need a homogeneous, strategic element about them if they are to have success. Foucault here is pointing to the epistemic significance of political movements, an internal homogeneity that is necessary for the deployment of strategic actions. This is not an essentialist understanding of identity, but it is suggesting that these groups turn toward identity as something enabling, as something capable of surmounting, through shared goals and strategies, forms of domination and oppression. This is, one could say, a pragmatic approach to identity, akin to Gayatri Spivak’s notion of “strategic essentialism” which assumes identity to be somewhat of an illusion, but accepts the necessity of publicly advancing identity claims for the achievement of political aims, to bring to light the consciousness-as-self-consciousness of a group and to subvert existing identity categories (Spivak 1987: 205). If the above interpretation has any merit, it suggests that Foucault has moved a long way from Nietzsche who believed that strategic claims were not to be taken as true claims and that relations of power were the only foundation of identity claims (Strong 1996: 122-3). As far as identity movements go, strategic homogeneity need not be essentialist in the everyday usage of the term but rather a coherent set of strategies designed to reject actual paradigms such as racism, oppression and inequality. On the other hand, such strategies may be more positively enabling in that they work toward building an internal ethic for purposes of maintaining cultural

continuity. In both of these senses, it may be suggested that the form of rationality employed by the Maya be called “contingent essentialism.” In the final chapter, I will attempt to elucidate some of the more salient deployments of rational homogeneity among the Guatemalan Mayans in the face of ladino hegemony.

Systematicity – Such “practical systems” originate, Foucault claims, in relations of control over things, relations of action upon others, and relations with oneself, each of which entails the others. A historical ontology of ourselves must accordingly be ordered along three principle axes: the axes of knowledge, power, and ethics. Practices of freedom must then consider a systematic series of questions such as: how are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge, how are we constituted as subjects who exercise and submit to relations of power, and how are we constituted as moral subjects of our own actions? (Foucault 1997: 317-18). Another way to ask these questions is to ask: how are our identities constituted? What are the some of the ways by which identity groups seeking to transgress existing limits conceive of their histories, including their cognitive histories? What are the practices of self-invention that can work towards putting up or reinforcing boundaries that can both affirm the dominated and exclude the dominant? What are the ways by which oppressed groups attempt to achieve self-mastery? How, finally, do subjects constitute themselves as politically active subjects? The later Foucault backs away from earlier postmodern conceptions of the self in that he no longer believes that individuals belong to certain social categories. In addition, the notion of “self- mastery,” if it is anything, is the affirmation of agency, a crucial lacuna in Foucault’s studies of power/knowledge. How identity groups seek to reinterpret their experience and what the epistemological, political and ethical significance is with regard to their identity are questions that will be considered within the context of Maya identity.

Generality – Foucault’s final category for the organization of ethico-political practices touches on the theme of problematization. In the course of the history of Western societies, there has occurred and recurred general forms of practices and discourses that must be problematized, including the definition of objects, rules of action, and modes of relation to oneself (Foucault 1997: 318). Foucault is not suggesting here that political and ethical practices be retraced in their “metahistorical continuity” over time, but he is suggesting that there have existed certain general patterns that can be determined through problematization. Such a claim does not assume that identities are homogenous in the strict sense, but does assume that there have existed shared historical experiences that need to be analyzed in terms of their common importance. Thus, the question to be asked is: what are some of the ways by which we are commonly attached to our histories and our cultures? What are the general rules of action that we follow? How do we relate to ourselves and to others? Such assertions speak to the reducibility of meaning, but not to the extent that all identities have the same experiences or that common experiences will yield identical understandings. What Foucault’s category of generality suggests is that there exist certain patterns of shared knowledge that we can draw on for an understanding of who we are. It also refers to a sense of subjectivity in relation to our private identities and how we fashion ourselves as ethical subjects. It is, says Foucault, an “attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the

possibility of going beyond them” (Foucault 1997: 319). As will become apparent in the final chapter, Maya initiatives are attempting to justify themselves through an ethical repositioning in relation to their own production of culture and knowledge, but also in relation to the power relations that have succeeded in hindering ethical self-formation.

Concluding Remarks

The Limits of Foucault's Freedom

It has been suggested that the relations between freedom and ethics were what occupied Foucault's thought towards the end of his life. Freedom was for him “the ontological condition of ethics.” Foucault's ethics departed from Nietzsche in the very specific sense that Nietzsche mistrusted moral, aesthetic and ethical concerns as providing any foundation for truth. Unlike Nietzsche, for whom morality had no place in philosophy, Foucault sought to historicize ethics, and by doing so, found for ethics a central place in philosophical thought. But although he admired the pagan aesthetics of existence as ethical practices, he was quick to caution that this ethical style was not one to be emulated by we moderns. What he admired most was how the Greek world separated their ethical practices from scientific knowledge; after Descartes, he says, “we have a nonascetic subject of knowledge. This change makes possible the institutionalization of science” (Foucault 1997: 279).

Foucault's ethics are not a *tabula rasa* upon which to inscribe current practices of freedom. Certainly, his harking back to philological texts to discover how ethics were problematized does not seem to have much meaning for current forms of subjectivity. However, the similarities that existed between our present and the ancient past are instanced in how ethical practices, then and now, were and are of more concern than religious or legal problems. He wonders if our problem nowadays

is not, in a way, similar to [the Greek] one, since most of us no longer believe that ethics is founded in religion, nor do we want a legal system to intervene in our moral, personal, private life. Recent liberation movements suffer from the fact that they cannot find any principle on which to base the elaboration of a new ethics. They need an ethics, but they cannot find any other ethics than an ethics founded on so-called scientific knowledge of what the self is, what desire is, what the unconscious is, and so on (Foucault 1997: 255-6).

But just because he laments the lack of a non-scientific foundation for ethical behavior and practices does not mean that such a project should be abandoned; what such movements need to be infused with, says Foucault, is a “hyper and pessimistic activism” which would work towards supplying such a foundation.

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate that Foucault's later thinking on ethics, subjectivity, and truth cannot be gleaned from *The History of Sexuality* II and III alone. His own political activism, his interviews, and essays, including his statement on human rights, indicate that he was not advocating a form of dandyism as a style of existence, but became increasingly sympathetic towards the efficacy of social movements and the need for collective rights as a form of resistance against domination. Whether or not his studies of Greco-Roman antiquity tended towards

interiorization, his focus on the body - on the reconstitution and care of the self - is directed towards a conception of embodied humanism as a potential site of cultural activism and resistance. Sexuality and the care of the self are the current, positive forms of biopower available to us in both the struggle for recognition and against domination. Thus understood, Foucault's account does not assume that domination can be overcome by a totalizing conception of humanism; it was, in fact, humanist forms of rationality that have historically created domination in the first place. If we do not understand how, historically, the body (including discourses of sexuality) has emerged as an apparatus for the constitution of human subjects, we have little hope of going beyond positivist ontologies which make the body an object of scientific knowledge.

Second, I have attempted to show that Foucault's flight back to Kant and his appropriation of Kant's notion of critique takes Kant's negative critique and turns it into an enabling, positive practice by which the freedom of the present might secure its heteronomy. At the same time, Foucault strips critique of its transcendental properties, opting for a "historical ontology of ourselves." Critique for Foucault takes the form of a "possible border crossing," and thus the creation of a new 'limit-attitude.' This new boundary is in fact an enabling of the quest to break through the barriers of the historical present above and beyond the permanence that prevented positive social and political change. Critique requires imagination, reinvention, and experimentation. It is to leave behind the juridical model of critique since that would be to align freedom with autonomy, conceived as legislation. To resort to the transcendental would be to admit that there is a fixity attached to limits, but Foucault conceives of limits and historical and contingent. The goal of critique, then, is to promote the widest notion of freedom possible; in this sense, his methodological refusal of the transcendental turns out to be an ethical principle which affirms the desirability of struggle against limits (Cutrofello 1994: 26). And, although Foucault does not formulate a general ethic, he does posit an ideal of emancipation, thus tacitly presupposing a Kantian normative theory. The goal of enlightenment for him is an enterprise which should seek to link the progress of truth and the history of liberty "in a bond of direct relation," but this does not mean that one has to choose between the "good" and "bad" elements of the Enlightenment. Rather, we must adopt a historically pragmatic approach in order to determine not if, but how, we have been affected by the Enlightenment and how we can constitute ourselves as autonomous subjects. Our forms of critique must therefore be practical, as a work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings. Above all else, says Foucault, limit-testing must be practically coherent; and that coherence will be brought out in the process of putting historico-critical reflection to the test of *concrete practices* (Foucault 1997: 312-17).

I have argued in this chapter that such concrete practices are, in Foucault's later view, practices concerning the formation of identity and that this identity formation is instanced in one form of limit-testing: cultural and social movements which have as their defining agenda ethical self-invention. These practices can thus range from educational programs and the rediscovery and revival of traditions to engagement with global political and economic structures that are forms of embodied, pragmatic humanism aimed at the recovery of the self and others within communities.

They are, in short, practices of freedom. These practices required, Foucault believed, an agonal subject, one who stylizes the concrete possibilities which present themselves as practices of liberty. That is why, as James Bernauer points out, Foucault is far in the end from Nietzsche; his work would have terminated in “a splendid solitude, foreign to any form of human solidarity and sense of common fate” (Bernauer 1988: 71). In the next chapter, I take a critical look at a disparate body of literature – self-proclaimed “post-development theory” – with a view to exposing what I believe to be a pernicious use of Foucault’s anti-humanism.

Chapter Five

Rhetoric of 'The End': Post-rationalism and Anti-humanism in Post-development Theory

Introduction

A spectre is haunting the underdeveloped world and by the accounts of its *post-development* theorists, the ghost in the machine is Development (Rahnema and Bawtree 1997). Recent decades have witnessed a proliferation of challenges to mainstream development studies and policies – sustainable development, alternative development, participatory development, reflexive development and more recently, “post-development.” This chapter explores the metatheoretical assumptions of self-proclaimed post-development theory, the most radical approach to “alternative development”. It is argued that while this approach identifies many of the contradictions of classical Western development theories, it culminates in a philosophical and methodological incoherence that undermines its credibility as a constructive alternative. The example of post-development’s anti-humanism is used to explore the contradictory implications of its proposed alternative theory of the subject. In concluding, it is argued that this fundamental incoherence can be traced back to its implicit characteristics as a form of “ludic” postmodernism. The result is a superficial, apocalyptic reading of poststructuralism, i.e., of the implications of post-foundationalist epistemology (e.g., discourse analysis, deconstruction) and the orientalist critique of Western knowledge. Consequently, it cannot ask in differentiated and rationally justifiable ways such crucial questions as: what kind of alternative humanism? What kind of constructionism? What kind of post-foundationalism? What kind of grassroots, local movements? In short, despite its provocative normative critique of development, the rhetoric of the “end of development” mystifies as much as it clarifies, preventing it from elucidating a theory of the contingent and contextual conditions necessary for the flowering of the very humanness it would redeem.

By most post-development accounts, the subject of development is dead. Reason has dissolved into will, will to desire, and subjectivity to a language game that eschews consensus. As the dawn of the new millennium unfolds, mainstream development theory continues to come under increasing scrutiny for its “pernicious colonization” of knowledge in what was once referred to as ‘underdeveloped’ or ‘Third World’ areas of the world. The so-called “crisis” in development theory has been described by Colin Leys as being precipitated by the immense unleashing of market forces in the Third World, the failures of Marxism, and the concomitant inability of states to be the “prime movers” of development that had been the assumption of development theory. At the same time the power of social movements to effect systemic change has fallen short of their intended promise (Leys 1996: 7). It is in this void left by the crisis in critical development theory that post-development stakes its theoretical claims. The polemics of this challenge are organized around a “postmodernist” attack on the foundationalist and humanist assumptions of the

mainstream development theory that emerged in the social sciences in the post-1945 period. Both the “imperialist pretensions” of the Western development apparatus and the failed promise of Marxist alternatives have led to the disenchantment of development theory, projects, and practices.

This chapter is concerned with the metatheoretical assumptions, normative implications and rhetorical strategies underpinning such renouncements. The importance of this question stems in part from the way in which many of the most important alternative development strategies and practices, e.g., theories of sustainable development and related conceptions of participatory action research, often allude to post-development theory for philosophical justification (Becker and Jahn 1999; Rist 1997). The theme of this chapter is that post-development theory cannot adequately serve this purpose given its internal contradictions and incoherence as an alternative. What are the implications of a general disavowal of humanism and universality? Does social constructionism and anti-foundationalism entail skepticism and relativism? What should it mean to criticize “Western” science? How is local autonomy and knowledge to be understood? Are all grassroots, local movement of equal significance? The central thesis is that post-development theory is trapped within a methodological dilemma: it is either (a) an incoherent and defeatist form of ludic postmodernism that gives up on representing, evaluating and transforming social realities; or (b) or backs into a *performative contradiction* by persisting in conjuring up hope for developmental alternatives.³¹

The strategy of analysis will involve the following line of argumentation. First, I will take as an example of the post-development critique the broad, unifying theme of “anti-humanism” to show its significance as the basis from which ideas of progress, human rights and development are rejected. An analysis of the rhetoric of the normative thesis of “end of man” and a related radical anti-foundationalist critique of social science will be used to identify the central claims of this denunciatory strategy. Second, I will trace part of the problem of post-development theory to its multiple forms and varieties. Though there is a loose family resemblance that is shared, it will be argued that the result is a number of internal tensions that require differentiating quite distinct tendencies whose claims cannot be easily subsumed within a single, anti-humanistic perspective. Third, I will describe the poverty of post-development’s anti-humanism in terms of a series of rhetorical strategies that often effectively criticize existing development theories, but remain problematic as effective points of departure for alternatives. Fourth, these rhetorical strategies will be read as symptomatic of related tendencies of what has been described as “ludic” postmodernism’s disillusionment with the social sciences. Finally, it will be suggested that though the questions posed by post-development theory are important, they need to be reframed in terms of a more empirically credible and metatheoretically coherent alternative to positivistic and Marxian forms of foundationalism.

³¹ A performative contradiction refers to a mode of argumentation that in undermining the very possibility of truth claims, calls into question its own implicit will to knowledge (Jay 1993: 25-29). This involves a variation of the Cretan liar paradox.

Section One: What is Post-development?

“Post-development” unnerves. The term first came into use following the publication of a report on an international colloquium on development sponsored by the Eckstein Foundation in Geneva in 1991 (Rist, Rahnema and Esteva 1992). Its main participants, the contributors to *The Post-development Reader*, state their aims to be “subversive,” “human-centered” and “radical” (Rahnema and Bawtree 1997: xi-xii). In the words of one its anthropological adherents, post-development should be conceived as an attempt to invent “new narratives” in an effort to dispel the mystification of the development discourse (Escobar 1995a). On a more general explanatory level, post-development refers to a form of contemporary *anti-development* thought which rejects classical notions of development and other grand narratives of modernity calling for universal progress and emancipation. The underlying theory of action in post-development is one of radical resistance. Development theory is a “cunning Goliath” to the multitude of oppressed Davids (Rahnema 1997a: xv). Development theory is the perpetrator of “more and more chaotic and violent actions” (Sheth 1997) and it “stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape” (Sachs 1992a), necessitating the public exposition of those who repeatedly proclaim its “myth” (Esteva 1992).

Much of this questioning is compelling as a critique of hegemonic, neoliberal globalization theory. Post-development theory challenges the official discourses of development (the World Bank and the IMF are the main targets) and their role in defining the world’s “common future” (Commission 1987). The critique of post-development is framed around discourse analysis and the deconstruction of development texts (Crush 1995a: 5-6). The vocabulary of post-development is one of resistance, advocacy, empowerment and self-worth (Corbridge 1998). Development, in other words, has failed to live up to its promise of providing all of the advantages that go along with “the good life” as defined by a Eurocentric conception of modernity, whether in its capitalist or Marxist forms. In practice, the focus of post-development theory is upon traditional rural and largely agrarian communities given its general condemnation of industrialization as “Westernization”. As a consequence, the continuing concentration of marginalized, formerly rural residents living in urban ghettos cannot be directly addressed, even if lamented.

The following interpretation is underdetermined by post-development texts, which do not address all of the issues under discussion within a specific text. Yet, underlying this ostensibly postmodern critique are questions of a more general philosophical nature whose basic themes are often associated with poststructuralism: a critique of metaphysical humanism and related notions of universal human rights, e.g. (Escobar 1995a; Escobar 1995b; Rahnema 1997a; Rahnema 1997b); a rejection of the notion of the Enlightenment foundational subject; and reflections on the nature of language that call into question foundationalist claims to represent social reality (Crush 1995b; Escobar 1995b; Rahnema 1997c). Following poststructuralist methodologies, development should be conceived as discourse, as an interwoven set of languages and practices” (Crush 1995a: xiii) that is linked with a broader postmodern critique of universality with an emphasis on skepticism, localism and

relativity of knowledge(s).³² Vague identification with “postmodernist” and “poststructuralist” answers to these important questions runs the risk of being taken in by the hyperbole of post-development theory and its specific appropriation of such themes.

The distinctiveness of post-development theory lies not so much with either asking these metatheoretical questions or a of critique of classical development theory (projects shared with other tendencies), but rather with *the specific strategy of renouncing development as dehumanizing*. Above all, post-development’s uncompromising rejection of the development discourse is premised on a *rhetoric of “ends”*: the end of representation, the end of development, the end of Western, universal forms of “knowledge as power”. The implication here is that post-development theory falls back on an apocalyptic, Nietzschean call for the return to more authentic, and unspoiled forms of culture freed from the homogenizing and degenerative imposition of Western knowledge claims.

Section Two: The Pernicious Consequences of Humanism

A key to exploring the rhetoric of post-development theory can be found in its critique of humanism: the view that the humanistic tradition has colonized individual autonomous capacity to search for the truth (Rahnema 1997a: xii). Humanism has a variety of meanings, but what is in question here are the epistemological and ontological foundations of Western philosophy since Kant. The fundamental epistemological assumption of humanism is based on the opposition of subject and object. Modern humanism places subjective intentions at the center of meaning and interpretation, coupling this with then notion of a universal epistemological subject. This idea of a unitary subject endowed with a priori rational certitude has been, until recently, the central epistemological premise of post-Kantian thought. Translated into a theory of history, this perspective implies that the human species is engaged in a universal process of collective self-realization guided by reason.

In post-development thought, the “gospel” of universal humanism is condemned for its neglect of difference, i.e. of local conceptions of truth, justice and the good life (for example, (Rahnema 1997a) and Esteva, 1998 #304]). Post-development positions are grounded in an anti-humanistic rejection of the classical development assumption that local cultures will eventually reach a mature stage of development as cultures evolve and (rationally) embrace the economic and cultural practices of modernity, leading to the fulfillment of human development. From such an anti-humanist perspective, “[no] criticism can be global, but only local. Drawing upon the cultural resources of the particular society in question to formulate and argue its case, which is relevant only to the particular case, in the particular context” (Leonard 1995: 38).

The contributors to *The Post-development Reader* debunk overtly humanistic traditions such as epistemology, progress, development and socialism (Rahnema and Bawtree 1997: xii). Michel Foucault’s early, anti-humanist views are invoked along

³² The extent to which poststructuralism is said to be linked to the postmodern enterprise has been a hotly debated topic. In her recent work on post-colonial theory, Gayatri Spivak contests such a conflation on the grounds that poststructuralism does not, like postmodern theory, “kill the subject” (Spivak 1999: x).

side a Gandhian plea for a revolt against science and epistemological terrorism. For post-development thinkers, the Rights of Man and other universal ideas legitimate domination in the name of development, scientism, and capitalism. The unilinear and deterministic displacement of local knowledge forms through the imposition of binarisms - "growth-development" vs. poverty and scarcity, etc. - is seen as unjust and dehumanizing. The harkening for a return to a simple life offers a refreshing alternative to the "tyranny of globalizing discourses" with their emphasis on universal human rights and "needs" (Esteva and Prakash 1998: 199). The ontological matrix emerging from this "overcoming" of development takes the form of what has been characterized as a "neo-traditionalist" reaction against modernity. With respect to science and epistemology, post-development theory embraces a form of "neo-Luddism" (Nederveen Pieterse 1998: 361).

At the practical level, post-development accounts of Western forms of subjectivity are dismantled for their 'viciousness' and for hindering Third World subjects from coming to terms with their own "pain" and "powerlessness" (Havel 1997; Rahnema 1997b). Crucial to post-development positions is the notion that development is above all a normative issue whose foremost aim must be individualizing human, as opposed to economic, GNP-driven development. Post-development calls for indigenous populations to be "de-modernized" and to reject Eurocentric conceptions of "progress", and "civilization." Post-development theory does not hesitate to assume that, once the 'development machine' has been "smashed," history can be rescued and the knowing subject returned to a state of "true humanity," freed from the rationally distorting constraints of Western epistemology.

Section Three: Varieties of Anti-Humanism

The preceding characterization of anti-humanism could be criticized for ignoring the diversity within post-development theory and the diverse trajectories of anti-humanism. Though post-development theory cannot be conceived as a unified body of thought (Nederveen Pieterse 1998), it is important to consider some of the varieties of its anti-humanism.

Ecological anti-humanism: "man" as technocratic domination of nature

This tendency is organized around an ecological critique of the inhuman domination of nature justified by Enlightenment conceptions of progress and reason. The contributors to Wolfgang Sachs' edited volume aspire to 'tear apart the conceptual foundations' of development (e.g., "needs," "poverty," "welfare," etc.) and to "expose their violent nature" (Sachs 1992c: 4-5). This strain of anti-humanism points to a rejection of Eurocentric modernity as a whole and the idea of an evolutionary movement toward a world ecosystem which has reached a stage of homeostasis marked by an increased control over nature (Sachs 1992b: 32). Accordingly, nature is given priority over "man" with the realization that the "oneness of the earth" can only come about through the destruction of that which has survived the rise of industrialism (Sachs 1992d).

Postcolonial anti-humanism: "man" as European

Postcolonial theory is based in part upon a critique of Eurocentric conceptions of humanity, though it does not treat development issues per se (Sylvester 1999). The

anti-humanism of Ashis Nandy sees the split between humanity and nature as nothing more than an abstract idea imposed on Third World subject populations by Western forms of dominating knowledge.³³ According to Nandy, the political economy of Indian colonization was an obvious goal, but the Eurocentric, humanistic aspirations that were mirrored in the consciousness of both the colonized and the colonizers were the primary fertilization grounds for co-optation (Nandy 1997: 174-6). Colonialism sought to secularize the Indian population through a process of self-imaging, but this secularization was nothing more than an “Apollonian code of Western liberalism” designed to manage both overt and inner (psychological) dissent (Nandy 1997: 175). Nandy’s anti-humanism is organized around a futuristic vision oriented toward a change in human awareness and “ a reconceptualization of political, social, and cultural ends; by identifying emerging or previously ignored social pathologies that have to be understood, contained or transcended”(Nandy 1996: 637).

Localistic anti-humanism: “man” as bearer of universal rights

The Enlightenment goal of universal rights and human emancipation is deconstructed and dismissed by Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Siri Prakash as yet another example of the West’s unwanted intervention in developing communities. In *Grassroots Postmodernism: Remaking the Soil of Cultures* they proclaim that

[at] the risk of being accused of parochialism, cultural relativism or, worse yet, inhumane indifference to dowry deaths, clitorectomies, [and] gay bashing ... we want to explicitly reject all contemporary attempts to globalize human rights. Their moral and philosophical foundations are increasingly suspect to us (Esteva and Prakash 1998: 137-8).

Esteva and Prakash set out to demystify what they refer to as the “three sacred cows” of the modern era: the myths of global thinking, the universality of human rights, and the individual self (Esteva and Prakash 1998: 9-11). Finding modern faith in human rights to be “incommensurable” with and “dangerous” to indigenous cultures and perpetuating the “cultural imperialism of colonialism,” the authors decry the “Grand March of Human Rights” as the Trojan horse of modernity, the injustice and abuse to which all indigenous cultures must oppose. The autonomous community should be left to generate its own narratives from within based on nontheoretical, non-ethnocentric (i.e., non-Western) knowledge claims.

Nomadic anti-humanism: “man” as fixed identity

Escobar’s anthropological critique of development calls for a rejection of the entire development paradigm, not a development alternative, but “alternatives to development”(Escobar 1995b: 215). Escobar focuses on the hegemonic and monolithic nature of development, calling for the inculcation of “nomad science” which “stays closer to the everyday”, following events and solving problems “by means of real life operations, not by summoning up the power of a conceptual

³³ Literary postcolonial theory develops a similar critique of Eurocentrism, but generally refrains from drawing direct social and economic policy conclusions. See? Though Said pioneered such analysis in his Foucault-influenced analysis of “orientalism,” he rejected drawing anti-humanist, anti-universalist conclusions.

apparatus or a pre-established form of intervention” (Escobar 1995b: 223). The concept of “nomadism” follows Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri’s (Deleuze and Guatarri 1987; Deleuze and Guattari 1983) psychological emphasis on the schizophrenic nature of postmodernity and thus, on the absence of any fixed meaning. The time has come, Escobar proclaims, to be “human in posthumanist (post-man and postmodern) landscapes” (Escobar 1995a: 226). How the “human” is to be resurrected from anti-humanism remains obscure.

Each of these forms of anti-humanism raise such different questions that it would be necessary to evaluate the specific strengths and limitations separately. But what these anti-humanistic themes share is the belief that the “subjects” of development are the arbitrary, constructed products of development’s universalizing, Eurocentric and technocratic discourse, rather than representations of some sovereign, irreducible entity endowed with common, self-developing capacities. Such critiques *are* asking important questions. Where does the West get its justification in pronouncing that “its culture, its science, its social organisation and ... its very rationality [can lay claim] to a universal validity: is it anything more than a mirage tied to a domination and a political hegemony?” (Foucault 1998b: 469). Unlike Foucault’s more agnostic stance, however, post-development theories prematurely and apocalyptically draw radical policy conclusions based on problematic strategies of argument that cohere around the anti-humanist theme.

Section Four: The Poverty of Postdevelopment’s Rhetorical Strategies

Despite apparent diversity, certain common threads bind such critiques. In general terms, post-development abandons notions of empirical adequacy and representation, relying primarily on discourse analysis in the deconstruction of development theory and practice. In opposing the “subject” of humanism, a centerless theory is used to focus on the object side of the subject/object dichotomy (Dunn 1998:186). The resulting critiques, however, confuse key issues through questionable rhetorical strategies that make claim to be cogent arguments.

Conflating Opponents

The first of these strategies is to be found in the deployment of the term itself. Humanism is dismissed in a wide-sweeping manner without any consideration of the nuances of the concept. Theocentric humanism, Renaissance humanism, secular humanism, classical Marxist humanism, or contemporary critical social theory are premised on different assumptions regarding the status of the subject. Post-development’s postmodernism is typical in not differentiating among the various *senses* of humanism. Terry Eagleton points to postmodernism’s confusion of the four meanings of humanism: 1) an *ethical* sense in which human beings should be treated with equal respect and compassion; 2) a *sociological* sense which places structures as the products of human beings and not the other way around; 3) a *historical* sense in which “man” during the Renaissance became the center of scholarly attention, and 4) the sovereignty of the human over the supernatural. In practice, post-developmentalists like many postmodernists focus their critique on humanism as a doctrine which believes in a human essence or common nature (Eagleton 1996: 128-30). Thus, for example, when Esteva and Prakash dismiss the very idea of human rights on the grounds that “[our] grassroots experiences continue to teach us that ...

the universality in the human condition claimed by human rights propagators exists only in their minority worldview” and that even ways of breathing are “clearly culturally specific” (Esteva and Prakash 1998: 125-7), they construct a totalizing model of humanism and human rights and set up a fetishized and essentialist “identity politics” from which no multiple subject positionings may be discerned.

Binary opposition of alternatives

Second, such a conception neglects important critical, intermediate conditions that lie between the current universality-relativity impasse with regard to human rights. As Ann-Belinda Preis has commented, this stalemate has come about precisely because “culture” has been viewed as an impediment to, and something outside, the struggle for human rights. She concludes that a more dynamic approach to culture is needed if “the critical 1980s poststructuralist and postmodern work in sociology and anthropology must now begin to make substantial inroads into the analysis of human rights” by analyzing the specific “dynamics of human rights and culture in the (post) modern world” (Preis 1996: 297). And, rather than dismissing human rights or development as Eurocentric strategies of domination, it is important to analyze how the *ideology* of development is insinuated in local cultures (Pigg 1992). Contrary to such imperatives, much of the post-development literature is linked to utopian visions of a return to a nostalgic past where stories, traditions and folklore are spuriously credited with a form of epistemic autonomy that have no need for dialogue with Eurocentric knowledge.

Reinvoking representation

The primary method of post-development research is an ahistorical form of discourse analysis. For example, while Escobar rightly condemns the opportunism of development projects, textual analysis displaces social analysis, focusing on the language at the expense of the power relations from which these constructions arise (Little and Painter 1995: 602). Though post-development theorists rely primarily on deconstructing the texts of their opponents, they cannot resist occasional indirect recourse to empirical claims. For post-development thinkers, for example, the impossibility of development’s humanistic pretensions is instanced in two-thirds of the world being transformed into “poor subjects” in 1948 when the World Bank defined as poor those living below a \$100 per capita income (Escobar 1995a). Or again, it is suggested that competition in the global market forecloses the possibility of a balanced social organization where “solidarity, generosity and mutual aid” are the constituent characteristic traits of “true humanity” (Berthoud 1990: 85). But how are these contested issues about the quality of life to be comparatively evaluated? The UN Human Development Report has developed a more “humanistic” methodology for this purpose (UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) 2000); post-development theorists only offer slogans. Such an anti-representational strategy is indicative of a performative contradiction: the tendency, that is, to engage in a mode of discourse in order to prove its inadequacy and thus undermining the presuppositions of its own claims. (Jay 1993: 25-9). If one seeks to invoke empirical arguments, then one needs a post-positivist, yet *empirical* methodology.

Resurrecting the subject

The underlying problem with post-development's anti-humanism surfaces from its inability to theorize adequately the implicit, *reconstructed* humanism its critique implies. While drawing on the negative connotations of humanism as a Western universal construct, post-development nevertheless poses a *general* theory of anti-humanism, and thus fails to escape the universal ideal against which it sets itself, resulting in yet another performative contradiction. The force of this argument turns on post-development's insistence that, with the "end of development," subjects will possess a degree of control over their words, their own meanings and thus over their own lives. Paradoxically, *this is the very principle upon which modern humanism was founded*. Escobar at times seems to realize this in proposing that grassroots movements in marginal cultures can represent themselves in order to "unmake the Third World" (Escobar 1995a: 224-5). But this gesturing toward alternatives cannot clearly justify why Eurocentric humanism should be replaced with other forms, a strategy which merely arbitrarily privileges one form of unified knowledge over another without specifying their potential interrelations.

The rhetoric of resistance

The concept of resistance that is substituted for that of emancipation in post-development theory is tied more or less directly to Foucault's inadequately theorized notion of resistance as a refuge of ineffable creativity (Sangren 1995: 16). "The greatest political promise of minority cultures," Escobar writes, "is their potential for resisting and subverting the axioms of capitalism and modernity in their hegemonic form" (Escobar 1995a: 225). In Rahnema's estimation, the so-called "powerless" have a "real" power that is constituted by "informal networks of resistance" which ordinary people erect to counter the abuses of prevailing power apparatuses (Rahnema 1992: 123). And, on James Scott's account, resistance politics is the "building block" for more elaborate institutional political action (Scott 1997). How do the dynamics of resistance shape up in the totality of power relations within a particular context as part of a theory of social movements? Sadly, the post-development critique says little in terms of internal systemic relations or the various political strategies of resistance that are needed for effective social action. Resistance itself becomes an ideal, neo-humanist form of politics, but nowhere is it explained how resistance can actually facilitate counter-hegemonic strategies as a means for combating the dominating effects of development. In short, resistance is, as in Foucault, dramatically undertheorized (Taylor 1986).

Section Five: Disillusionment: Post-development Theory as Ludic Symptom

Though valuable as a critique of development's hegemonic discourse, the lacuna in post-development's decentering of the subject and critique of humanism undermine its capacity to reconstruct theoretical and political alternatives. Post-development eclectically appropriates themes from diverse poststructuralist and postmodernist theories, making it virtually impossible to engage in a systematic critique based on the use of a coherent approach (e.g., that of Foucault). How can we understand the origins of such tendencies? From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, post-development theory can be read as a *symptom of disillusionment*, an expression of the very crisis it seeks to describe.

Speaking on behalf of the contributors to *The Post-development Reader*, Majid Rahnema writes that they (the contributors) have, at some point in their own lives, “bitterly experienced the disillusionments intrinsic to such (humanistic) ideologies” and that the goal of the volume is to discern how achievements in the technical, scientific and economic fields “affect the human condition” (Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997: xii]. Much of the appeal of the more problematic aspects of postmodernism can be traced to this anti-utopian mood of “Generation X postmodernism” which is constructed on superficial, stereotypical, and totalizing models of modern theory and the Enlightenment (Best and Kellner 1997: 12). An important consequence of this spirit of disillusionment has been a selective appropriation of poststructuralist themes, especially the uses and *abuses* of Foucault. Though this theme cannot be treated in detail here, post-development theory is part of a broader tendency to appropriate Foucault as a relativist “ludic” postmodernist, despite his own insistence on being part of a counter-modernity that stretches back to the Enlightenment. Best and Kellner characterize “ludic” postmodernism as being animated by a cynical, anti-theoretical hostility from which no reconstructive strategies can be fashioned, and indeed, are not considered (Best and Kellner 1997: 27). As Foucault repeatedly cautions, *both* global and radical projects can only “lead to the return of dangerous traditions” (Foucault 1984: 46). Foucault can be said to promote what Best and Kellner call an “oppositional” postmodern position, one which seeks new forms of critique, struggle and opposition (Best and Kellner 1997: 26-7). This type of postmodernism does not dissolve into a nihilistic, cultural relativism with no opening for critical transformation. On the contrary, Foucault claims that any conception of freedom must be based on the *transformation of the theoretical critique into a practical critique*; that is, one based on an examination of the historically contingent conditions that have produced subjects and gives “new impetus...to the undefined work of freedom” (Foucault 1984: 45-6). By contrast, post-development does not aspire to a programmatic reconstruction of such contingent conditions. The paucity in post-development’s postmodernism stems, as Nederveen Pieterse points out, from being “directionless” as a result of refusing to translate critique into construction (Nederveen Pieterse 1998: 361). And even where it does point in the direction of reconstruction (as in the work of Escobar), post-development theory lacks the conceptual basis for a persuasive “posthumanist” alternative.

Section Six: Reframing the Agenda of Questions

Obviously, much can be said against “modernizing” development theories, whether Marxist, functionalist, or neoliberal. My claims should not be read as a defense of either Marxist or modernization theories of development. There is certainly more than an inkling of truth in the claim that proponents of mainstream development (academics, Washington, The World Bank, the IMF, etc.) are misguided by neoliberal, trickle-down strategies of industrial growth. The disastrous effects of many development projects and policies are well known and widely condemned. Moreover, the transnational movements opposing neoliberal globalization have documented some of the problematic consequences of the latest phase of

“modernization” theory, even if suffering from many of oversimplifications of post-development theory.

But a critique of development should not simply be a choice between fragmented relativism and a reductive universalism. Post-development’s paradox is that the more it multiplies difference, the more totalizing and universalizing its claims become. In this sense, it conjures up a reverse Orientalism. In short, the weaknesses of post-development theory point to some fundamental questions that need to be addressed more effectively by alternative development theories. The central theme of this essay is that post-development theory has posed important questions for this purpose, but that its appropriation of poststructuralist and postmodernist anti-foundationalist and anti-humanist themes remains selective, often incoherent, and incapable of formulating a constructive response to the problems it identifies. In concluding, it is instructive to review the kinds of questions that need to be explored in order to more effectively conceptualize a rethinking of “development”:

(i) *What kind of humanism?* Despite post-development’s professed anti-humanism, its Gandhian aspirations necessitate a reconsideration of the notion of humanism itself, a reconsideration that must avoid both the certitudes of Enlightenment humanism and the chaotic relativism of ludic postmodernism. Human values are neither a question of epistemological certainty, nor of directionless relativity. As feminist critical theorist Seyla Benhabib convincingly argues, as situated subjects, we still strive to maintain our autonomy *outside* of our histories, fictive meaning and “chains of signification” (Benhabib 1992: 214). A reconstructed humanism would open the way toward diverse, postfoundationalist conceptions of humanism, while at the same time preserve a critique of neoliberal globalization as the latest stage in the process of “selective” modernization.

(ii) *What kind of constructivism?* The human sciences must come to terms with the “linguistic turn” and the constructed character of knowledge. But post-development perspectives contribute to an overly textualized conception of social reality that obscures important issues. The formalistic focusing on textual discourse is distanced from the social, ideological and material realities of everyday politics. As Laclau argues from a poststructuralist Gramscian perspective, the representative process is all the *more* important for integrating what is increasingly becoming for the social agent an existence consisting of “multiple selves” and “unstable identities.” The representative process is crucial in the construction of democratic alternatives which must “multiply the points from and around which representation operates rather than attempt to limit its scope and area of operation” (Laclau 1996: 99). Thus, while a concentration on textuality is indispensable, the distancing of such issues from the larger social and material conditions robs post-development of much of its (potential) critical perspective.

(iii) *What form of post-foundationalism?* The anti-foundationalist, anti-epistemological stance of post-development critiques places the question of knowledge on the terrain of an either/or: *either* one employs an unqualified naturalistic positivism *or* one resorts to an anti-naturalistic hermeneutics. Again,

Laclau's views are instructive. His alternative to strong foundationalism and universalistic certainty is organized around a constructed and *contingent universalism*, one which both recognizes human rights as a necessary principle for radical democracy and avoids the problems associated with Enlightenment rationalism, or the deep-structural logic of Habermas' "domination-free communication" (Laclau 1996: 110-111). If such a theory of plurality and contingency were followed through in post-development, the political implications would then entail the freedom both from the constraints of an agenda-less, anti-theoretical localism and towards a reconstructed and pragmatic theory of representation which does not dissever the dynamics of struggle from political economy and the call for collective action. Laclau's alternative to either a pure *constructivist* or a pure *universalist* argument establishes a balance between both extreme forms of identity: "any theory about power in a democratic society has to be a theory about the forms of power which are compatible with democracy, not about the elimination of power" (Laclau 1996: 115).

(iv) *What kind of critique of Western science?* Post-development critiques of "Western" science tend to essentialize what they opposed, blurring distinctions among competing epistemologies, the varieties of Western scientific practices, and ignoring the pitfalls of "indigenous" knowledges and their potential abuse by local elites (Nanda 1999). These "critiques" call for "the end of science," for the curtailment of its trail of "disturbing odours" over the last two centuries (Alvarez 1992: 221; Sbert 1992) without considering the differing extents to which scientific practices are forms of social constructivism which change in accordance with new discoveries, paradigm shifts and their constellations vis-à-vis social institutions (Beck 1992) (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994). Post-development theory ultimately fails to provide a methodology for evaluating alternative technologies or how globalization privileges some forms of 'Western science' over others. As Ulrich Beck observes, this demonopolization of science "arises ... as a consequence of the *triumph* and differentiation of scientific validity claims" (Beck 1992: 156).

(v) *What kinds of grassroots resistance movements?* Paradoxically, most grass roots movements in "underdeveloped" societies pursue many kinds of goals that are repudiated by post-development theorists. Are local agents merely duped by "Western" model or do they have some understanding of the dangers of merely dismantling development? This contradiction is not surprising given its romantic reliance on the intuitions of local knowledge, as opposed to the complex relations between collective action and the reshaping of civil society (Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 1998a).³⁴ Post-development theory does not elucidate either a theoretical or practical alternative politics of resistance oriented toward understanding how social movements actually *transform* the dominant discourses and exclusionary practices.

In conclusion, much of the empty rhetoric of post-development theory is tied to the lack of a clear vision regarding reconstructed alternatives to the notions of humanism (and human rights) and its relation to social constructivism, anti-

³⁴ It also demonstrates a turn in Escobar's thinking from his earlier emphasis on nomad science and the problems associated with traditional ethnographic representation.

foundationalism, the critique of Western science, and oppositional movements. Post-development theory attempts to flesh out the implications of Edward Said's oft-quoted view that the West has produced the underdeveloped world "politically, socially, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively" (Said 1978: 3). The central contention of this chapter, however, has been that there are too many instances of post-development theorists dancing exultantly in the boneyard of the "end" of development instead of filling the vacuum left by its "death." A more pragmatic rhetoric, one capable of going beyond mere criticism of development's modernizing Eurocentric discourse, would have the advantage of illuminating rather than concealing the theory of subjectivity upon which post-development's arguments are ultimately dependent. Before moving on to current Maya revitalization practices, I look in the next chapter at some of the debates on identity and difference, including Foucault's own ethico-political conception of identity.

Chapter Six

Debating Identity: But who, “we?”

Introduction

In this relatively brief chapter, I want not to get bogged down in the quagmire of the debates surrounding the notion of identity, but to identify some of the salient sides of the debate that I believe to be pertinent for an understanding of Foucault’s late(nt) approach to the concept. I then turn to the debates on identity within the context of the Guatemalan pan-Maya revitalization movement which in turn will foreground the final chapter on the Maya ethic of resistance.

Section One: Identitarian Dilemmas

The concept of identity has undergone a paradigmatic shift in the past few decades. Once equated with Cartesian self-sameness or identity, the concept has become more fluid and multifaceted due in part to the postmodern emphasis on difference and plurality. The cognizing self, it is argued, can no longer act as its own warrant against uncertainty and equivocation, but is constituted as a multiplicity of identities. Derrida’s lecture “Différance” (1982) calls into question the Cartesian self-presence of the “subject as consciousness” by way of his claim that consciousness is not the absolute, central form of Being, but rather its effect or determination (Derrida 1982 [1972]-b: 16-17). “Différance” produces differences by negating fundamental binary oppositions, such as intelligibility and sensibility, and shows how they are interactively related to signification. The sign is a “deferred” presence; it does not merely represent an object, but relates to other signs that surround it (“there would be no force in general without the difference between forces”). “Différance is thus the name Derrida gives to the “active” play of different forces [Derrida, 1982 [1972] #570: 17-18]. As one commentator puts it, *différance* is meant to invoke the instability of the binary oppositions fundamental to logical systems (Gutting 2001: 298).

Realist Identity?

It is Derrida’s notion of *différance* that informs - if only tacitly - much of postmodernism’s conceptualization of identity. Identities are seen not as fixed and foundational, but are subject to a play of differences; they are seen as not simply being different, but as constantly relating to one another. Thus, one might have identities as a scholar, an athlete, as having a gender identity, and so on. On this account, identity is no longer shared (as in ethnic identity discourses), but is plural and often subject to the hazardous interplay of (representational) forces. More recently, however, there has been a concerted attempt to revive or redefine notions of subjectivity and agency as concerns the notion of identity, partly in response to the anti-humanist debates coming out of French poststructuralism. It was mentioned previously that a revival of a realist understanding of identity politics has made a considerable mark on debates concerning the formation of identities. Satya Mohanty,

Linda Martín Alcoff, and others argue for the reclamation of the term “realism” to highlight the epistemic significance of identity (Moya and Hames-García 2000). Alcoff wants to underscore the non-essentialist nature of a realist argument. For her and Mohanty *et al*, the concept of identity has no critical purchase unless it is given a material interpretation which involves “creative appropriation.” (Alcoff 2000: 324). But does one have to adhere to a realist account of identity to argue that identity necessarily, or, even desirably, involves individual creative appropriation? Is it not rather the case that, as literary studies and cultural anthropology have recently shown, appropriation is an important analytical tool for understanding how the potential clash between personal appropriations of culture and the intended meanings imposed on individuals by social discipline works toward both an understanding of social discipline and a subverting of its potentially negative effects (Frijhoff 1999: 96)? One *might* be a realist on this account and assert that there is something knowable about reality, at least if one’s realism holds to the view that “knowledge is contingent on a historical development of theoretical commitments that could have been otherwise,” (Alcoff 2000: 316-17), but it is, to say the least, confusing when Alcoff makes the assertion that infusing meanings into the real world (i.e., creative appropriation) does not require that one distinguish between “world” and “human” and that knowledge is not merely a process of self-reflection. Social identity, she continues, is real and not infinitely plastic, or merely linguistic (Alcoff 2000: 318). In other words, Alcoff is arguing for a postpositivist understanding of identity as grounded in relations other than those of domination, claiming that appropriation is the appropriate tool for an analysis of how identities can be formed *in spite of* social discipline, language, etc.

I do not think, however, that Michel de Certeau, one of Foucault’s interlocutors, would, were he alive, label his own approach as a “realist” one (especially one defending identity politics) since (as defined by Alcott) it was he who first introduced the term “appropriation” to describe how the culturally marginalized attain power through subtle tactics of manipulation and play. Certeau, a leading French (Jesuit) historian and ethnologist of early modern and modern “economies” of writing reading, and speech, originally deployed the term “appropriation” to denote how “practices operate on the objective forms of standard cultural or religious representations, and appropriate them in such a way as to transform them” (Ahearne 1995: 48). On Certeau’s account, the tactics of appropriation are a way of coping with reality, of surviving culturally in a sometimes dominating, hostile social setting. As Willem Frijhoff explains, it

permits to achieve one’s identity in spite of the structures of dominance. [Appropriation] easily becomes a byway, the secret route of a poacher (this is the image used by Certeau himself), always on the edge of some form of perversion of the established order for his personal benefit, well-being or identity. Although Certeau’s perspective was not at all directed towards minorities in history, one cannot deny that his theories may easily be picked up by victim groups who look for a theory legitimating their social inferiority or their cultural failure (Frijhoff 1999: 98).

The point to be made is that Alcoff and her realist compatriots are not using appropriation in the sense of a searching for inward-looking strategies to cope within a setting of dominating social structures; their aim is to illuminate the cognitive bases of identity politics, to point to ways by which to identify the normative and epistemological implications of identity. Their particular usage of appropriation is, moreover, drastically undertheorized. They reject the application of universal principles for the transcendence of difference, but claim that that we can negotiate identities through “shared activity in a shared context” (Alcoff 2000: 335). Such a formulation, however, seems vague at best; they reject the inner/outer distinction of the self on the basis of their conviction that “the word *real* works to counter a view that interpellations of social identity are always chimeras foisted on us from the outside or misrepresentations” (Alcoff 2000: 341). But, this is a long way off from Certeau’s view that the limits of representation are countered through everyday action on the very distinction between the inner and outer selves.³⁵

Interpellation and Surplus Identity: Judith Butler

I want to turn to an argument made by Judith Butler on the paucity of global identitarianism. In *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler 1997), Butler claims to adopt a Freudian-Foucaultian perspective on interpellation, or naming. To summarize, Butler falls back on a conflationist account of identity and subjectivity, arguing that subjection, as a category of identity, is paradoxical in that, while interpellation calls forth a subject which only can only come into existence because it has been so named, it is also the case that the same act of interpellation creates a surplus identity on the basis of which agency is possible. It is this surplus identity that can, on the one hand, resist identification, but, on the other, only because that identity has been established (Butler 1997: chaps, 3 and 4). We can, she argues, resist the power that constitutes us as the power we oppose (Butler 1997: 104). It is her (Foucaultian) view that identities/subjectivities are “subject to” external power relations. However, in the first instance, Foucault’s genealogical studies of relations of power focus only on the formation of the subject; he has little to say about “identities” *per se* until he fills out his account of modern subjectivity with an ethical dimension. At this point, then, it is a bit of a stretch to stake out common ground for her global anti-identity thesis. A second point to be noted is that Foucault himself is not overly concerned about the individual *psychic* effects of power’s oppressive identitarianism, although his general thesis admits of a type of social alienation due to the ubiquity and essentializing naming tendencies of power.

Identity/Difference: William Connolly

William Connolly argues that “contingency as opportunity” for the self-mastering of identity is an alternative way for people to interrogate the exclusions built into their entrenched identities. It is this “agonistic ethic of care,” he states, that allows for the interrogation of difference in the flight from the transcendental (Connolly 1991b: 14). One of the more salient points Connolly makes regarding modernist assumptions about identity is that, if one reads Foucault, Derrida, and others properly (as opposed to reading them selectively), one will find that they, along with other postmodernists, *do* presuppose univocal standards of subjectivity,

³⁵ (See de Certeau 1997).

truth, and reason. They then seek to problematize such assumptions so as not to “curtail thinking in the name of guarding the faith” (Connolly 1991b: 60-1). In other words, the point is to contest universality by constantly probing historical particularities so as to find ways out of the labyrinth of transcendental logic. There is in Foucault, Connolly asserts, an “implicit ideal of politics” with respect to identity and difference; Foucault takes as problematic a fixed set of presumptions regarding the naturalization of identity that is oriented around universal models of mastery and devises interpretations that will work towards countering such tendencies (Connolly 1991b: 62).

Connolly devises a conception of identity built around a critical analysis of fragmentation and the idea that an agonistic model of democracy points towards a more pluralist politics. The difficulty surrounding the fragility of identity, he argues, resides in the current universalization of the drive to affluence and mastery among states, in contending hegemonic sets of identities, and in the intensification of pressures for normalization, all of which produce fragmentation in that there is pressure to conform to established standards of normality (Connolly 1991b: 172). Connolly’s prescription for a corrective to the “abnormality” of identity is to identify the contingent and ambiguous nature of identity. Identities, he claims,

tend to congeal of their own accord into hard doctrines of truth and falsity, self and otherness, good and evil, rational and irrational, common sense and absurdity. Is it really necessary to seal them over a second time with transcendental proofs? (Connolly 1991b: 173).

What is necessary, he continues, is an itemization of the contingent (i.e., socially mediated) features of identity. Some of these features may be “entrenched” contingencies of identity. These features are susceptible to reconstitution, but most often are resistant to modification. For instance, “heterosexuality” may be an entrenched contingency; you may have acquired through the course of your young life the constitution of an individual attracted to the opposite sex. Such features become a sort of “second nature” that is branded into us and appear to be culturally organized, interiorized, and naturalized (Connolly 1991b: 176). Through a genealogical analysis of identity it is possible, Connolly claims, to reconsider those entrenched or branded features of identity and question how they are ethicized as natural and universally determined. It is at this point that a disregard for difference arises, for it treats another contingent identity as the “natural standard” that all must strive to attain. The alternative is to purge oneself of certain features of identity because they are unworthy of ethicization, but this, too, has pernicious consequences in that one establishes an ethically ideal standard which closes off difference. The solution, concludes Connolly, is to “work on the self” by converting an antagonism of identity into an “agonism of difference,” which works towards an mutual acceptance of the strife and interdependence of identity/difference (Connolly 1991b: 177-8).

Connolly’s agonism may be seen as an extension of Foucault’s views on identity in that he borrows on Foucault’s insights regarding the importance of ethical sensibility. Foucault, as we have seen, believes that moral codes are deeply embedded in social and political circumstances and that (following Nietzsche) no analytical separation between them is possible. At best, we can develop a critical ethical

sensibility to unmask and challenge hegemonic identities that are imposed in essentializing, often totalitarian ways. Foucault, it was argued, offers a positive alternative to existing moral orders through cultivation of the care and aestheticization of the self. Once we recognize the discursive and political limits that have been imposed on moral orders, we can start to think about ways by which to transgress them by making problematic their extant, totalizing nature. Dominant discursive practices strangle the possibilities for open identities through reproduction and legitimation; identities become fixed and impenetrable, placing limits on what we can say, do and think as living beings. The only way out of such a bounded space is through transgressive political action.

The foreclosure of alternative ways of being is inherently evil, according to Connolly (Connolly 1993). He finds in Foucault's ethics a damning critique of the covert evilness of conventional politics as consisting not in

actions by immoral agents who freely transgress the moral law but evil as arbitrary cruelty installed in regular institutional arrangements taken to embody the Law, the Good, or the Normal (Connolly 1993: 366).

Connolly builds on Foucault's views on ethical sensibility through the notion of "purpose." The four purposes of an ethical sensibility are, for him, a) to expose the arbitrariness of hegemonic identities and the defining lines of otherness through which their own self-certainty is assured; b) to destabilize existing moral orders that house fixed identities so as to mitigate the dependent uncertainty and generalized resentment that has arisen in late modern societies; c) to create a Nietzschean "pathos of distance" - that is, a relationship of mutual recognition - whereby a space unfolds in which differing, often conflicting moral and ethical perspectives meet in an ethos of mutual respect, in part because the relationship exposes contingency in the being of both; and d) to call into question theories of intrinsic identity which suppress the contingent and constructed character of identity and go some way towards articulating the political ideals inspiring positive alternatives (Connolly 1993: 373).

Connolly finds in Foucault and Nietzsche an "unsurpassed" use of the genealogical method which goes some distance towards contesting essentialist notions of identity and otherness and introduces an agonal care for difference. An agonal conception of politics suggests that we cultivate contestation as a way to retain difference and get around essentialist notions of identity. Such a method, according to Connolly, is not "nihilistic," or, if it *is* taken to be, it is, he says, through the eyes of one attempting to secure a transcendental moral argument. But what is important with regard to the efficacy of genealogy is that it can work towards an attenuation of the gaps between social standards of identity and some of the more subversive orientations of life that come into conflict with the identities ascribed to them. It allows, in other words, for self-reflection on the contingent features of identity (Connolly 1991b: 182-3). Such a genealogical approach is not meant to construct a new ethic "from scratch," but rather seeks to make a difference by penetrating already established, permeated ethical codes.

Connolly, however, locates a lacuna in Foucault's Nietzschean-appropriated approach to politics. Connolly's own post-Nietzschean political theory takes into account Nietzsche's double-faceted view of life as both tragic and as being founded

on a nontheistic reverence which, combined, provide a “human basis for agonistic care and self-limitation” (Connolly 1991b: 185). Connolly, however, brackets Nietzsche’s view that we should leave behind the majority of humans who continue to be consumed by resentment and strive to create a few “overmen” in order to create a new type of humanity. It is no longer possible, he says, to preserve this form of struggle, one where a select few live on the margins of social life and recognize that existential suffering is a precondition of wisdom; the late modern era is one in which “the social fabric of interdependencies and conflicts is now too tightly woven” (Connolly 1991b: 186-8). Connolly’s summary argument is a call for a more participatory conception of citizenship in which there is wider access to politics for the marginalized (Deveau 1999: 14). Through agonistic sociocritique, he argues, we can at least lay bare routinized institutional injustices. One can respect adversaries while at the same time engaging, resisting and challenging them.

The lacuna in Connolly’s own argument is his failure to formalize his insights regarding the desirability of a union between agonism and pluralism. He does not include in his analysis of identity and difference any suggestions about how agonistic institutions, for example, might work to either foster or undercut wider participation in communities, nor does he specify how we might identify *who* has meaningful access to political institutions (Deveau 1999: 14) or how marginalized individuals or groups construct agonistic care for themselves and enact its various forms, and whether such enactments are successful in broadening the democratic scope. I agree that aesthetic self-fashioning can work some distance toward challenging hegemonic spaces by interrupting the pattern upon which dominant patterns of identity depend (Honig 1993b: 532), but, at the same time there must be further specification regarding the actual construction of agonal forms of resistance. In spite of this, Connolly’s commitment to a critique of entrenched, universal identities is a timely and important one.

Section Two: Identity Formation and the Ethics of Political Conduct

To claim that Foucault refused to entertain, much less conceptualize, the notion of “identity” because of its essentializing tendencies is to miss the point of a crucial set of arguments he makes regarding the constitution of the subject, the transgression of limits, and the care of the self. Among his reflections concerning what drives the “spirit” of enlightenment, he makes reference not to a “fixed” anthropocentric identity grounded in notions of utopian progress and bestowed with rights, but rather to an on-going process of *self-invention*, *creativity* and *the will to transformation*. As we saw earlier, Foucault moved from the will to knowledge that informed his archaeological investigations into the status of the human sciences to the will to power that guided his genealogical analyses of modern power regimes and the ubiquity by which subjects were negatively formed. Ethical self-creation, he argues, is a new way of refusing to be what we are. It is a new way of practicing politics, practices that are progressive in that they suspend, overcome and supercede negative forms of power. But in his view, this movement of supercession is less a matter of devotion to the doctrinal dictates of transcendental humanism than it is an ethical stylization of political practices in their “singularity.” The genealogical axis along which we constitute ourselves as moral agents must lead to a working over of the

substance of our ethics; it involves above all techniques of “self-forming activity” (Foucault 1997: 262-5). But it is not just that, for, if it were, there would be no general basis upon which Foucault could conceptualize any notion of identity politics that would relate to his ethics. On its own, self-forming activity is not enough to resist normalizing power; it needs to be supplemented with some quasi- normative ground in order to make resistance possible, as many of Foucault’s critics have pointed out (Taylor, Habermas, Fraser, etc.). I want to argue that Foucault *does* supplement his individualistic ethics with a normative ground and that this can be discerned by making a distinction between his changing conceptions of “freedom” and “liberation.”

Ethical self-formation as a practice of freedom and liberation

Foucault claims he is “always somewhat suspicious” of the notion of liberation because it implies that there is on all levels - historical, social, political and economic - some fixed essence that, once escaped, will enable “man” to be reconciled with himself, rediscover his nature, or regain contact with his origin” (Foucault 1997: 282). And, while he prefers to speak of freedom in a more individualistic sense, he is not discarding altogether either the idea or the force of liberation movements. This can be demonstrated by a more careful reading of his views in relation to self-aestheticization as something that must be fashioned outside of existing humanist codes. But, just because Foucault wants to separate out ethics from scientific knowledge, it does not mean that he views the ethical life apart from *political* contexts. Critics and sympathizers alike have suggested that Foucault’s turn to ethics was an abandonment of the radical transgressive limit-experiences he had advocated earlier and an opting for the return to a form of non-political self-stylization. (Miller 1993: 318) (Simons 1995: 72). In other words, he gave up on the notion of political resistance to domination. But these claims do an injustice to Foucault’s insistence that the subject, even the private, ethical subject, is formed in relation to “games of truth” that “take the form of a science ... or such as those one may encounter in institutions or practices of control” (Foucault 1997: 281). His proposal that we, as individuals, make our own life a work of art, can be connected to three overlapping themes: self-government, political transgression and freedom. In the “Introduction” to *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault says that “the studies that follow [were] a philosophical exercise [whose] object was to learn to what extent the effort to think one’s own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently” (Foucault 1986: 9). The “games of truth” which involve the practice of self-formation that Foucault now talks about, while conceived apart from coercive practices, are nonetheless intrinsically linked to the ongoing contestation for freedom from practices of subjectivation. This exemplary model of self-government, or ethical self-formation, that he finds to be ideally instantiated in the practices of the ancient Greeks is one that is constructed around the *individual’s* attempts to be creative outside of normalized institutional practices and should not be confused with *collective*, political practices of liberation, but he *is* saying that that such practices of liberation need to be *augmented* with individualistic practices of self-evaluation, self-knowledge, and self-mastery, i.e., practices of freedom.

With the exception of a very few, most of Foucault’s commentators make the claim that because Foucault’s work on ethics was so completely separate from his

epistemological and political/power studies, and because he consistently eschewed essentialist notions of collective identity, his ethics do not go far enough in establishing affirmative grounds for collective action.³⁶ But a more careful reading of Foucault reveals that the potential for resistance comes not from an individualistic bid for self-mastery and freedom alone, nor merely from existing collective practices of liberation, but, together, make up the transgressive or *emancipatory* potential of modern, subjugated subjects:

I am not trying to say that liberation as such ... does not exist. When a colonized people attempts to liberate itself from its colonizers, this is indeed a practice of liberation in the strict sense. But we know very well ... that this practice of liberation is not in itself sufficient to define the practices of freedom that will still be needed if this people, this society, and these individuals are to be able to define admissible and acceptable forms of existence or political society. The analyses I am trying to make bear essentially on relations of power. (Foucault 1997: 282-3).

Thus, it is a bilateral union of practices of freedom *and* liberation that pave the way for the transgression of the various forms of humanist political rationality. Freedom “requires a certain degree of liberation”; it is not something that can be ethically self-attained without the processes of liberation “paving the way for new power relationships, which must be controlled by practices of freedom (Foucault 1997: 283-4).

To this, it may be objected that “transgression” does not affirm anything enabling; that is, for Foucault, the function of transgression is not to *overcome* limits, but to affirm them by a “crossing over.” If this is so, what, then, would be the motor of historical change? If, by transgression, we simply affirm the existence of limits rather than negating them, what is left is a view of history in which events appear to lie alongside each other in a bed of neutrality and synchronicity. Indeed, this was a problem with Foucault’s *epistemes* and *dispositifs*. Without contestation of existing limits, without the negative force that would possess the potential for the transformation of the existing socio-political order, alterity was an unattainable goal. Even in his studies of the history of sexuality, sexuality is seen as an ensemble or series of affirmations of historical and social experiences of sexuality, and thus, there was not need to set them up against the reality of a thing in itself. In this sense, sex is nothing more than the set of its assertions, and thus, the “truth” of sex is only to be found in the historical succession of affirmations (Macherey 1992: 186). But it must be remembered that the anti-humanism that emerged among French poststructuralists in the 1960s has to be set against Hegel’s totalizing dialectic in which the other is conceived in essentially negative terms relative to the self, resulting in a metaphysical subsumption of the other to the self (Falzon 1998: 42). I conceive of Foucault’s notion of transgression as more of an open-ended process of interaction among

³⁶ For example, Thomas McCarthy makes the claim that, by softening his earlier holistic stance, Foucault finally enables us to see the possibilities for resistance that were only inherent in his power/knowledge phase, but that he has gone “too far in the opposite direction and replaced it with an individualistic bias” (McCarthy 1994: 268).

embodied beings in social and cultural contexts. He does not take what Nietzsche called “metaphysical comfort” in eschatological doctrines; for him there is no knowledge of the Absolute for this is a type of humanism that cannot be tolerated, much less defended.³⁷ Whereas Hegel believed that historical progress was a rational process that would result in the realization of human freedom through dialectical negation, Foucault sought transformative potential in Bataille’s concept of transgression. It must be remembered, too, that Bataille considered himself to be “Kojévian-Hegelian,” and thus, as it has been suggested, Foucault’s use of the concept of transgression can be seen, from a genealogical perspective, to be Hegelian (Miller 1999).³⁸

In a later interview conducted in Toronto in 1982 (“Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity”), Foucault makes it clear that the possibilities for resistance and emancipation are not just a matter of the ethical self-stylization of the individual, but that such practices might at times be conceived in terms of collective power relations in the form of identity politics which is one of the possible ways by which we can change existing power relationships; it is a “creative process; to create and recreate, to change the situation, actually to be an active member of that process” (Foucault 1997: 166-8). What has happened since the 1960s is that there has been a decolonization of power due to the political innovation and political experimentation of social movements (Foucault 1997: 172-3). The criticisms of Habermas and those associated with the Frankfurt School, along with others who attempt a more sympathetic reading of Foucault’s ethics, are thus missing a crucial point when they claim that he does not supply an adequate normative framework for critical social inquiry in light of his highly individualistic care of the self (McCarthy 1994: 272). However, while Foucault says that ethics is “the conscious practice of freedom,” and that freedom is “the ontological condition of ethics,” he is not claiming that *our* ethics are *synonymous* with the care of the self, but that this was the case with the Greek ethos which was “a way of being ... this was the way they problematized their freedom” and “freedom was thus inherently political” (Foucault 1997: 286). To claim that Foucault distanced his ethics from the political misses the mark in many respects. As one commentator puts it, Foucault believed that it is only by recognizing the political/discursive limitations of ethical sensibility that we can begin to search for a different, more cautious approach to a grounding for ethical action (Schubert 1995: 1008). And, as Deleuze notes, it was necessary for Foucault to develop a “third axis” outside power and knowledge in order to demonstrate how it is possible to transgress the limits that have been imposed on subjects; power and knowledge were shown to

³⁷ As Frederick Beiser notes, metaphysics for Hegel was rational knowledge of the absolute but that his definition of the absolute was a naturalistic one, that is one which did not concern itself with the supernatural, questions of God, etc. The absolute was the universe-itself and not its cause. Hegel’s metaphysics therefore is not one grounded in notions of the unattainable supernatural, but rather was grasped as a form of scientific naturalism (Beiser 1993: 8).

³⁸ Alexandre Kojève, along with Foucault’s mentor Jean Hyppolite, was instrumental in initiating the Hegelian “renaissance” in France during the 1930s. Prominent postwar intellectuals such as Raymond Aron, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Georges Bataille, and Jacques Lacan regularly attended Kojève’s lectures. His writings laid the basis for a class-based Marxist interpretation of Hegel. As Eve Tavor Bannet notes, Kojève’s interpretation of Hegel’s master-slave dialectic became fundamental to the thinking of the whole French left (Bannet 1989: 232) See also (Hirsh 1982: 13-15).

be repressive in all of their modern historical configurations. There is arguably something to Deleuze's claim that the recovery of the self was present all along in Foucault's thought: that he had to bring forth this third axis "by assuming a certain distance, and so being able to circle back on the other two," "untangle," and "re-center" the ethical self that had "remained hidden" and was finally brought out in the "Introduction" of *The Use of Pleasure* (Deleuze 1988: 96). In other words, Foucault did not "drop" the power/knowledge axis from his analyses of contemporary culture, but merely added a third axis, "a critical ontology of ourselves" to round out his investigations into what has constituted us as modern subjects.

The Ethical Subject and the Other

In Foucault's view, the care of the self always takes into account the other, but only does so when the self takes care of itself first: "The care of the self always aims for the well-being of others; it aims to manage the space of power that exists in all relationships, but to manage it in a nonauthoritarian manner" and that this form of the care of the self – care for oneself and for others – can be understood as a conversion of power, "as a way of limiting and controlling power" (Foucault 1997: 287-8). Here, for perhaps the first time, Foucault enters upon the ground of a philosophy of the subject. In keeping with his anti-essentialism, he still maintains that the subject is "not a substance," but is rather a form that has been historically constituted on various levels. But, unlike the subject who was the passive object of knowledge, either in strictly epistemological terms or as docile object of humanist political rationality, Foucault's new subject is, he says, an active one.

Critics such as David Hiley and Jon Simons claim that Foucault's concern with practices of the self and self-creation are not consonant with the notion of community, and thus exclude the political (Hiley 1985: 78-80) (Simons 1995: 102). But Foucault's active subject, as he makes clear, cannot be divorced from its own society; the practices of self-invention "are models that he finds in his culture, and are proposed, suggested, and imposed on him by his culture, his society, and his social group" (Foucault 1997: 291). In another striking reversal of posture, he cites with approval the liberation movements of the 1970s, adding that we need to go even further:

I think that one of the factors of this stabilization will be the creation of new forms of life, relationships, friendships in society, art, culture, and so on through our sexual, ethical, and political choices. Not only do we have to defend ourselves, not only affirm ourselves, as an identity but as a creative force (Foucault 1997: 164).

When Foucault says that the ethics of the concern for the self are in themselves practices of freedom, his is not saying, as is commonly attributed to him, that there is no resistance against power. Freedom is not simply a matter of self-aestheticization; but where there are *power relations*, i.e., between two or more individuals, there is the freedom to resist. It must be remembered at this point that Foucault is not interested in establishing a universal solution to the problem of freedom. His is more concerned to introduce a sense of struggle for freedom that arises out of the interactions one has with others in particular socio-political configurations.

One way to go about addressing this question further is to detect, as does Thomas Osborne, a kind of “theory of right” in Foucault’s later work, one grounded not in traditional naturalist conceptions, but in our status as *governed* beings. He notes that, for Foucault,

it is not our rights that confer duties on those who govern but the fact that there is government that makes it imperative that those who are governed should seek to elaborate their relations with government in the form of a particular stylisation of rights. This is not really moral solidarity but an ethical or perhaps, stretching our topic a little, an aesthetic solidarity – one that has to be produced, stylised, singularized (Osborne 1999: 53).

If this line of argument is pushed through, it might be suggested that it is just such a stylization of the will to transformation, conceived as self-legislation, that places Foucault’s ethics on the ground of the philosophy of the subject, or perhaps more appropriately, a philosophy of subjectivity. Kant, it is commonly argued, conceived autonomy as the capacity for self-legislation in moral matters, a definition that is indebted to two propositions. The first of these is the view that no authority outside ourselves is needed to fulfill our moral requirements since such requirements are those which we impose upon ourselves. The second component is that in self-government we legislate ourselves according to the mandates of the “ought” : to act in accordance with self-imposed obligations (Schneewind 1992: 309-10). Such are the constituent elements of autonomy, it is argued, and their necessity ensures that there will exist a minimum of paternalistic, political control over the lives of individuals and of humanity as a whole. But if we borrow on Jeparidze’s argument that Kant’s autonomy consists not in self-authority, but autonomy through the constitution of intersubjective relations, we can link Foucault’s ethics of freedom to the notion that autonomy consists in critique, *historical* self-creation, and relations with the other in social and political contexts.

Another way by which we can link Foucaultian ethics to recognition of the other is by considering what the importance of writing is for him. In a much neglected essay, “Self Writing,” Foucault stresses the importance of writing as a “way to show oneself ... to make one’s own face appear in the other’s presence. [It is] not so much a decipherment of the self by the self as an opening one gives the other onto oneself” (Foucault 1997: 216-17). Here, Foucault does not dissociate writing from reading for they are indispensable to one another and together form educational experience which must be seen as an “art of oneself.” Foucault says that it is a matter of “bringing into congruence the gaze of the other.” In “On the Genealogy of Ethics,” he makes the connection between writing, ethics, and the self by pointing to the practice of *askesis*, or a set of self-training exercises. Among the Pythagoreans, Socratics, and Cynics, such exercises were attributed great importance; “*hupomnemata*,” or the act of recording one’s daily thoughts in notebooks, journals, and the like provided individuals with a sense of who they were, to reassemble, the “already-said” of one’s daily life. This form of contemplation is “ontological knowledge” of oneself, but can only be accomplished by “looking into the eye of the other” (Foucault 1997: 273-5).

While it is true that Foucault refused to lay out a programmatic framework for praxis, he nonetheless pointed to the dangers of present-day subjectification and cautioned that one must struggle “as other,” as an individual or as part of a collective whose self-constitution is at stake (Thiele 1990: 919-20). One must continually define and redefine oneself as a political work of art and this involves fundamental relations with members of one’s own group or society. The next section will specify the terms of the constructivist/essentialist debate on identity in the context of pan-Maya activism in Guatemala.

Section Three: Anthropology Debates Maya Identity

It is ironic, writes the anthropologist Edward W. Fischer, that, just when many Western scholars are turning to *constructivist* arguments to reconfigure models of localist identity formation, the subjects of their studies have themselves begun to practice localist, *essentialist* politics to justify their political legitimacy (Fischer 1999: 473). Drawing on Maya ethnotheoretical models of identity, Fischer employs the concept of cultural logic - “generative principles realized through cognitive schemas that promote intersubjective continuity and are conditioned by the unique contingencies of life histories and structural positions in political-economic systems” - to promote a “continuity” view of current Maya culture (Fischer 1999: 473). Fischer is only one side of the heated debate taking place among Guatemalan scholars, activists and anthropologists attempting to decipher the post-civil war, “revitalization” movement among the Maya. His detractors, the “constructivists,” argue that there is nothing “natural” about Maya cultural identity, that Maya identity is simply a constructed process of resistance against long-standing ladino (non-Indian) hegemony. They claim that essentializing Maya resistance in terms of an essentially conceived past overlooks positions of multivocality. The “essentialists” in this debate, they claim, are making an ontological claim which asserts a reality (in this case, Maya identity), while the “constructivists” are making an epistemological claim which speaks to the conditions of possibility (i.e., knowing what Maya identity might be) (Fabian in Fischer 1999: 490).

According to the “essentialists” in this debate, the postmodern “constructivists” take as their guiding methodological bible George Marcus’ (Marcus and Fisher 1986) view that there is an emerging “anthropology of experience” dedicated to better incorporating into ethnography the lived experience of the anthropologized as it is both locally constructed and globally situated. There is a heightened attention to the contingent, polyvalent nature of symbols and multivocality that weds Geertzian ethnographic phenomenology and the self-referential criticism advocated by James Clifford with the antiessentialism pioneered by Benedict Anderson (Anderson 1983) and Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) to highlight the inventedness of imagined community and to empower ethnographic others, while authorially decentering themselves (Fischer 1999: 473; Watanabe 1995: 28).

For their part, the “constructivists” assert that essentialist arguments - grounded in an ethico-political defense of Maya “continuity” - effectively close off dialogical pluralism of the field of ethical, political, and scientific positions

(Castaneda in Fischer 1999: 489). Moreover, they conflate the epistemological, ethical and political differences between constructivist arguments and by doing so, end up reproducing the binarisms that postmodernism has worked to dismantle. By employing the concept of “cultural logic” to define the boundaries of the “doxa,” Fischer and those sympathetic to his position repeat the structuralist error of making form more significant than content (Fabian in Fischer 1999: 490).

Among the growing corpus of indigenous Maya scholars, a similar division exists. Enrique Sam Colop (Sam Colop 1996), and the ladino scholar and activist Mario Roberto Morales, along with Umberto Flores Alvarado advocate the view that Maya identity is simply the product of counterhegemonic resistance. Morales in particular supports a position which claims that Maya culture and ethnic identity is a product of self-interested construction which is, moreover, advanced by a relatively small group of well-educated and politically savvy Maya activists (Fischer 1999: 475). For his part, Fischer accuses Sam Colop of downplaying Maya identity, but Sam Colop’s own view, if it does fall into the constructivist camp, is clearly not one which overlooks how the Maya have been misrepresented through a long-standing process of ladinization. He is in fact lamentably making the point that misinformation and racist opinions in both the press and in schools and universities have succeeded in furthering this hegemonic process (Sam Colop 1996).

At any rate, and in spite of the anthropologist H. Russell Bernard’s pronouncement that “[whatever] our epistemological differences ... the actual methods by which we collect and analyze our data belong to everyone across the social sciences” (Bernard 1998:14), there remains a fundamental gap between what constitutes “humanism” as opposed to “scientism” in anthropological discourse and how these concepts are conceptualized in poststructuralist terms, even though some anthropologists would throw their lot in with poststructuralism or its notoriously weaker variant, postmodernism. Anthropologists seem to either a) conflate humanism with scientism by claiming that “we need more humanistically informed science” (Bernard 1998: 15-16), implying that objective data collection can be used to assess cultures in general, or b) they separate humanism from science by asserting that, *pace* Foucault, one can mount an effective humanist critique of the scientism underlying hegemonic practices in cultures (Fischer 1999: 475), implying that humanism is a wholly subjectivist critique of the totalizing perspective of scientism. What both of these conceptions are lacking is a more nuanced understanding of humanism; namely, one that assumes the *ethical* features of anthropological humanism (a commitment to the amelioration of suffering and inequality) while leaving behind its universalist, necessary and apriori foundations.

One way to go about this as regards Maya identity is to conceive the possibility that Maya cultural activism may be organized around a conception of intentionality/nonintentionality. That is, perhaps it is the case that the Maya *define* themselves intentionally as a marginalized majority working to enhance Maya solidarity and ethnic self-awareness, but their ethico-political *practices* should be seen as *unintentional* in that there is no predetermined, essentialist path upon which such practices are predicated. Using analogous terminology, I will argue that these practices may be seen as a sort of “contingent essentialism,” or a strategy designed to redefine the past in terms of the present so as to arrive at an historical account of their

subjectivity, something Foucault, as we saw, calls a “historical ontology of ourselves.” I will be arguing in the last chapter that Maya ethical self-fashioning is oriented around such an intentionless intentionality. In the next chapter, the revitalization practices of the Maya Indians of Guatemala will serve as one example of how such an enterprise might be fashioned.

Chapter Seven

Maya Transgressive Aesthetics as Pragmatic Humanism

*Que no son, aunque sean.
Que no hablan idiomas, sino dialectos.
Que no profesan religiones, sino supersticiones.
Que no hacen arte, sino artesanía.
Que no practican cultura, sino folklore.*
- Galeano, "Los Nadies"³⁹

Introduction

What would a Foucaultian ethic of resistance - conceived as pragmatic humanism - look like if one were to graft the stakes of this debate onto a contemporary societal configuration in which the struggle against hegemonic limits was an everyday form of practice and, indeed, survival? This chapter deals with an emergent movement in Guatemala, variously referred to as the pan-Maya movement, *el movimiento maya*, the Maya revitalization movement, or Maya cultural activism (Fischer and McKenna Brown 1996a). Whatever one wishes to call it, this movement is one aimed at empowerment; it seeks through ethico-political practices to upset conventional representations of the Maya people and to redress imbalances - economic, social, political, and cultural - brought on by centuries of ladino hegemony. This rallying cry is in many ways a nuanced (i.e., non-violent) response to the "Guatemalan holocaust" that took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s during which time an ethnocidal campaign aimed at the extinction of Guatemala's Maya population. In this chapter, I use a late Foucaultian framework to underscore how current Maya practices may be seen as a form of pragmatic humanism, further conceptualized as a form of constructed essentialism and an ethic of resistance. I do not wish to focus so much on the organized ideologies that the Maya do or do not join; instead, I direct my attention to the internal dynamics of Maya revitalization and the particular ways by which participants are focusing on the growth of their capacities through a process of ethical self-invention and reinvention. Such a dynamic may be seen as a nonviolent option aimed at the enhancement of Maya ethico-political sensibility.

In the first section, I sketch the outlines of a more general aesthetics of existence currently being constructed by the Maya. In (late) Foucaultian terms, this

³⁹ *They do not exist, even if they exist.
They do not speak languages, but rather dialects.
They do not profess religions, but rather superstitions.
They do not make art, but rather crafts.
They do not practice culture, but rather folklore.*

The depreciatory terms used to describe the Maya (and found in social studies textbooks for secondary students) are captured by the poet Eduardo Galeano to denote *ladino* belittling of "the Other" (Sam Colop 1996: 112-13). For more of Galeano's work see (Galeano 1988).

means a focus on the stakes instantiated in the severing of the growth of capacities from the intensification of power relations: in this case, the ladino hegemonic state. The stakes, for the Maya, are high. They are high because the growth of their capacities means the difference between a band-aid solution to cultural (non)recognition and providing the foundation for long-term, sustainable cultural development. In the second section, I focus on the specific forms of rationality that are being employed in the organization of this cultural movement. I argue that such forms of rationality are part of a process of “tactical essentialism” in that they are designed to upset conventional ladino conceptualizations of truth, freedom, and subjectivity. In the third section, I undertake an analysis of the historical ontology of themselves currently being undertaken by the Maya. The fourth section deals with how the Maya are currently problematizing their present day situation through a genealogical approach to their identities. Finally, in the fifth section, I discuss what I believe constitutes the basic impetus behind Maya enlightenability. I argue that the various forms of ethico-political self-fashioning are propelled by a particular *ethos* regarding their freedom, an *ethos* further conceived as a limit-attitude.

Section One: The growth of Maya capacities (Stakes)

The construction of identity

The last decade or so has witnessed a cultural explosion of sorts among the Maya of Guatemala. Reeling (still) from centuries of ladino oppression, the Maya have long been denied a voice in political, social, and cultural representations of their history. Following the end of the Second World War and amidst a U.S. backed coup in 1954⁴⁰, a strong current was initiated, one aimed at the *ladinization* (also referred to as *ladinoization*) of Guatemalan culture for the purpose of providing a catalyst for development (Fischer 1996: 53). Written in the constitution of 1965 was a “recognition” that the material inferiority of the Maya necessitated socioeconomic improvement as a condition for their integration into ladino culture. Lamentably, the state has restricted its efforts to cultural integration, leaving largely unresolved the economic plight of the Maya people (Cojtí Cuxil 1996: 25). But it is more than merely an economic plight that has been left unresolved; lasting solutions for *both* cultural and economic problems caused by long-term displacement among the Maya Indians⁴¹ have not been forthcoming under the neoliberal model, and by the end of 1994, over 80% of Guatemalans were still living in abject poverty (Delli Sante 1996: 275). Human rights have been consistently violated in spite of the state’s willingness

⁴⁰ As suggested by Jim Handy, however, the U.S. decision to intervene in the democratic Arbenz administration (1951-54) was not the inevitable catalyst that brought down the government. Rather, the catalyst was the institution of the Guatemalan army itself, a highly professional and powerful, yet clearly divisive cluster of factions, one of which successfully worked towards bringing down Arbenz’ government (Handy 1994: 179-84).

⁴¹ The counterinsurgency campaign was initiated by Lucas García in 1981 and continued by Efraín Ríos Montt and Mejía Victores. Some observers have estimated that more than one million of Guatemala’s seven and one half million people were displaced in one manner or another from 1981-1983, most of them Maya Indians from the western highlands. (Smith 1988: 206-7). In addition to mass displacement, it is estimated that between 1978 and 1984, some seventy thousand (largely indigenous) people were killed and forty thousand disappeared. Today, Guatemala’s population is estimated to be around eleven million (Nelson 1999: 9).

to commit to the Global Agreement on Human Rights in March of 1994. As one commentator puts it, one of Guatemala's most tragic decades is over, but the tragedy is not (Delli Sante 1996: 273).

But, parallel to long-standing patterns of ladino violence and injustice, the last decade or so has also witnessed the emergence of a strong Maya revitalization movement comprised of rural, urban, cultural and intellectual groups who have as their aim a strengthening of Maya cultural, social and moral values. This resiliency on the part of the Maya is instanced in their courage against a state that brands as subversive even minimalist appeals for linguistic and cultural autonomy (Watanabe 1995: 26). It is, suggests one commentator, like a "finger in the wound" to talk about the body politic of the Guatemalan nation (Nelson 1999). This metaphor is used by many Guatemalans – both ladino and Indian - to describe the painfulness that accompanies attempts to address ethnic difference in a nation that exists, but is not whole or complete (Nelson 1999: 1).

"Maya" is a recent invention. Following a long peace process which culminated in accords reached in 1996, indigenous activists began to deploy the term "Maya" to refer to members of Guatemala's approximately twenty-one distinct ethnic communities, and, as Diane Nelson points out, these activists are using terms such as *formar* (to create) to denote the self-creating nature of a Maya identity after five hundred years of ladino oppression. Nelson suggests that this "creation" of identity is not to take on an identity that is *either* easily discarded *or* thought to be permanent, but that practices such as education and language revivalism work with individual bodies to produce a body politic "through constant repetition in sites of power that themselves are historically overdetermined, as well as through unconscious investments and resistances"(Nelson 1999: 5).

Cultural rights groups have flourished since the mid-1980s in Guatemala. Principle groups include the Guatemalan Mayan Language Academy (ALMG), the Guatemalan Mayan Writers Academy (AEMG), the Mayan Center for Research and Documentation (CEDIM), and the Center for the Study of Mayan Culture ((CECMA). Many of these groups joined to form the Guatemalan Council of Mayan Organizations (COMG) which itself joined the larger Mayan Unity and Consensus Group (IUCM) (Nelson 1999: 20-1). Since the reestablishment of civilian rule in 1986, the construction of Maya identity has taken a decisive step away from dominant integrationist and assimilationist policies. The assimilationist approach is one oriented towards the subjugation of colonized peoples. It advances the view that the cultural annihilation of the Maya Guatemalans represents an advancement because it "civilizes and integrates them into a national culture [read: Ladino culture]" (Raxche' 1996: 78). The integrationist policy is a more gradual one whose aim is to use elements of the Maya's own culture (in a limited fashion) both to pacify the Maya and take advantage of their folkloric and aesthetic models for purposes of development (such as tourism). Integrationism is a variant of the assimilationist approach, however, in that it attempts to minimize, debilitate, and finally extinguish Maya culture (Raxche' 1996: 82).

The construction of a Maya identity may be seen in late Foucaultian terms as "games of truth" in which there exist "free individuals who establish a certain consensus, and who find themselves within a certain network of practices of power

and constraining institutions” (Foucault 1997: 297). The reality is, as Foucault says, there are no states of communication in which games of truth circulate freely. The idea is not to dissolve power relations “in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire ... the *ethos*, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible” (Foucault 1997: 298). The Maya care of the self as ethico-political practice does not come “already constituted,” but may be seen as a process of *formación*, one of self-creation which has, however, the raw materials of long-standing Maya traditions with which to work. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have made the suggestion that where there is power, there is resistance, but that resistance is not always political (Laclau 1985). I would argue that, in the case of the Guatemalan Maya, the bid for cultural recognition and autonomy through passive forms of resistance can be conceptualized as a tripartite relationship of transgressive aestheticism, creative resistance, and political agonism.

Culture Makers and Constructed Essentialism

Critics of this movement argue that there is no significant difference between *indígenas* and the *mestizo* mainstream. In other words, the Maya population is comprised of multiple and hybrid identities that can only be situationally considered. There is nothing essentially “Maya” (i.e., pre-Columbian) about these people, and a close analysis will reveal that in fact much of their culture is largely Hispanic in orientation (ironically, this constructivist argument falls back on a “modified essentialism” with regard to ladino culture (See Fischer 1999)). Ladino oppression and racism are not myths. The mobilization of the Maya may be seen in terms of a constructed and tactical essentialism. This is not identical to Spivak’s notion of “strategic essentialism” but is more on the order of a tactical and situational set of practices that have as their aim a form of participatory democracy in which Maya self-representation will act as a vehicle for political change. However, as Kay Warren points out, we must resist totalizing this movement and instead focus on how specific elements (e.g., Maya public intellectuals and activists) and key events of the movement can illustrate the language of social criticism and practices of revitalization (Warren 1998: 28). This constructed essentialism is meant to advance political and cultural claims; it is, as Foucault would say, to become a “we.” Indigenous language and the interrogation of history represents a constructed form of uniqueness that is instrumental in highlighting the “unity within diversity” model upon which revitalization efforts rest (Warren 1998: 160).

Transgressive aestheticism: Maya life as a work of art

In considering what constitutes Maya cultural revitalization as transgressive practice, it is important to recall that, for Foucault, the transgression of limits is, in itself, a process of ethical self-formation which, through strategic means, can reveal the relations between truth and power. In the case of the Maya, the creation of new skills aimed at cultural empowerment is part of a wider recognition of the political, economic, and social systems of which the Maya are part (Fischer and McKenna Brown 1996a: 4). Through a revival of lost traditions and the creation of new ones, the Maya of Guatemala have begun to rise from the ashes of the holocaust (Smith 1991: 29). But this reinscription of symbols and the furthering of capacities as a

strategy for the strengthening of their culture is not confined to an insular set of practices; unlike some ethnic revivalist movements emerging from the post-Communist era, the Maya seek peaceful solutions, many of which attempt to redress the long-standing cultural imbalance through recourse to international treaties, NGOs, and through the constitution of the Republic of Guatemala itself. They have, for example, successfully petitioned the government for official recognition of a unified alphabet. Language standardization is arguably the most important strategy for cultural revitalization because it is, one commentator suggests, a direct transmitter of Maya worldview and philosophy (England 1996: 179).

The transgressive practices of the Maya suggest, along with Foucault, that such games of truth circulate amidst power relations; it is not a matter of dissolving completely these power relations, but attenuating their one-sided superintendence through the acquisition of rules of law, through certain management techniques, and the creation of an ethico-political sensibility that will facilitate empowerment with as little domination as possible. The Maya are indeed making their lives a work of art. From scholarly activism to the creation of women's groups, human and economic rights activism and even a bid for the restoration of land rights, the Maya are, through the exercise of technologies of the self, effecting by their own means, affirmative operations on their own bodies and souls, conduct, and ontological states in order to transform themselves. In Foucaultian terms, this means that they are creating their own freedom by making their lives a work of art. An aesthetics of political existence is not a free-floating stylization of life in which "anything goes," but involves the creation of a meaningful political order without reference to predetermined sets of rules regarding the true nature of community, social regularities and the individual. It is to transgress existing limits which, as Foucault says, may be dangerous, but the alternative means that we are apathetically bound and conditioned by a stale, static and unyielding social and political order (Foucault 1997: 256). When Foucault says that freedom lies outside juridical determinations of it, he means that freedom is not something that can be guaranteed once and for all by laws and institutions; it is something to be practiced, it is a questioning of politics and power and the domination that is inscribed in power that revolves around our ways of becoming who we are, our ethos. That is why freedom is an ethical matter (Rajchman 1991: 112). It is the ontological condition of ethics. As we will see, Maya cultural activists are initiating self-creating programs outside ladino juridical forms, since all appeals through juridical forms have failed to concretely produce the recognition so desperately sought by the Maya.

Creative Resistance

Against long-standing ladino domination, the culture-based solution sought by the Maya may be seen as one of creative resistance. The anthropological debates focusing on claims that Maya cultural activism must be conceptualized as either "essentialist" or "constructivist" is in many ways an unproductive one. Fischer's claim that there is an underlying "continuity" to Maya practices that can be framed around a concept of "cultural logic" points to the engagement in a type of ethnoscience which assumes that knowledge production ("the doxa") is bound and conditioned by structural regularities. In other words, he identifies key cognitive patterns which provide the deep structure underlying thought and practice. As Charles

Hale notes, Fischer's approach provides us with a model in which culture is prior to and largely insulated from the exercise of power and the processes of subject formation (Hale in Fischer 1999: 491). The sort of reification and authenticization of Maya culture proposed here leaves unaccounted for the contingency of practices and the polyvalence of voices among the Maya population. On the other side of the divide, the constructivists fail to take into account that there may be an ontogenetic strategy at work here, for why even reintroduce "Maya" as a category in the construction of identity? As one critical observer notes, some cultural practices are resilient by virtue of the embeddedness in mythic and ritualistic practices, but they only continue through time due to their present relevance. Such practices do not represent external reality; they are

nonrepresentational...yet reoriginating that is integral to their endurance. They are structures that have no necessary meaning and are always open to the meaning of the world in which they are practiced (Kapferer in Fischer 1999 : 494).

This understanding resonates with my earlier suggestion that Maya cultural activism may be organized around a conception of intentionality/nonintentionality, or tactical essentialism. Such a conception does not entail the assumption that Maya cultural practices lack fluidity, nor does it imply that there is an "always already" set of characteristics that define individuals as "Maya" or "non-Maya"; rather, it may be seen as one way to incorporate solidarity and ethnostalgia as a way to highlight the constitutive difference of Maya life-practices and as a rhetorical strategy designed to heighten the consciousness of the other. According to Diane Nelson, such was the strategy of Rigoberta Menchú Tum, the Nobel winning Laureate whose *testimonio* recounting the counterinsurgent massacre of members of her family and village by the Guatemalan army can be seen as a conscious aim to form a "body politic of solidarity" among Maya and among Mayan women in the face of overt domination (Nelson 1999: 49).

How, then, is Maya resistance "creative?" In the first instance, in spite their continued cultural colonization, a multitude of Maya groups, ranging from institutionalized organizations to cultural activists to everyday clusters of local actors, have sought to carve out an autonomous (i.e., non-racist) space for themselves through practices of language revindication, *traje* (traditional Maya dress) and religious revivalism, educational revitalization and artistic (re)creationism, some of which will be discussed in more detail below. In their search for autonomy from the interdictions of ladinization, they have focused on the growth of their capacities by revising and rethinking *techne*, or the ways by which actors concretely acquire their intelligibility through what Foucault calls "deliberate forms." As John Rajchman notes, one might then say that as an "ontological condition," freedom does not prescribe the descriptions under which our actions must fall, but frees us to construct our own freedom, to make it a technical practice (Rajchman 1991: 112-13). It is these techniques as a concrete, creative set of practices that Foucault calls "the care of the self."

The care of the self involves a new experience of self and of others. It is a new relationship between body and soul, a way of living that opens up the possibility for

transgression. It is a way of constituting the intersection between remembering a past that has been forgotten and the self-regulation of practices and self-invention of subject positionings. In order to retain the instrumental uses of identity without making them regulatory imperatives (Butler 1991), the Maya of Guatemala have begun to critically analyze and (re)articulate the past, not with the ill-fated intention of discovering its “true” nature, but in order to move back and forth between the past and a self-constituted political project of the present. This is what I mean by constructed essentialism.

Political agonism

It is a somewhat standard view that, because Foucault sees power as productive (i.e., as both enabling and constraining), he does not adequately supply normative grounds for his analyses of resistance. It was suggested earlier, however, that his preference for power that precipitates an agonal form of subjectivity – as “permanent provocation” – by which insidious forms of power can be attenuated gives Foucault the quasi-alternative some see as missing in his overall critique of modern humanist political rationality. Agonal resistance is not, on Foucault’s terms, a good or normative reason for resistance; it is not a means to a utopian end, but can lead, as Connolly points out, to a transformation of the ways in which we experience identity (Connolly 1993: 382-3). Elsewhere, Connolly refers to agonal subjectivity as a “politics of disturbance” (Connolly 1991a: 473). This seems to capture what is at the heart of current Maya practices of resistance. In large part, the Maya are attempting to carve out a sense of identity that takes its markings from the images that others have of them.⁴² It is a standard view that Maya identity is a hybrid and syncretic set of markings that are firmly anchored in history (Nelson 1999: 128-30). But, the ways in which the Maya struggle to overcome hegemonic limits (including participation in the state) point to a strategy whereby the use of Maya traditions (dress, language, art, history) as definitively given facilitates the struggle to carve out some form of identity outside ladino representations. This means that the agonal subjectivity underlying Maya practices is in part rhetorical, never complete and not wholly discursive. In other words, there is no attempt to define cultural rights practices as merely linguistic; they are concretely embodied in materiality and power relations. When the Maya say that class conflict is not their issue, they are reacting to critics who say that ethnic discrimination and cultural identity are not the salient problems confronting Guatemala; the real issue, the Left says, is class inequities. But as one critic of this view argues, this amounts to the claim that somehow culture and materiality are fundamentally separate issues. As she explains it, the Maya do not see class struggle as their “unitary framework.” They seek, she says

to build a cross-class movement ...that would include middle-class professionals and business people as well as cultivators, students, teachers, development workers, and rural shopkeepers. [Many] extended families routinely have multiple class/ethnic identifications,

⁴² Arguably, this includes images transmitted by gringo academics. The anti-Mayan ladino activist Mario Roberto Morales states that, “Maya theories of identity are not their own; they are from the United States. They are *Maya agringado* (gringoized) (Morales 1995).

localized in different ways in rural and urban space (Warren 1998: 48-9).

To use Michael Taussig's metaphor, it might be said that the Maya view the state as a "mask" – "a dazzling and disturbing representation" - which prevents individuals from "seeing" political reality, as a "nervous Nervous system" that delineates the cultural construction of reality as masked and inherently deceptive (Taussig 1992: 113). In sum, the political agonism as practiced by the Maya is an ethic which is not a form of essential morality, but the constitution of experience through a set of diverse practices. Its aim is to positively facilitate the growth of capacities which have long been disconnected from the political technologies of ladino state fetishism.

Section Two: Tactical Essentialism (Homogeneity)

The strategic forms of rationality deemed necessary by Foucault as a means to concretely achieve the aims of freedom from oppression are the subject of this section. In the Maya case, it was stated that such forms of rationality may be seen as practices of what I called "tactical essentialism." Tactical essentialism starts from the premise that there is a need to give a name to or create a center for the deployment of rules and the organization of practices that can work to reverse the disadvantages experienced by subaltern groups. It is a homogenizing strategy designed to organize ways of doing things (Foucault calls this the technological aspect) and modify the rules of the game (the strategic side of practices) with the maximum amount of freedom possible. Such experimental technologies and strategies are necessary in order to locate the interstices where change is possible and to determine the precise form that change might take. The Maya search for identity suggests a strategy aimed at the creation of a historically-conditioned, contingent form of identity, one not grounded in Platonic, ahistorical truths, but in a more fluid set of characteristics which will allow for recognition while at the same time avoiding overly determined stereotypes that could conceivably lead to more overt racism and reverse the gains made by the introduction of race, gender, sexuality and other markings in the context of power relations.

Idols behind the altars: reading history as resistance

One of the strategies being employed by Maya scholars involves the reading of history as a form of resistance; it is a strategy designed to summon up the past, not to demonstrate a true history, but to highlight the ontogenetic roots of Maya identity so as to learn new ways of expression and create counterhistories that work towards the dissemination of Spanish translations (Warren 1996: 89-91). The reading of original Maya chronicles such as the pre-Hispanic Annals of the Kaqchikels (1510-1604)⁴³ and the act of juxtaposing such readings against the nineteenth and twentieth century Spanish translations has revealed, for example, the importance of *cosmovisión* (a worldview) and ethnogenesis which in turn have provided, as Kay Warren notes, important subthemes in Maya revitalization (Warren 1996: 91-2). She adds that the reading of classical Maya texts also revealed that when Maya

⁴³ The Kaqchikels are Maya Indians living in the central highlands of Guatemala. Throughout their history, they more than any other Indian group have resisted assimilation and attempted to use colonial politics for their own ends. See, for example, (Maxwell 1996).

cosmology was translated into Spanish, it was incorporated into Christian themes; so, for example, “translators equated the Maya underworld (xib’ alb’ ay) with hell, Maya divinities with the devil, Spaniards with gods, and Maya with pagans” (Warren 1996: 94).

The reading of the emergence of the Kaqchikel state as an autonomous political entity from the dominant K’ iché (formerly spelled Quiché) state has disclosed the importance of women in political affairs. It was discovered that they were accorded positions of great prestige in the original cultural system, sometimes fighting alongside their male counterparts. In addition, a reading of the Spanish conquest upsets conventional interpretations which have the Maya in a state of adulation upon first contact. In Maya revisionist translations, The Kaqchikel chronicles depict Maya reactions to the Spaniards as those of terror and fear. There are also documented instances of Maya resistance and heroism which have been used to deal with the passivity the current Maya population perceives to be a long-standing effect of ladino racism (Warren 1996: 95-8). The revival and revision of Kiqchikel chronicles is not, however, merely the privilege of Maya scholars. As Edward Fischer’s anthropological fieldwork shows, Kaqchikels in general view their identities as intricately connected to cosmic forces through certain such things as souls, spirits and “inner motives.” What this amounts to is, in Fischer’s view, a sense of “metaphysical balance” in Maya cosmology, a sense of unity and centeredness that is perpetuated by a movement of cyclical progression evident in Maya cosmology (Fischer 1999: 479-81).

As Warren points out, Maya revitalization cannot sit comfortably in bodies of literature which have as their frame of reference resurgent ethnic nationalism or grass-roots social movements with connections to transnational organizations. Maya culturalists, she claims, find that the ethnic nationalist model reduces multifaceted and pluralistic movements to territorial nationalism, while the transnational ties of grass-roots movements as described by Arturo Escobar and Sonia Alvarez and Evalina Dagnino (Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 1998b) would restrict these practices to a “minority rights” issue, and by doing so would promote Maya assimilation into the mainstream (Warren 1996: 102-3).

Reading Maya history as resistance is both a technology and a strategy designed to extricate ethico-political practice from (ladino) scientific knowledge. By undertaking a genealogical analysis of their own subjectivity, the Maya are seeking, through their own forms of rationality - conceived as tactical essentialism - prescriptive solutions to the various forms of domination, misrepresentation, and oppression. Foucault himself puts it best when he says that “[among] the cultural inventions of mankind there is a treasury of devices, techniques, ideas [and] procedures that cannot exactly be reactivated but at least constitute ... a certain point of view which can be very useful as a tool for analyzing what’s going on now - and to change it” (Foucault 1997: 261).

Velar stops/uvular stops: Linguistic self-determination

Language standardization, it is argued, is focal point for Maya revitalization. It is both a marker of local identity and a way by which to prevent the further fragmentation of some twenty Maya languages (England 1996: 178). In particular, written language is important for historical preservation and the facilitation of

literacy. The Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (ALMG), formed in June 1987, first agreed on a “unified alphabet” for all Mayan languages which has since been legalized by presidential decree. Equally important was the rejection of Spanish orthographic principles; for example, the large committee of linguists that facilitated these changes in language rejected the “*c/qu* spelling for the velar stop ([k]), instead using *k* for the velar stop and *q* for the uvular stop ([q], a sound that does not exist in Spanish” (England 1996: 182-3).

Since the standardization process was initiated, many critics have argued that the small, urban minority of Maya language scholars do not represent the majority of rural Maya. But, as R. McKenna Brown suggests, the point is to heighten awareness of Mayan languages, as both a symbolic and functional marker of identity; it is to make the Maya aware that language maintenance is a resource that needs to be extended beyond everyday usage. To some, it appears that control over Maya linguistic and cultural destiny has led to a reconsideration of fundamental tenets of their science and personal involvement with their work [McKenna Brown, 1996 #699: 173; 176]. As one Maya scholar and activist suggests, the development and use of Mayan language needs to be extended to public education, courts of justice, the mass media, and public office to make good the 1976 Human Rights Declaration regarding the right to self-determination of indigenous peoples (Cojtí Cuxil 1996: 36-7). In any case, what is important with regard to the development and maintenance of Maya languages is that they are the only facets of contemporary Maya culture that can be considered truly *Maya* in both genesis and development (England 1996: 189).

While there are many other instances of homogenizing strategies with regard to the realization of Maya self-determination, the two examples of reading history as resistance and the importance of language revivalism and maintenance serve as prime indicators of Foucault’s axiological suggestion that ethical self-reflexivity produces a creative medium that allows actors to identify socially constructed boundaries and construct a historical ontology of themselves as a form of resistance. Both the reading of history and language-maintenance promotion are markers of identity that facilitate a homogenizing strategy for the transgression of limits. They are practical forms of rationality that seek to modify the rules of ladino “games of truth” and permit forms of ethical self-invention within existing power relations. These forms of rationality should not be seen as developing out of an ahistorical, ontologically given human essence, but this does not foreclose the possibility that they arise out a *localized* human essence which is pragmatic, tactical, and contingent.

Section Three: A Historical Ontology of Themselves: (Systematicity)

In his later writings, Foucault finally theorizes what had been missing in his earlier analyses: how we exercise control over *ourselves*. In addition to his rejection of proscriptive, external moral systems as a regulatory form of ethics, he claims in “On the Genealogy of Ethics” that three domains of genealogy are possible; 1) a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; 2) a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others, and; 3) a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents (Foucault 1997: 262). In relation to practical

systems in which we live, a historical ontology of ourselves must, he says elsewhere, answer the following series of questions: How are we constituted as subjects of our own knowledge (knowledge axis)? How are we constituted as subjects who exercise or submit to power relations (power axis)? How are we constituted as moral subjects of our own actions (ethical axis)? (Foucault 1997: 318). Thus, the systematicity of practical systems must revolve around the care brought to the process of putting historico-critical reflection to the test of concrete practices.

Looking closely at the case of the Maya of Guatemala, we can see a historical ontology of their existence at work. The axis around which they constitute themselves as subjects of knowledge (“control over things”) is instanced in a number of ways. One of these ways witnesses Maya students and professionals and other individuals turning to social science in an effort to supply a voice to academic representations of their culture and history. This is a counterpolitical act intended to recover the plurality of Maya voices, reverse the negative, often dire, political consequences that ladino and other Western academic representations have had for the Maya, and therefore is done to counter “scientific objectivity” (Fischer and McKenna Brown 1996a: 2). Much of their activism has helped to foster the growing interest among younger Maya in their native languages. In addition, certain Catholic groups have acted to mobilize the Indian population around economic and political issues (Fischer 1996: 58). They are attempting to stimulate an interest among the Maya in constituting their own life, their own knowledge, and their own ethical sensibilities. And, along with the language revitalization movement, other self-forming activities include the launch of a monthly magazine *Ixim* (Corn) and a turn to pre-contact hieroglyphic, numerical and calendric systems aimed at cultural empowerment, ethical self-creation and the constitution of their own knowledge. In addition, a number of Maya organizations are in the process of implementing culture-based programs designed to assist poor Maya farmers. The Coordinadora Cakchiquel de Desarrollo Integral (COCADI) has, for example, begun to teach farmers how market commercially natural pesticides, and produce organic agricultural products so that they may gain control over their own knowledge (Fischer 1996: 58-65). The growing practices of self-writing and the study of linguistics has, as Carol Hendrickson notes, become one of the important ways by which Maya create their own knowledge which in turn can serve as an instrument of sociopolitical critique (Hendrickson 1996: 159). In Foucaultian ethical terms, the practice of self-writing (*hupomnemata*) is important for the training of oneself; it is “to make of the recollection of the fragmentary logos transmitted by teaching, listening, or reading a means to establish as adequate and as perfect a relationship to oneself as possible” (Foucault 1997: 274). Maya women, too, have begun to take control over the constitution of their own knowledge. Hendrickson explains that weaving and *traje* (traditional dress) are important, if non-institutionalized, markers of identity and passive forms of resistance (Hendrickson 1996).

Such practices are aesthetic in the (Foucaultian) sense that they are instances of self-forming activity designed to work on Maya ethical substance, to change themselves, to make their lives “a work of art.” That Foucault wanted to go beyond Kant’s practical philosophy is evidenced in his assertion that we must live according to an ethical attitude, a historical ontology of ourselves, which in turn meant a critique

of what we are, a historical analysis of the limits that have been imposed on us and the possibility of transgressing, or a “crossing over” of those limits. As Lawrence Kritzman succinctly puts it, Foucault’s “experimental” attitude derives from his desire to write an ontology of the present which is regarded as “integrally linked to the destiny of the political community” (Kritzman 1988: xviii).

In the *Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus laments that, on our way to death, we tend to get into the “habit of living,” and in doing so, fail to reflect on our existence (Camus 1955:7). Camus’ point is that there is a practical need to reflect on our daily existence; our ethical actions must be grounded in thought if they are to be consistent with our goals. Using Foucault as a point of departure, we can conceptualize the Maya experience as being founded on a similar set of considerations; their self-forming activity – aestheticism in a broad sense – are technologies exercised on the self, forms of self-mastery (*askesis*) which spring from a desire to understand the past, a critique of the present, and acquiring knowledge about what is necessary for the care of the self. As Foucault remarks, “Taking care of oneself requires knowing ... oneself. Care of the self is, of course, knowledge ... of the self – this is the Socratic-Platonic aspect - but also knowledge of a number of rules of acceptable conduct or of principles that are both truths and prescriptions. To take care of the self is to equip oneself with these truths: this is where ethics is linked to the game of truth” (Foucault 1997: 285). Through enabling, self-forming practices, the Maya are constituting themselves as subjects of knowledge, as enmeshed in particular power relations, and as moral agents in the construction of their tactical and constructed essentialist identities.

Section Four: Problematization as a Mode of Analysis: (Generality)

It is crucial to understand that, for Foucault, our ontological states are given through problematizations and practices; they are not handed over to us apriori. Only we, as embodied, thinking beings who act, can make ourselves what we are. In other words, we be-come through everyday practices, employing a pragmatic approach to what it means to be human in all of our ethical and political dimensions. In so far as Western practical systems are concerned, there have existed general patterns of regularities which are, however, historically singular in nature. These regularities include the bifurcation of reason (constitution of the subject as both subject and object) and what Foucault had earlier called “dividing practices” that are common to all practical systems. The vital aspect of problematization is that it does not purport to arrive at a “valid” solution to political problems; rather, problematization is “the development of a domain of acts, practices, and thoughts that ... pose problems for politics” (Foucault 1997: 114). It is, in other words, to question politics. It is the only way by which to become a “we.” We must ask: why does politics assume the reasons it does for this or that action; why does it assume one position as opposed to another? Problematization helps us to understand the history of thought; it is, in fact, Foucault says, “a work of thought” itself (Foucault 1997: 119). Above, all it can assist in our understanding of how subjects fit into games of truth.

In order to better understand what Foucault means by problematization, his approach to the history of madness can serve as an example. Foucault sought to examine why madness was problematized in the first place: “How was the mad

subject placed in this game of truth defined by a medical model or a knowledge?" (Foucault 1997: 290). How did it become an object of theoretical discourse? In the course of his examinations, Foucault discovered that the mentally ill person is constituted as mad in relation to and over against those who declare him (or her) mad; in other words, through coercion. But, whereas these earlier analyses conceptualized the subject as a passive one, his later work on ethics takes the subject on a more active course. How do we problematize current political practices so as to fashion ourselves as ethical, active subjects? We must define the objects, rules of action, and modes of relation to ourselves if we are to analyze questions of general import (Foucault 1997: 318). Problematization is a way of using history to account for the present. It is a strategy that back and forth between presentist and historicist perspectives. Finally, it is a way determine a problem, define its domain of objects, and traverse those objects in order to solve the problem.⁴⁴

Ladino games of truth and the problematization of Maya identity

Foucault frequently stresses the study of "procedures of exclusion" as a way to understand how those who are excluded are in the end *included* through the establishment of social scientific norms. Procedures of exclusion are thus seen as part of the process of normalization. Giovanna Procacci explains that Foucault's research showed him that, through an emphasis on moral reform, for example, the inclusion of the poor turned into a disciplinary action aimed at restoring a "normal" relation between wealth and poverty (Procacci 1994: 212). The Maya of Guatemala have begun to problematize their own subjectivity by looking at, among other things, the procedures of exclusion practiced institutionally in and through ladino games of truth. The domain of objects that has been determined as facilitating these procedures of exclusion is complex. In the first instance, there is a concerted effort directed towards understanding how ladino forms of rationality and games of truth have traditionally (mis)represented Maya subjectivity and undermined their own forms of rationality, such as cosmology, calendrics, meteorology and astronomy.⁴⁵

Beginning with conquest right up to the present day, the games of truth practiced by the ladino minority have had as their goal the integration of indigenous groups into the "national culture" (Constitution of 1965: Article 110), thus setting up the conditions and parameters of what constitutes "truth" and "falsity." Under colonial and republican regimes alike, the legislation enacted has cast the Maya and their languages as a hinderance to national progress. During the colonial period, Spanish conquerors resorted to coercion in order to extract Maya labor and convert them to Christianity. This was a normalizing set of procedures oriented around pacification/disciplinary policies that had earlier been successful in medieval Spain. The crown's "Castilianization" policy in Guatemala included the demand that Indians adopt patronymic surnames and that all language instruction and official ceremonies

⁴⁴ For difficulties associated with problematization as a methodological tool for historical analysis, see (Castel 1994)

⁴⁵ For an account of these Maya practices, see (Tedlock 1982)

be conducted solely in Spanish (Becker Richards and Richards 1996: 208-9). The indigenous past was buried in its own ruins.⁴⁶

In June, 1984, the Guatemalan Bishop's Conference released a pastoral letter entitled "To Build a Peace." The letter outlined the historical and structural roots of political violence in Guatemala and called for the implementation of indigenous human rights, the creation of political, economic and social reforms and the eradication of force (Davis 1988: 31). It was not until the restoration of civilian rule in 1985 that the Maya could begin to actively problematize their subjectivity and even then, many of the existing inequities have remained hopelessly insurmountable. In spite of this, in the struggle for recognition, there are numerous positive examples from which to draw. One of these is the role of Maya women in later modern Guatemala. Maya women have begun to problematize their own subjectivity by questioning their subordinate role in ladino society. The *mujer maya* ("the Mayan woman") suggests Diane Nelson, "sustains modernity and is in turn changed by it, made problematic" (Nelson 1999: 280). By problematizing their own relation to modernity, tradition, and ladino politics, Maya women have begun to make forays into the political world in which they inhabit through activism, professionalism, and education. Even among those who remain in their villages, there is a change of emphasis in their contribution to politics and the economy of the community; many are working at export production plants, in the tourism industry, and other traditionally male prerogatives (Nelson 1999: 281).

Though internal colonialism still reigns in Guatemala, Maya cultural activism suggests, along with Foucault, that the problematization of thought, brought on by political, social and economic processes, has begun to take hold among the Maya. They have initiated the development of a "given" into a question, and have begun to transform, as Foucault suggests, a group of obstacles into problems and produce a response to those problems (Foucault 1997: 118). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the (re)writing of Maya history and culture, in the demand for the formation of Maya study centers, in the demand for recognition of Maya culture at all levels, and in the social demand for the nondiscriminatory application of constitutional rights (Cojtí Cuxil 1996).⁴⁷ This cultural revitalization movement aims at making problematic the politics of the past in order to pose a plurality of questions to ladino

⁴⁶ The Maya are not strangers to procedures of exclusion. From the other side of the equation, they have over the last century practiced their own procedures of exclusion, which were not, however, enacted as disciplinary policies. Eric Wolf's notion of a "closed, corporate community" demonstrates with some modifications that the strategy of exclusion from outside forces has long been a practice of the Maya Indians. Wolf's anthropological fieldwork revealed a pattern among Indians in Middle America. The community is "solidary" towards outsiders; it maintains a monopoly of resources and defends the first rights of insiders against external competition (Wolf 2001: 175). It is thus a kinship coalition that is designed to protect the collectivity as a whole from outside aggrandizement. Such a strategy was thus a way to question ladino politics; it was one of the ways by which communities became a "we."

⁴⁷ One anthropologist estimates that the number of Maya attending Guatemalan universities, for example, has risen from less than 30 in the mid-1970s to over 500 by 1990. Sixty to seventy of these have earned *licenciaturas* (roughly, an undergraduate degree equivalent to the master's degree in North America), ten have earned master's degrees and one a doctorate. See (Watanabe 1995: 32).

politics, to expose the arbitrary, delimiting nature of political doctrine, and to work towards a transgression of those limits.

The Maya have thus begun to write a history of the present. A problematization is a historical account which differs from written historical accounts. It is a set of acts, practices, and thought that originate from the perspective of the present, using the past as archival materials. These may include written histories, forms of rationality, modes of scientific inquiry, etc. Admittedly, one of the problems associated with problematization is the arbitrary selection of archival materials with which one constructs a problem. When did the problem first appear? How can we be sure that it began *then*, and not at some other time? Can we fasten onto the past concerns that only hold true for our time? I would argue that, in the case of the Guatemalan Maya, problematization is not beset with such difficulties. In the first instance, there *is* a specific time frame around which the Maya can identify the onset of procedures of exclusion, that being the time of conquest. As for Robert Castel's cautionary view that problematization leads to the "choice" of significant elements from the past and therefore lends itself to partial and arbitrary inquiry (Castel 1994: 239), it may be counterargued that, in the case of the Maya, *all* of the elements of their past are significant for an understanding of their present-day existence. Ladino procedures of exclusion have had a totalizing element about them; every act – political, social, or economic – has resulted in the placement of a decisively negative, delimiting imprimatur on Maya existence and cultural identity. It is only by making problematic these practices of the past (and present) that the Maya can begin to transgress the political and cultural boundaries into which they have been historically determined and bound. As one Maya scholar puts it, "national unity cannot be constructed while denying an existent plurality. The Maya ... do not base their future on the past; they add their future to their history and to the history of humanity" (Sam Colop 1996: 155).

Section Five: Maya Enlightenmentality as Pragmatic Humanism

Foucault's reconsideration of the Enlightenment led him to de-transcendentalize, I have argued, the doctrine of humanism. If humanism is anything, it is first a concern for humanity and Foucault's concern for the subjectivity of humanity is patently obvious. Whether it be an investigation into constraining or enabling forms of historically determined subject constitution, Foucault devoted his entire life's work to decoding the cryptic and deterministic inscriptions of the human sciences of "man." In a series of lectures he composed between 1978 and 1983, he undertook the task of bridging the gap between his extreme nominalism and the collective ideals of humanism that he found so pertinently articulated in Kant. One way to go about explaining *how* he approached this formidable task is to assert that he radically historicized Kantianism, holding fast to the regulative utopian ideal of human freedom by refracting critique through historical reflection (Hansen 2000: 39). We can only transgress – not transcend – the limits of anthropological, transcendental humanism from within; and, we can only do so by exposing their contingency through a historical ontology of the present. Fundamentally, this involves the adoption of an attitude, or an *ethos* about who we are as subjects, as human beings, an *ethos* which can no longer be exclusively qualified in terms of the various mutations

of reason. The *ethos* that we need to develop resides, according to Foucault, in the presumption of a capacity for self-creativity outside an identical consciousness. As such, he argues, the process of enlightenment is the responsibility of each individual, including the philosophical critic. Enlightenment, Kant reminds us, is a “way out” of a state of immaturity, and by immaturity he meant “a certain state of our will which makes us accept someone else’s authority to lead us in areas where the use of reason is called for.” The on-going process of maturation is, in Foucault’s view, at once spiritual and institutional, ethical and political (Foucault 1997: 305-6).

The specific versus universal intellectual

Foucault once declared in an interview (“Truth and Power”) that the universal intellectual of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries no longer existed. What had emerged, particularly after World War Two, was the “specific” intellectual; one who is specific to the particular and local political struggles that involve that intellectual’s knowledge. The specific intellectual, according to Foucault, encounters certain obstacles and faces certain dangers because she or he can be perceived to be a political threat in light of their knowledge and expertise. The person occupying a specific position is linked to “the general functioning of an apparatus of truth” understood as “a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements” (Foucault 2000: 131-2). More towards the end of his life, Foucault spoke of the “ethic of the intellectual.” By this he meant that the intellectual should not be of a Sartrean sort who wants to project and entire worldview onto the world; Foucault wanted to capture an ethos of the intellectual as vocation of enlightenment, as one who was always in relation to truth, and as one who engages in an on-going critique of regimes of truth (Osborne 1998: 156-7).

The role of specific, public intellectuals in Maya cultural activism is in fundamental ways a page out of Foucault’s own views on the role of the intellectual. Maya professionals from a variety of disciplines have been instrumental in crafting social criticism. From linguists to lawyers to publishers and journalists, Maya public intellectuals have begun to use their expertise to engage in heated political debates, to challenge state hegemony of education, and to affirm the Maya cause by formulating counterhistories, creating a Maya Studies interdisciplinary program, all in the service of revitalizing and constructing a distinctive Maya culture. The leading activist-theoretician of the movement, Waqi’ Q’ anil Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil, has elaborated the movement’s demands on the ladino state for major reforms in administration, language policy, the military, economics, education, communication, and respect for Maya ceremonial centers (Warren 1998: 38.). Cojtí Cuxil writes that the internal colonialism of the ladino state has led to discrimination and economic exploitation through a monopoly on all levels of government. He calls for a revision of the current constitution (ratified in May 1985) to address demands for political autonomy, territorial rights and linguistic revindication (Cojtí Cuxil 1996).

The role of public intellectuals in the Maya struggle for recognition is important in that it is they who are advancing essentialist claims as a tactic to reject the powerful ladino definition of Mayas as the weak, insignificant other. The motivations behind the promotion of Maya languages, calendrics, shaman-priests and conceptions of moral authority are lodged in an urgent desire to revitalize the past

before it is lost in the collective Maya memory (Warren 1998: 78). The specific intellectuals leading this movement exemplify Foucault's view that what is at stake is a permanent "critical attitude to the truth" (Rajchman 1991). The specific intellectual engages in a constant critique with relations of power; she or he can provide the strategies necessary to confront the "general politics" of truth. In Foucault's words, the specificity of the intellectual is important particularly in relation to the politics of truth in that "[their] position can take on a general significance, and that [their] local, specific struggle can have effects and implications that are not simply professional or sectoral" (Foucault 2000: 132). Hence, the importance of Maya intellectuals.

Human Rights

It was pointed out that, towards the end of his life, Foucault suddenly became a champion of international human rights. But, does this mean that he succumbed to the perils of universalist, transcendental humanism that he had, during the course of his career, taken great pains to disavow? To be sure, Foucault introduced a minimalist conception of the philosophy of the (agonal) subject into his analyses of modern power formations. Is it not, however, possible to say that human rights are socially constructed, that ideas and practices with regard to human rights are created and re-created by human actors in social and historical configurations and settings: that is, pragmatically? Are not the creation and re-creation of human rights in part responses to challenges to power? In a Gramscian sense, can human rights not be seen as operating to legitimate counterhegemonic challenges to extant power relations? (Stammers 1999). After all, were not liberalism and the French revolution "social movements?" In effect, I would argue that this is precisely how Foucault later conceptualized human rights. As he himself says, "singular forms of experience may perfectly well harbor universal structures" (Foucault 1997: 201). But, Foucault did not need to adopt Kantian transcendentalism in order to claim that human rights movements may be global in orientation, yet local in origin.

As Demetrio Cojtí points out, Article 66 of the current constitution (Protection of Ethnic Groups) is just ladino "babble." The judicial "progress" that has been made is more a "symbolic compensation for the Indian holocaust that began in 1978 than a conceptual and political advance of Ladino rulers" (Cojtí Cuxil 1996: 25). Maya leaders are thus seeking a ratification of both domestic and international agreements and treaties on the rights of indigenous minorities. The Maya have, in their attempts to foster socio-historical and ethico-political change, sought recognition of their human rights through appeals to the Guatemalan state and the United Nations, both of which assert the right to certain rights, including self-determination and autonomy. Lamentably, Cojtí Cuxil as notes, "Maya revindication seeks a multiethnic Guatemala through the recognition of equal rights for all ethnic communities. [These] demands cannot be satisfied by the limited rights accorded Indians in the current constitution" (Cojtí Cuxil 1996: 29-30). In addition to this, the narrowly defined (Western) conception of human rights as "civil" and "political" have manifestly failed to interrogate gross violations of social, economic, and cultural rights (Stammers 1999: 1001-02).

Ethico-political self-fashioning and Maya critique

In considering what makes Maya revitalization practices *ethico-political*, we might say, along with Foucault, that the ethical substance being worked over by Mayan ethics consists in self-forming activity that is related to the normative forms of everyday practice. As was suggested, this ethical practice, conceived as an aesthetics of existence, is being developed through the examination of both the past and the present, a reflection upon limits and the possibility of going beyond them. Foucault calls this a 'limit attitude'. A limit attitude is a permanent, practical critique that "will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are" (Foucault 1997: 315). This means that such permanent critique cannot be universal, but must always be local and experimental. Reinscribing themselves in Guatemalan society, the Maya, by creating dialogue within and through texts, by turning to social science to support their political advocacy, by re-presenting themselves through the writing and re-writing of history, and by fashioning their own ethical sensibilities outside of scientific objectivity, have unquestionably turned to critique as a form of self-legislation amidst an overtly hostile battle over representation and identity formation.

The Mayan ethos

In the cultural practices of the Maya, we can see Foucault's thought in action. The Maya are, in the last instance, attempting to escape their inherited identities and relations to themselves and others. That was the central concern of Foucault's work. How do we get free of ourselves, we who have been formed, fashioned, and molded from without? The normative self-organization of Maya ethico-political practices is founded on an *ethos* of self-determination and resistance to domination. It is founded on a desire on the part of the Maya to create their own lives as works of art, by a commitment to create new forms of thought and action which are both enabling and self-invented. It is founded, finally, on a desire to overcome interdictions and transgress the limits of ladino regimes of truth. It appears to me (a non-specialist) that the Mayan ethic of resistance consists in an *ethos* derived from a sense of becoming, of a maturity not in the Kantian, self-closing sense, but in an openness toward the possibility of becoming other than what they are. It is to redefine their humanness, but in a manner that is pragmatically and concretely self-fashioned as *Maya* human. That, one could say, is the promise of Maya enlightenmentality.

Concluding Remarks

I have not set out in this chapter to traverse all of the anthropological debates on the diversity or non-diversity within the *movimiento maya*, to tackle the thorny issues of class versus ethnicity, or to place Maya revitalization practices within the context of transnationalism and the global arena. Detailed analyses of these issues have been undertaken more ably by others (see, for example, (Fog Olwig and Hastrup 1997) (Warren 1998) (Brysk 2000)). Instead, I have attempted to initiate a problematization of a problematization, using Foucault's later work on ethics as a backdrop. Problematization, Foucault reminds us, is not the representation of an "preexisting object" ; it is the "totality of discursive and non-discursive practices that brings something into the play of truth and falsehood and set it up as an object for the

mind” (Quoted in Castel 1994: 237-8). Problematization assists in the development of a “given” into a question or a set of problems “to which diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response” (Foucault 1997: 118). The starting point of analysis and the orientation that propels it is the present-day situation, and the ways in which the questions are asked *today* (Castel 1994: 238). It is a genealogy of the present in which subjects only resort to “foundations” as a way to produce or “invent” themselves. That is what Foucault calls “ethics.”

The diverse solutions both sought and found by the Maya, I argued, may be seen as a form of constructed essentialism, or pragmatic humanism which arise out of an *ethos*, or a desire to escape a constructed past. This is not so much a reconstruction of the past or an evaluation of its functions in ladino history. Instead problematization of the past discloses an understanding of how past ladino political technologies are important in the current exercise of power. How did the exercise of power in all of its racist manifestations work towards setting up and maintaining current political practices? By problematizing the past, the Maya have constructed the parameters for their own “limit-attitude”; the technologies they employ, the strategies and tactics they use, and the agonal subjectivity they have created, are founded, it could be argued, on an interplay between the Delphic and Socratic maxims “know yourself, but take care of yourself.” The pragmatic humanism to which I allude in respect of Maya practices may be seen as a rhetorical strategy designed to upset conventional (ladino) conceptions of truth, subjectivity, and freedom. It is to enact what the pragmatist Richard Bernstein has called Foucault’s hyperbolic “rhetoric of disruption” [Bernstein, 1992 #719: 154-5]. A rhetoric of disruption works as a “critical sting” that works to expose the ethico-political dangers of games of truth. So, perhaps we can look upon the pragmatic humanism of Maya practices as a like strategy: to expose the dangers surrounding the conceptualization of Maya subjectivity by non-Mayans.

To use the term “pragmatic humanism” is also to say that we all live in particular settings or configurations which might even reveal fundamental differences. In the case of the Maya is to suggest not that the persistence of social inequalities be overcome by a philosophy that purports to place the Maya, along with us, at the center of the universe, but to rid self-creativity and self-determination of its transcendental burdens so as to advance identity claims which will create a necessary fissure that can lead to open participation in a polycultural society. It is to expose the myth, along with Max Weber, that “progressive,” “objective” science, can tell us how to live our lives. Pragmatic humanism is to develop an enlightenmentality which means, as Foucault understands it, humanity putting its own reason to use, without subjecting itself to any authority. Foucault’s view of *Aufklärung* as the “permanent creation of ourselves in our autonomy” serves as a fitting maxim for Maya revitalization practices. These practices are not searches for “formal structures with universal value,” but are historical investigations into what events have led the Maya to recognize that, through critique, they can constitute, to different degrees, *themselves* as subjects.

Conclusions

From Humanism to Humanism: The New Order of Things

"[Foucault's theories] are not intended as permanent structures, enduring in virtue of their universal truth. They are temporary scaffoldings, erected for a specific purpose, that Foucault is happy to abandon to whomever might find them useful, once he has finished the job" (Gutting 1994: 16)

Foucault provokes. In stimulating, often frustrating ways. We cannot yet know how the full impact of his legacy will unravel. Foucault did not pretend to be the "conscience of humanity." He characterized his own intellectual engagement as providing tools for furthering the struggle against the modernist discourse of humanism in all of its transcendental weariness. "All of my books", he proclaimed, "are, if you will, little tool kits. If people wish to open them and make use of this certain phrase, idea, or analysis, as one would use a screwdriver or a wrench in order to short-circuit, disqualify, or break the systems of power, possibly even those from which my books are conceived ... well, so much the better."⁴⁸ This work has been premised on such an invitation. I have attempted to present a different, more enabling dimension of Foucault's thought while remaining aware of some of the underlying aporias inherent in his arguments.

Section One: Ethical, pragmatic humanism

Pragmatic humanism's challenge to metaphysical humanism is a challenge to withdraw from the "blackmail" of the Enlightenment. To have a pragmatic, yet human-istic, outlook does not mean that we march merrily, along with the Marquis de Condorcet, toward the indefinite perfectibility of the human species. With the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, along with a series of essays and interviews, Foucault delineates the parameters for an alternative to modernist ethics and conceptions of humanism. The ethical self-empowerment of the subject takes the place of a subject who was previously said to be thoroughly produced and determined by the chimera of knowledge production. It has been a major contention of this work that important dimensions of Foucault's later work have been overshadowed by the debates between those advancing Habermasian-like claims regarding the desirability of intersubjective, communicative foundations and the staunch Foucaultians who are anxious to draw out and extend Foucault's Nietzschean sensibilities. Rather than getting enmeshed in this somewhat stale debate, I have attempted to lend a new perspective to Foucault's work by situating him on the margins of a philosophy of the subject which sees Foucault occasionally borrowing assumptions from the humanist repertoire. But such a humanism does not rely, I have argued, upon a Cartesian certitude in which our already established relation to nature and the world around us

⁴⁸ Interview in *Le Monde*, 21 February 1975.

provides the ticket for a one-way trip to untrammelled equality, progress, and freedom. Our conscious states are not unified by a set of "always already" characteristics, but are constructed through an on-going relation to experience. That is the pragmatic dimension in Foucault's approach to our particular humanness. His ethical subject is an artifactual one; the self is not an essence, but a process of reflexive cultivation (Schubert 1995: 1008).

Critics of Foucault are quick to condemn his lack of a metaphysical ground as a form of modern apolitical Luddism (Thiele 1990: 908). Without a transcendent conception of humanity, they argue, Foucault leaves the modern subject in a helpless, nihilistic and relativistic void from which there is no hope of escape. Without a moral ground, resistance is futile. But, a closer look at Foucault's agonal subject gives pause for a different understanding of identity. For the later Foucault, agonal subjectivity is an *activity*. It is a way for subjects to practice their freedom over against the powers of normalization. And, by practicing our freedom, we are instrumental in the production and formation of our own identities. What changes with Foucault's forays into the ethical status of the subject is a transition from the "causally inert" subject of *The Order of Things* and the "subject as conduit" of *Discipline and Punish* to a subject capable of creating an alternative - through struggle- to both nihilism and a Cartesian stable identity. As Paul Thiele says, Foucault's Nietzscheanism is most clearly demonstrated in his view that the "aestheticization of life rather than its moralization would allow for individual autonomy without sacrificing creativity to norms" (Thiele 1990: 915). More pointedly,

[the] *aporias* in which Foucault is said to find himself, namely the seeming impossibility of justifying struggle without transcendental standards in a faithless (some might add *hopeless*) age were already illuminated by his mentor. Nietzsche's solution ... was an apolitical, tragic heroism, a philosophical and aesthetic life of continual self-overcoming. Foucault formulated its political analogue (Thiele 1990: 916).

I would add to this succinct formulation the suggestion that Foucault also re-politicized the doctrine of humanism by placing Heidegger's *humanitas* of *homo humanus* on an contingent, epochal and experiential plane. To act as a human subject is to *exercise* our subjectivity in contingent social and political formations. To be human means to have the capacity to make our own ethico-political choices within systems of power. We can make these choices by undertaking a genealogical deconstruction of our identities, through a historical reconstruction of our experience as human subjects, and through on-going agonal struggle in an arena where individuals can change the conditions under which they are constituted. It is that struggle, the struggle towards something positive, that lends substance to a Foucaultian defense of many of the rights defended in the humanist tradition; it is just that the grounds for their defense are, as Thiele concurs, different (Thiele 1990: 919). We cannot defend human rights, freedom of speech and our self-creating constitutions by resorting to a Kantian, already defined conception of being. But, we can search for a more pragmatic approach as a ground for ethical action. By conceptualizing human rights, freedom of speech and self-creativity as on-going

responses to constructions and contestations, we can both avoid essentializing ontological claims and ameliorate the conditions which make struggle necessary in the first place. "Pragmatic humanism" must thus be seen as a naming strategy for that which escapes naming; it is a recognition that, as human beings, we are never final in the sense of being completed projects, for to be a completed project means that there is no work left to be done.

Foucault's enlightenmentality consists of a "critical presentism" that necessitates reflecting upon the analysis of power and the struggle against limits as inexorably conjoined efforts. To this one might object that, because Foucault sees power as essentially productive, such a struggle is ultimately futile. But I have argued that a pragmatic reconceptualization of Foucault's approach to self-production saves him from falling back on a reductive ontology of power and subjectivity. Foucault's genealogical pragmatism starts from the hermeneutic assumption that a certain degrees of self-reflexivity allows actors to better understand the social world around them. By tracing these forms of self-reflexivity back to classical Greek, Hellenistic and Roman social formations, he demonstrates how actors have been capable of creating a form of self-conception. To be sure, one needs to draw this out in Foucault to save him from falling into a reductive abyss of dominating power relations, but the grounding for such an interpretation is nonetheless present in his later analyses of subject constitution. In "The Hermeneutic of the Subject," Foucault makes his position abundantly clear. The set of techniques whose purpose is to link together truth and the subject include the importance of listening, of reflecting on one's situation through personal writing, and the practice of "habitual self-reflection" (Foucault 1997: 101) which, together, facilitate an ethically motivated conception of self-empowerment that is not simply another form of domination, but is meant to establish the subject's independence relative to the external world.

A Pragmatic Politics of Contingency

Through his pragmatic, genealogical approach, Foucault introduces a new way of conceptualizing ethical self-formation. Through a *deconstruction* of transcendental metaphysics, Foucault *reconstructs* experience as contingent. A Foucaultian *politics* of contingency arises from his insistence that philosophy has a critical function, one that simultaneously problematizes both our relation to the present and the constitution of the self as an autonomous subject, a critical function which is, moreover, rooted in the Enlightenment (Foucault 1997: 312). Such a politics of contingency also informed the philosophy of Dewey. While Dewey arguably offers a "metaphysics of experience," (as opposed to a metaphysics of existence) which assumes that all experiences are equally exemplars of existence (Stuhr 1997: 127) and Foucault reconstructs experience through problematization, both approach the experience of humanity from a radical empiricist point of view that charts the irreducible connections between ethics and experience (Stuhr 1997: 128). For Dewey, experience constitutes reality and values can only be consequences of inquiry in forms of social experience; for Foucault, it may be said that contingent and contested forms of experience structure reality and that ethics are something that can be revealed as opposed to something that is already given. By making criticism aware of itself, by acquiring an enlightenmentality about the status of our intelligence and its ability to reconstruct experience, pragmatic humanism can work towards an always

partial, open-ended inquiry into the ethical self-constitution of the subject. In the view of John Stuhr, this is the language of questioning and coping, the optimism made possible by genealogy and critical reconstruction. It is to “disrobe” pragmatism through eventalization and problematization (Stuhr 1997: 244). Foucault’s optimism, like that of pragmatism, is made apparent by his statement that “I dream of a new age of curiosity. We have the technical means; the desire is there; there is an infinity of things to know; the people capable of doing such work exists” (Foucault 1997: 325-6).

Like Dewey, Foucault believes that ethics (or, in Dewey’s case, values) are a *consequence* of problematization (in Dewey’s case, inquiry), and not antecedents of it. The ethical consequences of problematization for the Greeks, for example, were framed in such a way as to make one’s life a work of art an aesthetic ideal. Foucault wonders if our problem is not similar to the Greek one in that we, like they, do not believe that our ethics is founded in religion, nor do we, like they, want a legal system to intervene in our moral, private lives (Foucault 1997: 255). For us, Foucault believes that “from the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art” (Foucault 1997: 262). Thus Foucault fuses Nietzsche’s optimism regarding life as the aestheticization of existence and pragmatism’s consequentialist outlook.

Ethical dialogism

There is a two-sided response to critics who find a lacuna in the lack of a dialogical conception of subjectivity in Foucault’s works. On the one hand, there *is* an inescapable internal dialogism at work in Foucault’s ethical writings. It is, in fact, the only alternative to the totalizing, monological play of forces that he explicitly rejects. When Foucault repudiates the notion of an abstract, ahistorical foundational subject, he is, if only in an ancillary way, promoting a type of life-affirming dialogue in the process of acculturation (Gardiner 1996). Christopher Falzon goes further in noting that Foucault is far from being an “inhumanist”; the social order is only intelligible in corporeal, human, dialogical terms or in the interplay of material human forces. And, we can only understand Foucault’s account of domination as a “relation of forces in which dialogue is arrested” (Falzon 1998: 43-51). In an interview with Paul Rabinow, Foucault suggests that the “rights” of each person depend upon the dialogical situation. It is only the rights given to one person by the other and the accepted form of dialogue that make up the “serious play of questions and answers” (Foucault 1997: 111-12). In addition, *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* are premised on the interplay of relations with others. Again, we can see Foucault’s consequentialism at work here; ethical forms of behavior and normative principles only emerge out of engagement with the other. Foucault’s dialogical ethics can be said to rest on a rejection of a transcendentalist ethics of the Kantian variety. Kantian ethics lack a dialogical dynamic in that our ethical commitments arise out of a self-imposed necessity. For Kant, the moral law is pure, a priori, and formal and is not therefore subject to experiential, historical principles (Schneewind 1992). Foucault explicitly rejects such a conception of ethics; his point is that external moral codes are bound up with prevailing structures of power and result in processes of normalization. One of the reasons Foucault was fascinated with the Stoic lifestyle is that he saw in the Stoics an ethics-as-aesthetics-as-choice style of existence as opposed to the

existence of ethical codes whose function was to normalize a population . Similarly, for the Greeks, there was no overarching ethical or moral code that governed the population; their ethical existence depended upon a relation to the self and to others. Friendship, for example, was a way of life which depended, obviously, on a certain reciprocity. To say that Foucault lacks a dialogical dynamic is thus to miss his fundamental normative point that our lives would be better played out by ridding ourselves of the idea that there is some overarching, monological ethical code to which we must submit in order to be true ethical subjects.

On the other hand, Foucault's dialogical ethics could be filled out, as Michael Gardiner suggests, with a more pointed Bakhtinian emphasis on a non-Kantian, Socratic dialogism which recognizes "intersubjective recognition and communicative praxis in the context of everyday social relationships." According to Gardiner, Bakhtin's antipathy towards Kantian essentialism leads him to formulate an ethics that is personalistic and non-domineering, yet which is grounded in everyday actions in a self/other relation (Gardiner 1996). However, I do not agree with Gardiner's ultimate sentencing of Foucault to a non-reciprocity in which the "imperious, self-validating" subject is ethically paramount. If that were the case, how do we account for the fact that his entire outlook is guided by a plea for the transgression of limits: in other words, by a desire to become something different, to create an otherness which opens up the possibility for transformation? Tacit though Foucault's dialogism may be at times, what is opposed most by him are practices in which an openness through dialogue is suppressed by transcendental, humanistic forces whose normalizing drives result in a totalizing ethico-political order.

Rescripting Power

Critics will point to the seemingly haphazard way by which Foucault rescripts power from essentially static and repressive to productive, and finally, to self-productive. But, if one looks past surface appearances, it will become evident that this rescription owes its underlying logic to a conception of power that shifted from a Nietzschean-inspired will-to-power to a self-determining form of power in light of Foucault's late alignment with Kant and the Enlightenment. Foucault's Kantian critique in *The Order of Things* was premised, as we saw, on a rejection of the modern *episteme's* ordering of codes. When natural history was supplanted by the study of life and biology, when general grammar underwent a fundamental reordering from words, things, and straightforward representations to the study of philology, and when the study of wealth and production were now assembled under the scientific rubric of economics, the order of things became grounded in the study of anthropological "man." The emergence of modern humanism signaled, for Foucault, an even more acute crisis of representation than Kant had lamented in relation to metaphysics, for it closed off the channels of freedom that had been open to thought during a time when human beings, not "man," existed. In Foucault's view, it was only Nietzsche who saw this and whose "Promise-Threat" indicated that it was not so much the death of God that was affirmed as the end of man: "what Nietzsche's thought heralds is the end of [God's] murderer; it is the explosion of man's face in laughter, and the return of masks" (Foucault 1970: 322). What all of this is leading to

is the suggestion that, in his archaeological phase, Foucault's conception of power was fashioned along the lines of a *cognitive-repressive* hypothesis; modern thought was "amoral" in the sense that it had become a "perilous act." And, it was principally to Nietzsche to whom we must look if contemporary philosophy is to "think again" and fill the void left by man's disappearance (Foucault 1970: 342).

Foucault's introduction of a social-theoretic account of power signaled a change of direction in which power was now said to be simultaneously pervasive and productive. Foucault is perhaps best known for this productive-positive account of power in which power is seen as a mobile, interplay of "force relations" circulating in and through the social body. Foucault's Nietzscheanism becomes more pronounced with this new understanding of power. He interprets Nietzsche's perspectival understanding of knowledge as strategic:

When Nietzsche speaks of the perspectival character of knowledge, he is pointing to the fact that there is knowledge only in the form of a certain number of actions that are different from one another ... actions by which the human being violently takes hold of a certain number of things, reacts to a certain number of situations, and subjects them to relations of force. The perspectival character of knowledge derives not from human nature but always from the polemical and strategic character of knowledge. One can speak of the perspectival character of knowledge because there is a battle, and knowledge is the result of this battle (Foucault 2000: 14).

Knowledge and power are thus implicated in a mutual relation with one another; power becomes productive because it both individualizes and totalizes subjects. In Foucault's view, Nietzsche's philosophy of force pointed to the "hazardous play of dominations" as well as the futility of the search for "origins." Genealogical analysis could show that "emergence" is always produced in a particular state of forces, and not at the root of man's attachment to being and truth (Foucault 1998a: 371). In the "endless repeated play of dominations," one finds a will to power lurking behind history's force field; it is only through critique, "reversal," and by turning reason and the "tools of history" against themselves that one could understand the "demagoguery" of productive power (Foucault 1998a: 381-3). In *The History of Sexuality*, volume I, Foucault continues to view power relations as "self-producing" and strategic in nature. The discourses on sex can reveal the tactical efficacy of power, the reciprocal effects of power and knowledge that such strategies ensure. These "force relationships" have shifted from being the essential kernel of warfare to the essential kernel of the order of political power (Foucault 1980a: 100-2).

If Nietzsche's critical genealogical method informed Foucault's approach to power until the late 1970s, it was Kant's legacy to which he turned in his writings on ethics. In the final analysis, Foucault sought to define the parameters for a new ethico-political outlook that might work towards a definition of the "undefined work of freedom." Power is now seen as essentially self-producing; it is not that Foucault ceased to analyze the dominating effects of power relations, but added, I am claiming, an enabling, self-reflexive dimension to his genealogical approach to power. Through ethical self-formation, subjects vest in themselves a form of power that would enable

them to transgress the delimitating effects of humanist political rationality. Kant's plea that we not look for any external authority outside ourselves for the production of (self)knowledge led Foucault to place his own transgressive hypothesis more firmly on Kantian ground. As was argued in chapter five, Foucault's borrowed on Kant's notion of "critique," construing it in late modern terms as an "attitude", as an ethical imperative to construct the widest notion of freedom possible, and one which affirms the desirability of struggle against delimitation. Critique was associated with the acquisition of an enlightenmentality which was, in effect, the self-production of power, either through the acquisition of knowledge, or through practices of freedom, but both of which heralded a form of self-mastery and self-discipline outside, as far as possible, juridical forms.

To grasp the nature of Foucault's changing approaches to power, he must thus be understood as having shifted from an all-embracing, ubiquitous and disciplinary conception of power to an subject-centered analysis in which individuals were said to govern themselves. We will not know how or if further shifts in Foucault's conception of power might have played themselves out, but it is clear that, in the end, his was an optimistic attitude about subjects' self-creating powers.

Historically contingent identity politics

In using the Maya of Guatemala as an instance of how subjects have begun to fashion themselves in the face of the delimiting strategies deployed by the state, I have attempted to demonstrate in late Foucaultian terms how critique and the concomitant development of an enlightenmentality can work towards opening up a space for identity claims and self-empowerment without, however, essentializing identity along prelinguistic, ahistorical lines. The ethico-political struggles that I have argued are at the heart of Maya revitalization practices are not merely instances of a struggle to define identity positions, but are struggles that have as their aim judicial and economic redistribution. Why do we need Foucault as a guide for this understanding? First of all, we can see in Foucault the ethico-political assumptions necessary for the kinds of identity claims that are being negotiated by the Maya: that such claims are not wholly discursive, but tend to reach outward and that experience provides a basis for an ethical and political understanding. Second, as the pragmatist Hilary Putnam nicely puts it, philosophy "which is all argument feeds no real hunger, while philosophy which is all vision feeds a real hunger, but it feeds it Pablum" (Putnam 1995: 23). There remains much work to be done regarding what forms Foucault's ethico-political sensibilities might assume in relation to real social configurations where the struggle for cultural, economic and political recognition remains a hindrance to forms of freedom.

Maya revitalization practices are activities that are carried out by embodied, human beings attempting to work within a framework that is historically and contingently emergent and establish a social order that is equitable. The harnessing of creative forces among the Maya indicates that there is something that is necessarily positive and open about their attitude toward political practice; by engaging in a dialogue with history, they have begun to open up the possibilities for resistance to domination through a more indirect and nuanced (i.e., less violent) approach. Seen in this light, ethico-political practice becomes a tool, or an instrument for the realization of creative transgression. But such ethical sensibilities do not foreclose the need for

some form of organization and regulation; self-forming activity need not be free-floating activity, but are specific instances of the means by which groups like the Maya can organize both thought and action. Georges Canguilem's definition of culture is an appropriately fitting one, and it stands out as especially fitting in relation to Maya cultural activism. Culture, he writes, is a "code that orders human experience in three respects; linguistic, perceptual, [and] practical" (Canguilem 1994:76). The organization of thought and action in Mayan ethico-political practices may be seen as lying precisely along such lines in terms of the revival of language, the establishment of uniquely Maya forms of knowledge, and the general cultural practices that are the driving force of revitalization.

This is how Foucault defines ascetic practice: asceticism not in the sense of a type of self-renunciation, but as an exercise by which subjects attempt to attain to a certain mode of being through self-forming thought and action, that is, one of freedom. And, as Foucault now agrees, exercises of practices of freedom require a certain degree of liberation which paves the way for new power relationships which in turn must be controlled by practices of freedom (Foucault 1997: 283-4).

Concluding Remarks

Foucaultian Humanism?

It might justifiably be asked: why even burden Foucault with the label "humanist?" Why not call his later work on ethics something else, something that would distance him from a doctrine he found to be so insidious and delimiting? It seems to me that to have a human-istic account of subject formation does not entail a commitment to ahistorical, transcendental, or metaphysical "truths." Foucault's conception of the human subject is very different from those who resort to universalist foundations for an ethical grounding. There is no attempt by him to formulate, in the complex interplay of social forces, an all-embracing, totalizing conception of the human being. Foucault's humanism stresses the agonal, embodied facets of human existence. The methodological refusal of the transcendental amounts to an ethical principle which affirms the practical attainment of the broadest scope of freedom possible. Foucault here enters, however tentatively, upon the ground of a philosophy of the subject by making the ideal of freedom a semi-regulative principle, and indeed this introduces a tension in relation to his refusal to formulate a normative theory. But, along with his introduction of freedom as an ideal is his insistence that we problematize existing forms of social organizations, and thereby open up a space for the practice of human freedom through ethical resistance.

Foucault's rejection of the transcendental rests on his objection to fixed, determinate limits. This is why he is tentative about formulating an ethical theory in the first place. However, that he sought to think beyond such limits gives him reason to reject transcendental humanism. Nevertheless, Foucault's humanism is premised on the obvious; we are all human being living amidst other human beings, and that means that we are in a continual engagement with other human beings, whether such engagement be within war-like battle lines, or whether it be as ethical subjects striving for self-definition and self-invention. A rejection of transcendental humanism need not lead to an essentialist reverence for the other, for that would involve a repetition of metaphysics; all we can know is that there is fragmentation, and thus, we

can only resort to a relativistic outlook about social and cultural forms, and must even acknowledge the fragmented nature of individuals living within those forms. But, such a view is no less totalizing than that of metaphysics in that it assumes a unitary (fragmented) conception of social organization.

How, finally, can we see the later Foucault's ethics as *pragmatic*, genealogical humanism? We must begin by understanding pragmatism as a philosophy of plural, human experiences. Pragmatism insists on the primacy of the partial, the particular, and the plural. The practical meaning of any situation has to be *sought for*. Dewey makes this point clear when he defines the process of inquiry, one that is exacted when we observe the detailed makeup of the situation, analyze its diverse factors, clarify what is obscure, and trace the consequences of the various modes of action that suggest themselves (Dewey 1972: 163-4). On Dewey's account, this is the work of *intelligence*; on Foucault's account, this is the work of *thought*, or problematization. By problematizing each "positivity" as Foucault once put it, by studying, for example, sexuality, and other social practices, we can come closer to understanding how certain domains of action or behaviors entered the field of thought; what made it uncertain? How did it become a general problem within existing socio-economic and political formations? How, then, can we develop such problems into questions so as to come up with possible solutions? Pragmatism's pluralism and Foucault's genealogical humanism both require, through recourse to experience, partial and temporary solutions to the problem of who we are to become. The only certitude we can rely on, according to pragmatism, is death. In Foucault's new order of things, human finitude does not lie in the indefinite perfectibility of the human species, but in the fact that our ethico-political activity arises pragmatically out of the complex interplay of human, corporeal forces. So understood, why *not* call it "humanism?"

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