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Worlds Apart? Sartre, Foucault, and the Question of Freedom

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ABSTRACT

Readily acknowledged as two of the intellectual giants of twentieth century French thought, Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault are typically depicted as philosophical opposites. Sartre and Foucault are certainly distinct philosophers, but such a portrayal all too often obscures important similarities in their thought. This thesis, by arguing that Sartre and Foucault are not worlds apart on the question of freedom, attempts to bridge the distance that is commonly regarded to exist between these two. This task is accomplished by bringing to light specific affinities between Sartre and Foucault on the issue of freedom that occur at different junctures in their oeuvres.

By proceeding with a critical intention in mind, this thesis provides an interpretative analysis that elucidates three important similarities between Sartre and Foucault: first, it will be shown that when Foucault, in his later thought, unequivocally raises the issue of freedom, he proposes an ethical orientation that is not markedly different from the one suggested by Sartre in his early existentialism. Both Sartre and Foucault put forth an ethical motive that relates to the creativity of the subject. It will be argued that this idea of creative freedom, implicit in Sartre's notion of authentic freedom and explicit in Foucault's proposal for an aesthetics of existence, can be related to an historical idea of artistic freedom, specifically, the autonomy that modern art promises. By showing that the concept of freedom which modern art presumes is a contentious issue, this thesis also argues that the idea of creative freedom in Sartre and Foucault is nothing less than an empty ethical suggestion.

By tracing the theme of the gaze in Sartre and Foucault, the next motive will to be show that their thought is motivated by a similar recognition: the notion that humans gaze upon themselves and their world through an objective lens that limits freedom. It will be argued that this insight can be associated with another insight that Sartre and Foucault share: the idea that universal morality is impossible. Although morality, in the eyes of Sartre and Foucault, is impossible, it will be argued that their political activity, while not revealing a universal moral project, nevertheless discloses an ethical impetus.

The final convergence that will be presented is that Sartre and Foucault, via different avenues, illustrate that freedom takes place in a socio-historical field that governs and determines its possibilities. Although this conclusion is a result of each thinker's engagement with history, it will be argued that neither Sartre or Foucault presents a convincing way out of this historical nightmare. In fact, by considering the implications of their refusal to introduce an idea of the good into the social field, it will be shown that both reduce the status of freedom to a negative concept.

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ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS FREQUENTLY CITED

Abbreviations of works by Foucault used:

- DE I* = *Dits et écrits I, 1954-1975*, Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 2001.
- DE II* = *Dits et écrits II, 1976-1988*, Paris: Quarto Gallimard, 2001.
- HF* = *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1972.
- HS* = *Histoire de la sexualité, 1. La volonté de savoir*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976.
- IFDS* = *«Il faut défendre la société»*, Paris: Gallimard Seuil, 1997.
- MC* = *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1966.
- NC* = *Naissance de la clinique. Une archéologie du regard médical*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963.
- SP* = *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1975.
- SS* = *Histoire de la sexualité, 3. Le Souci de soi*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1984.
- UP* = *Histoire de la sexualité, 2. L'usage des plaisirs*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1984.

Abbreviations of works by Sartre used:

- CRD* = *Critique de la Raison dialectique, I. Théorie des ensembles pratiques*, Paris: Bibliothèque de Philosophie, 1985.
- CM* = *Cahiers pour une morale*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1983.
- EN* = *L'être et le néant. Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1970.
- EH* = *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, Paris: Les Éditions Nagel, 1970.
- I* = *L'Imaginaire. Psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1966.
- RQJ* = *Réflexions sur la question juive*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1954.
- SG* = *Saint Genet. Comédien et martyr*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1952.
- QM* = *Questions de méthode*, in *Critique de la Raison dialectique I*.
- TE* = *La Transcendance de l'ego. Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique*, Paris: Librairie Philosophique, 1978.

INTRODUCTION

Si, en effet, l'existence précède l'essence ... l'homme est libre, l'homme est liberté.

Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme*.

L'homme disparaît en philosophie, non pas comme objet de savoir mais comme sujet de liberté et d'existence.

Michel Foucault, *Foucault répond à Sartre*

Bernard-Henri Lévy remarks that after May of '68 many may have been astonished at the various sightings of Michel Foucault and Jean-Paul Sartre marching together in support of common political causes.¹ Lévy, however, asserts that such a spectacle should not have been a surprise, as philosophically Foucault and Sartre were always close. Lévy's claim is baffling for the reason that it undermines the common portrayal of these two. James Bernauer, for instance, maintains that as thinkers Foucault and Sartre are "quite far from one another".² J.G. Merquior states that "in Foucault, there is, to my mind, no major Sartrean echo".³ In his biography of Foucault, James Miller reports that on the day of Sartre's funeral, Foucault announced that he desired to renounce Sartre and all that

¹ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Le siècle de Sartre*, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2000, 258.

² James W. Bernauer, *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight*, New Jersey, London: Humanities Press, Inc., 1990, 229n86.

³ J.G. Merquior, *Foucault*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985, 157.

he represented.⁴ According to Neil Levy, Foucault and his generation viewed themselves as being if not postmodern then at least post *Les temps modernes*.⁵ To this point, in an interview in *La Quinzaine littéraire* from 1966, Foucault explains:

D'une façon très soudaine, et sans qu'il y ait apparemment de raison, on s'est aperçu, il y a environ quinze ans, qu'on était très, très loin de la génération précédente, de la génération de Sartre, de Merleau-Ponty – génération des *Temps modernes* qui avait été notre loi pour penser et notre modèle pour exister ... (DE I 541).

As recounted by Foucault, for no obvious reason, he and his contemporaries were able to step out from under the shadow cast by the generation of Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Lending credence to the existence of a generational rift between Sartre and France's next wave of thinkers, Annie Cohen-Solal, in her biography of Sartre, notes that in 1964 Sartre seemed to be drifting from the intellectual currents of his time, and relates that:

alors qu'en France on se passionnait pour Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Lacan, Althusser, et Foucault, Sartre refusait de regarder en face -- ou avec l'ouverture d'esprit qui eût été utile -- ces méthodes d'investigation si fécondes.⁶

Thus, there does not seem to be any foundation for Lévy's above assertion regarding the affinity between the thought of Foucault to Sartre. Moreover, such a declaration is complicated by the attitude that these two expressed toward each other's work, and each other.

During their careers, in spite of a number of publicly shared political concerns, the relation between Foucault and Sartre was – at times – tenuous. Although separated in death by only four years, the generation gap between them conveyed that they were worlds apart on philosophical

⁴ James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore: Simon & Schuster, 1993, 38.

⁵ Neil Levy, 'Untimely Meditations: Periodising Recent French Thought', *Symposium*, II, 1, 1998, 63.

⁶ Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre, 1905-1980*, Paris: Gallimard, 1989, 746.

issues.⁷ Neither did much to downplay such a suggestion. Their antagonistic assaults toward one another, played out in the French weeklies, only perpetuated this assumption. Although this war of words essentially rested on each philosopher's view of the uses and abuses of history, the tone that it took was nasty. Each would accuse the other of being an agent of bourgeois imperialism: an ultimate insult for a French intellectual of this period.⁸ A week after some of his harshest comments on Sartre were published, Foucault⁹ – by means of a letter to the editors of *La Quinzaine littéraire* – would renege on his remarks.¹⁰ He explained that while Sartre's work marked an era, he and many others were working in new directions. In the same breath, in what can only have been a show of

⁷ For instance, Foucault explains: "Il y a eu la grande époque de la philosophie contemporaine, celle de Sartre, de Merleau-Ponty où un texte philosophique, un texte théorique devait finalement vous dire ce que c'était que la vie, la mort, la sexualité, si Dieu existait ou si Dieu n'existait pas, ce que c'était que la liberté, ce qu'il fallait faire dans la vie politique, comment se comporter avec autrui, etc. Cette sorte de philosophie-là, on a l'impression que maintenant elle ne peut plus avoir cours, que, si vous voulez, la philosophie s'est, sinon volatilisée, mais comme dispersée, qu'il y a un travail théorique qui se conjugue au pluriel en quelque sorte" (DE I 690).

⁸ Commenting on *Les mots et les choses*, Sartre states: "Une tendance dominante, au moins, car le phénomène n'est pas général: c'est le refus de l'histoire. Le succès qu'on a fait au dernier livre de Michel Foucault est caractéristique. ... Le succès de son livre prouve assez qu'on l'attendait. Or une pensée vraiment originale n'est jamais attendue. Foucault apporte aux gens ce dont ils avaient besoin: une synthèse éclectique où Robbe Grillet, le structuralisme, la linguistique, Lacan, *Tel Quel* sont utilisés tour à tour pour démontrer l'impossibilité d'une réflexion historique. Derrière l'histoire, bien entendu, c'est le marxisme qui est visé. Il s'agit de constituer une idéologie nouvelle, le dernier barrage que le bourgeois puisse encore dresser contre Marx" (Sartre, 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond', in *Michel Foucault, Volume I: Critical Assessments*, edited by Barry Smart, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, 67-68. Originally published in *L'Arc* 30, 1966, 87-96). In light of Sartre's accusations, Foucault responds: "Je vous répondrai deux choses. Premièrement, Sartre est un homme qui a une oeuvre trop importante à accomplir, oeuvre littéraire, philosophique, politique, pour qu'il ait eu le temps de lire mon livre. Il ne l'a pas lu. ... Deuxièmement, je vais vous faire un aveu. J'ai été au Parti communiste autrefois, oh! pour quelques mois, ou un peu plus que quelques mois, et je sais qu'à ce moment-là Sartre était défini par nous comme le dernier rempart de l'impérialisme bourgeois, la dernière pierre de l'édifice par lequel, etc., bon, cette phrase, je la retrouve avec un étonnement amusé, quinze ans après, sous la plume de Sartre. Disons que nous avons tourné autour du même axe, lui et moi" (DE I 694).

⁹ This certainly was not the first time that Foucault was quick to criticize Sartre. See Michel Foucault, 'Entretien avec Madeleine Chapsal' (DE I 541-546).

¹⁰ In a somewhat conciliatory tone Foucault, to the editors of *La Quinzaine littéraire*, writes: "Chers amis, Vous savez en quelle estime je tiens votre journal et l'effort que vous y faites. ... Un collaborateur de l'O.R.T.F. vient de vous communiquer un entretien avec moi, que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de publier. Or: ... Plusieurs passages (l'un concernant Jean-Paul Sartre, l'autre ma vie passée) étaient des explications données *a parte* pour justifier – à titre privé – mon refus de répondre à certaines questions" (Foucault, 'Une mise au point de Michel Foucault', DE I 697-698).

mock humility, Foucault added that his little enterprise of historical investigation did not warrant comparison to the grand oeuvre of Sartre (*DE I* 698).

From Foucault's comments in the sixties it is evident that he sees no grounds for a comparison between his studies and the work of Sartre. Considering that Sartre views the methodological assumptions of Foucault's 'little enterprise' as fundamentally flawed, the feeling appears mutual. But more poignantly, the grand oeuvre of Foucault does not seem to bear any likeness to that of Sartre. In fact, Foucault appears as a thinker who travels on a different path than Sartre. Lest it be forgotten, he had coolly announced that man was an invention of recent date, and was associated with structuralism – a movement Sartre was very critical of. In the sixties Sartre appeared so out of step with the intellectual trends of the day that Foucault described him as a man of the nineteenth century trying to think the twentieth (*DE I* 570). Seemingly, an apt description, since Sartre seems to be a thinker who is wedded to the modern tradition: his life-long obsession with freedom is telling, as is his declaration that existentialism is a humanism. Besides, at a time when grand narratives or totalizing discourses were being looked upon with suspicion, Sartre attempted to synthesize existentialism with Marxism. What would encourage a study of these two? How could such an endeavour be justified? Is not the generation gap telling?

In 1980, Mikel Dufrenne observed that "within Parisian intellectual circles, Sartre is no longer fashionable".¹¹ Indeed, Dufrenne's assessment rings true: Sartre appears as the elder statesman of a bygone era in French thought who stubbornly refuses to contemplate new developments. In the generation that followed, Foucault certainly was not the only thinker upon whom Sartre set his

¹¹ Mikel Dufrenne, 'Sartre and Merleau-Ponty', translated by Hugh J. Silverman and Frederick A. Elliston, in *The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*, edited by Jon Stewart, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1998, 279.

critical sights.¹² By the same token, Foucault's attitude toward Sartre was widely shared by his contemporaries.¹³ The initial hostility toward Sartre from the philosophical generation that came after him evolved into a silence on his thought.¹⁴ In fact, in France, during the 1970s and 80s, Sartre's reputation suffered from an almost total eclipse.¹⁵ Given Sartre's reluctance to move out from under the spotlight, a certain degree of antagonism was to be expected. Yet, as the ears of Brian Seitz detect, given the enormity of Sartre's stature in French thought not too long ago, the lack of any serious discussion of him was curious.

In the secondary literature surrounding the generation in France that followed Sartre, a lacuna of any thoughtful engagement with his thought is evident. According to Philip R. Wood:

extended confrontation with Sartre's work has been noticeably absent in the post-Sartrean philosophy, being restricted, when reference has been direct, to scathing dismissals without recourse to analysis or argument, or, when reference has been allusive, to superior scorn. When critical mention of Sartre has been pertinent and extremely valuable, it has tended to be lapidary and incidental.¹⁶

¹² In addition to Foucault, Sartre would also criticize Claude Lévi-Strauss, Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan. As diverse as the thought of these individuals was, Sartre would nevertheless lump them under the heading of structuralism. See Sartre, 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond'.

¹³ One exception being Gilles Deleuze. See Deleuze's piece on Sartre: 'Il été mon maître', *Arts*, 28 October-3 November 1964, 8-9.

¹⁴ Seitz explains that "the philosophical styles and generations that have emerged in France since Sartre have seemed to suffer from what literary critic Harold Bloom has called 'the anxiety of influence'. One of the most prominent symptoms of this anxiety is a disavowal of any link to indebtedness to Sartre" (Brian Seitz, 'The Identity of the Subject after Sartre, An Identity Marked by the Denial of Identity', *Philosophy Today*, Winter 1991, 264). As opposed to anxiety, Constantin V. Boundras observes that in the writings of those thinkers we call 'poststructuralists', Sartre seems to occupy a highly ambiguous place (Constantin V. Boundras, 'Foreclosure of the Other: From Sartre to Deleuze', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 24 No.1, January 1993, 32).

¹⁵ Gary Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 374n48.

¹⁶ Philip R. Wood, 'Derrida Engagé and Poststructuralist Sartre: a Redefinition of Shifts in Recent French Philosophy', *MLN*, Vol. 104, No. 4, 1989, 861.

Without a doubt, this absence of dialogue is an oddity, since Sartre, along with de Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty, was a member of a generation that defined – in an unprecedented way – a great part of the intellectual landscape of twentieth century France. All the same, Levy observes that in opening a work on Foucault, it has almost become a cliché to find the commentator begin with a sketch of the philosophical environment in which Foucault came to maturity only to show how he was able to overthrow this way of analysis.¹⁷ Foucault himself subscribes to this assessment. By his account, for various reasons, around 1950-55, the horizon of reflection that initially shaped his outlook¹⁸ was suddenly erased. What was left in the wake of this erasure, according to Foucault, was "une sorte de grand espace vide" (*DE I* 695). An odd comment from an individual whose studies certainly demonstrate that history influences how individuals see and talk about things. Then again it is not so strange, as Foucault gives the impression of the confident young rogue who was able to turn the philosophical tables, in effect, rendering Sartre -- and his generation -- irrelevant. In light of this observation, a study of Foucault and Sartre seems further hindered by the fact that they are cut off from each other by an event that abruptly divided French thought.

Common sense almost dictates that the fact Foucault and Sartre would join forces to protest specific political issues entails that they were contemporaries and not representatives of two different epochs. Were they not reacting to events of their present day? Yet sound judgement does not always prevail. The belief that Foucault was able to participate in upsetting the philosophical tradition – in fact, witness it vanish without a trace – is one that is widely circulated. In its simplest formulation,

¹⁷ Neil Levy, *Being Up-To-Date: Foucault, Sartre, and Postmodernity*, New York, Washington D.C./Baltimore, Boston, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2001, 12-13.

¹⁸ In the words of Foucault: "J'appartiens à une génération de gens pour qui l'horizon de la réflexion était défini par Husserl d'une façon générale, plus précisément Sartre, plus précisément encore Merleau-Ponty" (*DE I* 695).

this explanation subscribes to a before-and-after dichotomy: before, there was modernity and after, postmodernity. Abiding by this reasoning, postmodernity initiates a "fundamental break" in the history of philosophy which, in turn, implies that the majority of the thinkers on the earlier side of the rupture are *passé*.¹⁹ Remarking on this logic, Sonia Kruks explains that postmodernity recounts the travails of a small group of thinkers, distinct in location (France) and time (since the 1960s), who have performed the truly Herculean task of capsizing the entire previous Western tradition.²⁰ Kruks recognizes that this account introduces "for and against" debates which imply that one choose along specific lines: Does one support Enlightenment or postmodern positions? Humanism or antihumanism? The Cartesian knowing subject or the death of the subject?²¹ To these questions it may be added: Does one express agreement with Sartre or with Foucault?

Presenting history in terms of a fundamental break may be useful for portraying issues or thinkers in a black and white fashion but, at the same time, such a feat is carried out at the expense of distorting the complexity of a topic or for that matter a thinker. Such an explanation also belittles the complexity of history itself. With respect to the alleged rupture between modernity and postmodernity, this explanation fails to address the fact that many of the themes that postmodernity claims as distinctively its own are largely shared with modernity.²² The reasoning behind arriving at such a conclusion is too forced and rigid. On the topic of Foucault and Sartre, the notion of a fundamental break perpetuates a generation gap which dictates that because Foucault is a postmodern

¹⁹ Levy, *Being-Up-To-Date*, vii.

²⁰ Sonia Kruks, *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001, 2.

²¹ Kruks, *Retrieving Experience*, 3.

²² Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, vii.

thinker his thought is therefore incommensurable with that of the modern philosopher Sartre (and vice versa). Without a doubt Foucault and Sartre are distinct philosophers indebted to certain intellectual formulations. However, if the equivocal labels that a generation gap entails are removed, might the anxiety associated between these two be alleviated? If a closer look at a common concern in their thought were taken, might it possibly be discovered that their oeuvres are not incommensurable, but actually converge at key junctures? Could such tasks prove fruitful, perhaps, even enlighten our present?

In this thesis, neither a dialogue nor a debate between postmodernity and modernity is the order of the day.²³ As a substitute, this thesis will offer the following: it will show that with the twentieth century just behind us, hindsight affords the opportunity to see that the thought of two of France's most prominent thinkers from this century is not, as commonly perceived, worlds apart.²⁴ This thesis will expose the generation gap between Foucault and Sartre, explained along the lines of a rupture, as a chimera. Giving credence to B-H Lévy's claim that Foucault and Sartre are not philosophical strangers, this thesis will illustrate that just as they found themselves side by side on the streets protesting political issues, so too can their thought be seen on a common horizon – a plane intimately linked to the question of freedom. To accomplish this task, light will be thrown upon

²³ Commenting on this debate Richard J. Bernstein cautions: "Anyone with even the most superficial acquaintance with recent debates can scarcely avoid noticing that the terms 'modernity' and 'postmodernity' are slippery, vague, and ambiguous. They have wildly different meanings within different cultural disciplines and even within the same discipline. There is no consensus or agreement about the multiple meanings of these treacherous terms. Furthermore there is the paradox that many thinkers who are labeled 'postmodern', do not think of themselves as 'postmodern' or even use this expression" (Richard J. Bernstein, *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991, 11). For two important works related to this debate see Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, translated by Frederick G. Lawrence, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993 and Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, Paris: Minuit, 1979.

²⁴ Possibly, if successful, this task will encourage us to rethink commonly held assumptions that surround the debate between postmodernity and modernity.

convergences in the oeuvres of Foucault and Sartre on the subject of freedom. Moreover, by studying these two in tandem, their thought will be framed in such a manner that a greater respect for the stakes of this timely notion will be achieved.

Before outlining precisely how this task will be carried out, perhaps it would be pertinent to contextualize the thought of Foucault and Sartre.

History can be unpredictable, and the intellectual trajectory of Foucault illustrates just this point. The years of 1966 to 1969 witnessed the dramatic rise of Foucault's stock on the French intellectual scene. Though *Folie et déraison* had been published to academic acclaim in 1961, in the years that followed Foucault yearned to craft a work that might reach beyond the academy, and touch Sartre's larger public.²⁵ The surprise best-seller *Les mots et les choses* proved to be just this work. The intricate subject matter and technical arguments of this study would not lead one to predict that it would become as popular as it did. Nevertheless, in 1966, the May 23-29 issue of the French news weekly *L'Express* featured Foucault with the headline "LA PLUS GRANDE REVOLUTION DEPUIS L'EXISTENTIALISME".²⁶ "L'homme est une invention récente" read the caption underneath a picture of a stern looking Foucault. *Les mots et les choses* would be followed in 1969 by the equally demanding *L'archéologie du savoir*. Foucault had certainly reached Sartre's broad audience, and in the process, seemingly dethroned Sartre. Whereas freedom had been front and centre in Sartre's philosophy, this concept was absent from the discourse of Foucault. The analyses carried out in *Les mots et les choses* and *L'archéologie du savoir* would lead one to surmise that freedom, like man, was an outdated relic. In fact, during this period Foucault explained that man

²⁵ Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 125.

²⁶ *L'Express*, 23-29 mai 1966, 119.

disappears from philosophy as a subject of freedom and existence (*DE I* 692). Yet, toward the end of his intellectual path, the unforeseeable play of history would see Foucault engage explicitly with the same subject that had initiated Sartre's thought.

Foucault is important for the reason that though he was an emphatic critic of certain theories of freedom, he did nevertheless frankly resurrect freedom in the latter stages of his thought, and attempt to steer it in a new direction. Of equal importance, freedom would provide his intellectual pursuits with a critical thrust that many commentators had previously found lacking, and at the same time, in the eyes of Foucault, it would furnish his studies with a certain focus and coherence.

Though the fashion police of 1980 Paris may have deemed Sartre to be yesterday's man, the headline of an issue of *Le Nouvel observateur* from 2000 declares: "APRÈS VINGT ANS DE PURGATOIRE SARTRE REVIENT".²⁷ Seemingly, Sartrean crimes against fashion have been forgiven. In spite of the fact Sartre may have been in purgatory, it is doubtful he was ever absent. Even in 1980, Dufrenne was quick to mention: "But let us make no mistake: whatever the ebbs and flow of fashion may be, Sartre is profoundly present for our present age".²⁸ B-H Lévy boldly entitles his recent work on Sartre, *Le siècle de Sartre*. But just what is it about Sartre's thought that makes its existence so resilient, possibly a defining point of the twentieth century?

Gary Gutting argues that it is precisely because Sartre brings thinking about freedom to a peak of intensity that he remains the central French philosopher of the twentieth century.²⁹ "Sartre", according to Gutting, "is the philosopher of freedom par excellence":

²⁷ *Le Nouvel observateur*, 13-19 Janvier 2000.

²⁸ Dufrenne, 'Sartre and Merleau-Ponty', 279.

²⁹ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 387.

not only for the unparalleled detail and subtlety of his phenomenological descriptions and ontological explanations of it, but also for his continual struggle to embed it in the realities of society and history.³⁰

Freedom is the *raison d'être* for Sartre's work -- its stature in his philosophy almost goes without saying.

With respect to Foucault and Sartre, we have one philosopher who unequivocally raises the spectre of freedom toward the end of his lifelong work and another whose thought is almost synonymous with this concept. At this point, possibly it would be beneficial to determine if these two can be aligned with a tradition of social and political thought, and see if any resonances in their itineraries can be detected.

On the topic of Foucault, Barry Allen cautions that we must not be misled by trendy clichés that suppose that because he is a postmodern thinker, his thought has little or nothing to do with the modern tradition.³¹ On the contrary, Allen brings to light that Foucault is indebted to the tradition of European modernity which is characterized by two new and obliquely moral dispositions: "an ethos of individuality" and "an ethos of authority".³² To these two moral attitudes, "correspond two different ideas about what it is to govern and what makes government good".³³ The ethos of authority requires governments to expand the range of legal rights and to embrace wholly new projects in the name of some collective good that is supposed to take precedence over the merely individual. The ethos of individuality, on the other hand, advocates a government that recognizes and promotes the

³⁰ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 387.

³¹ Barry Allen, 'Foucault and Modern Political Philosophy', in *The Later Foucault: Politics and Philosophy*, London, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1998, 165.

³² Allen, 'Foucault and Modern Political Philosophy', 166.

³³ Allen, 'Foucault and Modern Political Philosophy', 166.

largest number of different patterns of conduct by individuals.³⁴ As argued by Allen, it is this latter movement that Foucault is aligned with, since he is in the tradition that spurns the authority of collective goals, and promotes the freedom of individual goals.³⁵

Sam Coombes remarks that one important aspect of Sartre's trajectory is that it intrinsically problematizes the whole question of the relationship of the individual subject to any notion of an ideological system.³⁶ According to Coombes, even Sartre's notoriously apolitical prewar days are marked by his anti-authoritarian and anti-establishment impulses. It is precisely these inclinations that Philip Knee argues shed light on the "most elusive object" in Sartre – his conception of "political legitimacy".³⁷ Knee observes that "Sartre tries to come to grips with the political problem of modernity: the self-institution of a society without the transcendent framework of legitimacy".³⁸ In the eyes of Knee, in spite of the fact that Sartre may share a common moralism with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, what sets Sartre apart is that while Rousseau, in his *Contract*, tries to translate the ideals of natural existence into conventions and artificial institutions, Sartre, on the other hand, does not create a method for the elaboration of legitimate forms of collective existence inasmuch as a logic for the subversion of all such forms.³⁹ Knee notes astutely that the "structuring thesis" of Sartre's

³⁴ Foucault's distinct interpretation of 'government' will be discussed in chapter five.

³⁵ Allen, 'Foucault and Modern Political Philosophy', 191.

³⁶ Sam Coombes, 'A revival of Sartre?', *Radical Philosophy* 109, September/October 2001, 27.

³⁷ Philip Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. XXXI, No.2, Issue No. 122, June 1991, 141.

³⁸ Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 142.

³⁹ Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 143, 144.

political posture is best expressed prior to *L'être et le néant*. At the heart of this Sartrean logic, lies individual -- not institutional -- freedom.

From these two brief analyses it can be discerned that Foucault and Sartre are located within a tradition related to individual freedom. This should not be a surprise, considering that Gutting identifies the concern with individual freedom as a defining characteristic of twentieth century French philosophy.⁴⁰ But just what is this shared recognition of freedom that this thesis desires to present in Foucault and Sartre?

Admittedly, to elucidate a common vision of freedom in two complex thinkers one is faced with the unenviable task of approaching a highly abstract concept. Freedom, as noted by William E. Connolly, is perhaps one of the most "slippery" and "controversial" concepts that can be discussed.⁴¹ As well, Hannah Arendt recognizes that "to raise the question, what is freedom? seems to be a hopeless enterprise".⁴² As hopeless and controversial as the definition of freedom may be, the concept of freedom that this thesis will elucidate is succinctly expressed as relating to what the subject is not. For Foucault this reasoning entails that the subject is not a being with a stable historical identity, while for Sartre it implies that the subject's existence is not absolute. Freedom for both thinkers is intimately linked to contingency: Foucault explains freedom as deriving from the notion that one's historical identity is contingent, while Sartre illustrates freedom as originating from the contingency of one's existence. Both philosophers presuppose freedom in order to illustrate that

⁴⁰ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 380.

⁴¹ William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Third edition, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993, 140.

⁴² Hannah Arendt, 'What is Freedom?', from *Past and Future*, in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, edited by Peter Baehr, New York: Penguin Books, 2000, 438.

many aspects of the social world, while disguised as necessary, are actually contingent and, accordingly, present the possibility for change.

Typically, a concept of freedom implies the elaboration of a political theory. For instance, as different as Marxism and liberalism may be from one another, they have in common the reality that both present a political system that will supposedly foster freedom. With Foucault and Sartre, though freedom is a defining point of their thought, neither presents a concrete proposal for a political system. All the same, both profess that their thinking is deeply inspired by politics, and each thinker equates the political with the moral.⁴³ A puzzling claim, since neither philosopher formulates a traditional moral theory. Yet, it is not so baffling in light of the fact that both evoke freedom as a critical tool. As it will become clear in this thesis, in the eyes of Foucault⁴⁴ and Sartre, though freedom is entrenched in Western thought, it is perverted by Western deeds. Accordingly, the task for both thinkers is to unmask the negative aspects of social existence by showing how they hinder freedom. This unveiling is intended to encourage the rethinking of everything that structures

⁴³ In a film from 1972 -- entitled *Sartre* -- Jean Pouillon, in conversation with Sartre, declares that morality is political. To this assertion, Sartre responds: "Ah! mais nous sommes d'accord. C'est que justement le problème était pour moi, au fond, de savoir si on choisait politique ou morale ou bien si la politique et la morale ne faisaient qu'un" (Sartre, *Sartre, Un film réalisé par Alexandre Astruc et Michel Contat*, Texte intégral, Paris: Gallimard, 1977, 102). In 1983, when asked to describe the context of his historical work, Foucault states: "Je serais assez d'accord pour dire qu'en effet ce qui m'intéresse c'est beaucoup plus la morale que la politique ou, en tout cas, la politique comme une éthique" (*DE II* 1405).

⁴⁴ Although it is certainly not controversial to discuss Sartrean freedom in terms of an evolution, with Foucault the matter is not as clear. As it has been noted in this introduction, during Foucault's archaeological period in the mid-sixties -- circa *Les mots et les choses* and *L'archéologie du savoir* -- freedom seems to be the least of his concerns. It has been seen that Allen identifies Foucault as belonging to a tradition of individual freedom for the reason that he rejects collective goals in favour of individual goals. Peter Dews provides an interpretation that complements such an analysis. According to Dews, "from the very beginnings of his work, although more explicitly at some periods than others, Foucault has been concerned with the emergence, expansion and consolidation of apparatuses of administrative intervention in, and control over the social world". Yet, in the sixties, Dews argues that in *Les mots et les choses* and *L'archéologie du savoir*, the emergence of modern forms of administration is hardly present at all, and Foucault, in accordance with the structuralist movement of this time, moves away from any form of politically oriented analysis (Dews, 'Power and Subjectivity in Foucault', *New Left Review*, No. 144, March-April 1984, 74-75). The precise nature, if any, of freedom during Foucault's archaeological period will be discussed in chapter five.

existence – including commonly held assumptions about what makes a political body a good system of government – in a supposedly necessary way. Presumably, for Foucault and Sartre, analysing freedom is the pressing political/moral question, and is prior to any definition of a political system.

Although Gutting maintains that freedom has been a defining point of twentieth century French philosophy, at the same time, he expresses regret at the fact that "few poststructuralists have been interested in developing a positive philosophical understanding of freedom".⁴⁵ In the words of Gutting:

they remain content with a naive, prereflective commitment to the unquestionable status of transgression, novelty, plurality, and difference as absolute ideals. There is, accordingly, no inclination to ask difficult questions about the roots and limits of human freedom; the consuming task is to expose and overcome all obstacles to its unrestricted expansion.⁴⁶

What results, according to Gutting, is an endorsement of the most radical liberation that never stops to ask just what this liberation would consist in and why it is so important. Gutting's lament will motivate the structure of this thesis. This thesis, while providing an interpretative analysis that will depict specific convergences in the oeuvres of Foucault and Sartre, at the same time, will proceed with a critical goal in mind. Specifically, the thought of Foucault and Sartre will be framed in such a way that it will be shown that, at respective points in their oeuvres, there can be found a vision of freedom which, it will be argued, reduces freedom to a concept so abstract that it cannot address any ethico-political issues. Having dispelled such a notion of freedom this thesis will continue by demonstrating that at other points in their oeuvres there can be found a vision that addresses the roots and limits to human freedom. At the end of this thesis, it will be argued that neither thinker

⁴⁵ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 389.

⁴⁶ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 389.

coherently fills out this line of reasoning, and it will be concluded that, for the concept of freedom to remain a viable concept, this shortcoming points to a future direction upon which freedom should be elaborated.

The first chapter will broach the topic of freedom as it arises in Foucault's later thought. Proceeding in this manner will furnish us with a sympathetic ear to hear the message embedded in his oeuvre, and will also provide us with a critical eye to detect how -- at times -- this moral becomes distorted. Specifically, in chapter one, the implications of Foucault's claim that the subject is and always has been the motivation of his research will be considered. It will be argued that this declaration enables Foucault to invoke freedom in the vein that he sees his oeuvre as documenting the practices that have resulted in subjects becoming certain kinds of subjects. In light of Foucault's presupposition of freedom, it will be observed that Foucault proposes a way out of our present-day subjective formations. This exit, it will be argued, presumes a subject and an ethical proposal related to aesthetics.

As mentioned, freedom is always at the fore of Sartre's endeavours. According to Philippe Hodard, though it is a tenuous matter to decide whether Sartre's thought is best characterized by continuity or discontinuity, this debate can be sidestepped by discussing the thought of Sartre in terms of an evolution.⁴⁷ Therefore, heeding Hodard's suggestion, it is pertinent to start at the

⁴⁷ (Philippe Hodard, *Sartre*, Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1979, 20). It can be a contentious issue to suggest that Sartre's thought is characterized by an evolution. For instance, Wilfrid Desan believes that there is a fundamental break between *L'être et le néant* and the *Critique de la Raison dialectique*. Desan argues that "it is my clear impression that Sartre's definition of man as propounded in *L'être et le néant* does not warrant the formidable impact of matter upon man which is shown and defended in the *Critique de la Raison dialectique*" (Desan, *The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre*, New York: Anchor Books, 1966, 281). All the same, Desan's critique can only come at the expense of defending the pure view of freedom that is associated with the early Sartre. André Gorz provides a more lucid interpretation of Sartre. According to Gorz: "la réflexion purifiante qu'était le *cogito* de *L'être et le néant* demeurait toutefois parfaitement abstraite. Replaçant la liberté au fondement de toutes les conduites ... Sartre montrait, en somme, la possibilité principielle d'une reconquête sur l'aliénation dans sa dimension subjective, tout en fondant la possibilité *formelle* de l'aliénation. Il ne

beginning of the Sartrean oeuvre in order that the important subsequent developments that freedom undergoes in his thought can be traced. The second chapter will initiate this task, by bringing to light the vision of freedom that underlies the thought of the early Sartre. It will be shown that freedom originates from the premise that the subject has no inner core or human nature. This argument, established in two of Sartre's earliest works, receives an in-depth ontological explanation in *L'être et le néant* whereby an intimate relation between freedom and the nothingness of the subject is established. In light of this connection, it will be argued that Sartre attempts to establish an authentic ethical orientation which encourages the subject to approach its existence in a open-ended and creative manner.

Having tracked the question of freedom on the respective terrain of the late Foucault and the early Sartre, chapter three will begin the process of bridging the 'gap' traditionally imagined to exist between these two. In this chapter, it will be argued that presupposed in the visions of freedom of Foucault and Sartre is a similar recognition of what the subject is. From different avenues, it will be elucidated that both thinkers see the subject's freedom as relating to contingency. For both, this observation entails that the subject does not have a stable identity. The establishment of this

rendait pas intelligible, en revanche, son existence *réelle*: les raisons pour lesquelles la mauvaise foi est infiniment plus répandue que l'authenticité relevaient, dans *L'être et le néant*, de la pure contingence ... Dans la *Critique de la Raison dialectique*, Sartre se préoccupe, au contraire, de rendre compte de la réalité de l'aliénation comme nécessité (nécessité *pratique* dans *ce monde*, et non pas, comme le veut Chiodi, nécessité ontologique) qui ne peut être dépassée par une simple conversion subjective, et qui ne peut être rendue intelligible que si l'on déborde le cadre du *cogito* réflexif, non pour l'abandonner définitivement, il est vrai, mais pour y revenir toujours" (Gorz, *Le socialisme difficile*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967, 229). As noted in this introduction, Gutting heaps praise on Sartre for his continual effort to embed freedom in the realms of the social and the historical. In this thesis it will be seen that as Sartre continually attempts this feat he moves away, as Gorz notes, from the pure freedom of the cogito, as elucidated in *L'être et le néant*, and focuses on the historical and social constraints to the subject's freedom. Incidentally, Sartre himself would deny that there was an "epistemological break" between *L'être et le néant* and the *Critique de la Raison dialectique*: he would describe the former as an abstract general point of view, and the latter as relating to the horizon of the social and concrete (Sartre, 'An Interview With Jean-Paul Sartre, translated from the Dutch by George Berger, in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to His Philosophy*, edited by Hugh J. Silverman and Frederick A. Elliston, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1980, 225).

observation will lead to the second task that will be carried out in this chapter. In light of the freedom of the subject, it will be shown that in Sartre's early existentialism is a project of creative freedom akin to Foucault's 'aesthetics of existence'. It will be argued that what is explicit in the later Foucault is already implicit in the early Sartre. In fact, it will be observed that both propose an ethical orientation related to art. Standing in the shadow of Immanuel Kant, it will be seen that though Sartre and Foucault reject the Kantian realms of pure and practical reason, for two thinkers concerned with individual freedom, the Kantian sphere of aesthetics seems a suitable model for ethics, since it rests upon subjective -- not objective -- standards. In other words, the principles of art in this rendition can be seen as prioritizing the creative freedom of the individual. This chapter, by engaging with writings on art history, will argue that both thinkers appeal to a specific historical presentation of art. Though modern art provides a glimpse into a shared ethical impetus that motivates Sartre and Foucault, it will be argued that they put too much stock in the autonomy that modern art promises and, in fact, succumb to the myth of modernism. For various reasons, it will be shown that art in this presentation is an unsuitable model for ethics, and risks reducing freedom to an empty concept.

Though an ethical orientation based upon the work of art will have been deemed a dubious proposal, this is certainly not to suggest that either the thought of Sartre or Foucault is not ethically motivated. In chapter four, by tracing the common theme of the gaze in these two, it will be argued that both share an ethical impetus that is related to the insight that human relations imply objective tendencies which limit freedom. It will be shown that from different directions, both realize that social formations imply the fact that certain segments find their freedom limited. As it will be observed, the theme of the gaze is one of the rare affinities between Sartre and Foucault that has been addressed in the secondary literature. Yet, as this chapter will argue, the idea that the gaze, for both

Sartre and Foucault, implies a lack of reciprocity points to a further convergence between these two. It will be observed that, although an echo of Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative may be faintly heard, both Sartre and Foucault, for similar reasons, reject the possibility of a Kantian kingdom of ends. In fact, both declare that a universal morality is impossible. In light of this shared observation it will be argued that both recognize the importance of responding to the ethical -- the visible violence that humans commit against one another when they gaze upon themselves and their world through a lens that is objectively tinted.

The question of history is one that is of utmost importance for Foucault and Sartre. Yet, both thinkers, at different points in their oeuvres, convey different attitudes toward this discipline. In the early Sartre the influence of history is essentially absent from his existential account of the subject. Yet, in his latter thought, his alignment with Marxism leads one to believe that he sees history as offering the possibility of emancipation. History is none the less equivocal in the thought of Foucault. During what is known as his archaeological period, Foucault appears content to describe the historical régimes of truth that govern the relation between words and things. This project lacks in any serious political ramifications. Yet, as Foucault moves from archaeology to genealogy, the task becomes to address the emergence of modern forms of administration in the social world. It is precisely this point in the oeuvre of Foucault that will be considered in conjunction with Sartre's Marxist phase. In chapter five it will be shown that from distinct routes Foucault and Sartre envision freedom as occurring in a social field that shapes the subject's possibilities. Both see freedom as leading to unforeseen effects -- in the form of social structures and relations -- that shape the field of possibilities. It will be argued that these socio-historical analyses in Foucault and Sartre bring to light the roots and limits to human freedom. Yet, at the same time, it will be noted that neither

thinker fills out the implications of freedom along the lines of the social and historical. In fact, this chapter will conclude by arguing that Sartre and Foucault reduce the status of freedom to an evanescent concept.

To recapitulate; this project will succeed if it can fulfill the following conditions: it shows that freedom is an important concept for Foucault; it demonstrates that Foucault and Sartre evoke a similar recognition of the subject that entails a common ethical proposal; it throws light upon a shared ethical impetus that underlies the thought of Foucault and Sartre; it elucidates that the socio-historical analyses of Foucault and Sartre demonstrate a similar understanding of the limits to freedom; and finally, it shows that a study of Foucault and Sartre encourages a rethinking of this idea. In carrying out these tasks, it is important that a balance be kept between Foucault and Sartre: their thought must be presented in such a way that resonances in their writings can be detected but, at the same time, the originality of each thinker must be preserved. Admittedly, such a feat is complicated by the sheer size of each thinker's corpus, which dictates that some works will feature more prominently than others. At the end of this thesis, by shedding light on the question of freedom in Sartre and Foucault, those works chosen will hopefully have justified their presence, and the absence of others.

CHAPTER ONE

Michel Foucault and the Freedom of Ethics

J'ai toujours été un peu méfiant à l'égard du thème général de la libération, dans la mesure où, si l'on ne le traite pas avec un nombre de précautions et à l'intérieur de certaines limites, il risque de renvoyer à l'idée qu'il existe une nature ou un fond humain qui s'est trouvé, à la suite d'un certain nombre de processus historiques, économiques et sociaux, masqué, aliéné ou emprisonné dans des mécanismes, et par des mécanismes de répression. Dans cette hypothèse, il suffirait de faire sauter ces verrous répressifs pour que l'homme se réconcilie avec lui-même, retrouve sa nature ou reprenne contact avec son origine et restaure un rapport plein et positif à lui-même.

La liberté est la condition ontologique de l'éthique.

Michel Foucault, *L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté*

1.1 Introduction

As a survey of the secondary literature shows, the extent to which Michel Foucault is concerned with the question of freedom remains to be discerned with greater clarity. Charles Taylor argues that Foucault's thought is incoherent for the very reason that it leaves no place for freedom and human agency.¹ Contrary to Taylor, John Rajchman asserts that "the question of freedom is one Foucault constantly, if tacitly, poses".² More boldly, Beatrice Hanssen states that "it is certain that all of Foucault's work all along was concerned with freedom".³ But is it so evident? Foucault did not explicitly discuss freedom in a positive light until late in his career. Prior to this point one might assume that he sought to avoid such a topic for the reason that it was inextricably linked with

1 Charles Taylor, 'Foucault on Freedom and Truth', in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, edited by David Couzens Hoy, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, 90.

2 John Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, 121.

3 Beatrice Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, London and New York: Routledge, 2000, 149.

humanism – a project about which he was very critical. It would seem that unlike a philosopher such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Foucault never made freedom a defining point of his thought. Or did he?

Foucault likes to shock. Anyone familiar with his vivid description of the execution of Damiens the regicide at the beginning of *Surveiller et punir* is aware of this fact. His historical works are disturbing. Yet, as unsettling as these studies are, the reader may be left wondering about their intention. Is their function merely to scandalize? Or do they have a critical motive? It appears that one cannot be certain. As Nancy Fraser recognizes, a reason for this ambiguity is that Foucault is generally reluctant to spell out the theoretical presuppositions informing his work.⁴ This stubbornness is more problematic in the sense that Garry Gutting notes, "the need to interpret Foucault sits ill with his own desire to escape general interpretative categories".⁵ In fact, at one point, Foucault commanded: "Ne me demandez pas qui je suis et ne me dites pas de rester le même: c'est une morale d'état-civil; elle régit nos papiers. Qu'elle nous laisse libres quand il s'agit d'écrire" (*AS* 28).

At times it seems that Foucault enjoys portraying himself as elusive and ever-changing – as a thinker who does not have to take a position. One can, for instance, sense the glee in his voice as he recounts that along with being labelled "un idéaliste", "un nihiliste" and "un nouveau conservateur", he has also been described as – "anarchiste"; "gauchiste"; "marxiste tapageur ou occulte"; "technocrate au service du gaullisme"; "néolibéral"; and so on (*DE II* 1412). Foucault baffles, and if one attempts to place him securely on the political checkerboard then inevitably one encounters problems. As opposed to being a thinker interested in politics per se, Foucault explains that he is more interested in morals – what he describes as politics as an ethics (*DE II* 1405). One might dismiss such a notion outrightly for the reason that Foucault never – in the traditional sense

4 Nancy Fraser, 'Michel Foucault: A "Young Conservative?"', in *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*, edited by Michael Kelly, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 1995, 187.

5 Gary Gutting, 'Michel Foucault: A User's Manual', Introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, edited by Gary Gutting, New York: The Cambridge University Press, 1996, 1.

– elaborated either a moral or a political theory. Nevertheless, such a dismissal would commit an injustice, as it would fail to recognize that Foucault is a thinker who is sympathetic to – of all things – the idea of freedom.

In this chapter it will be shown that from the vantage point of Foucault's later writings, it is evident that freedom is of utmost importance for his philosophy. Cryptic as Foucault can be, it will be argued that these writings shed light upon the equivocation that his thought can provoke. In fact, it will be observed that Foucault boldly explains his oeuvre as having a guiding theme that is intertwined with freedom. Of equal importance, it will be seen that in light of freedom, Foucault proposes an ethical orientation related to art.

This chapter will proceed as follows: first (1.2), to discern that Foucault is committed to freedom it is pertinent to begin with one of his final essays, 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?', as in this work, by engaging with the likes of Immanuel Kant and Charles Baudelaire, Foucault outlines what he describes as the 'indefinite work of freedom'. To further comprehend this project, it will be necessary to next contemplate 'Le sujet et le pouvoir', as in this essay, Foucault refines his concept of power, and claims vehemently that the subject has always been at the centre of his studies. It will be seen that these two essays combine to show that Foucault's oeuvre has a specific intentionality related to freedom. The importance of the subject allows Foucault to be seen in the critical tradition of Kant, in the vein that his histories document the practices that have resulted in subjects becoming certain kinds of subjects. These histories, though, are not purely descriptive, since, by demonstrating the contingency of the subject's historical formation, they aim to present the subject with the possibility that it can surpass its present formation. As it will be seen (1.3), Foucault initiates the implementation of such a project in the second and third volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité*. The oddity of Foucault shifting the direction of this project will be noted. However, it will be observed that Foucault's reorientation of the original project to Ancient Greece and Rome is not strange since it enables him to concentrate on ethics, specifically, the difference he sees between ethics and morality. The motive of this historical study is to elucidate the 'aesthetics of existence' of Antiquity

– the ethical practices by the self towards the self. At this point (1.4), it will be seen that, in the eyes of Foucault, this historical inquiry is important for the reason that it presents an ethics that appeals to art – not scientific knowledge or any other necessary structure. Of equal importance, this ethical orientation is of contemporary importance because it provides a way out for the subject, by which, through its freedom it can creatively transform itself.

1.2 The Later Foucault and Freedom

(i) Kant, Baudelaire, and the Enlightenment?

'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?' is one of the last essays written by Foucault before his death in 1984. This piece is curious for several reasons. Jürgen Habermas, among others,⁶ notes that the Kant encountered in this work is different than the Kant encountered in *Les mots et les choses*.⁷ While in *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault had depicted Kant – by focusing on the question: "Was ist der Mensch?" – as introducing "le sommeil anthropologique" (MC 351-52), the Kant found in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?', as Habermas observes, is one "who was the first to make a serious break with the metaphysical heritage, who turned philosophy away from the Eternal Verities and concentrated on what philosophers had until then considered to be without concept and nonexistent, merely contingent and transitory".⁸ Habermas' description of Kant will, for obvious reasons, raise eyebrows. To complicate matters more, Onora O'Neil notes that the essay of Kant's which Foucault engages, "has often been condemned as a shallow defence of freedom of opinion which endorses 'enlightened' despotism".⁹

6 Richard J. Bernstein, 'Foucault: Critique as a Philosophical Ethos', in *Critique and Power*, edited by Michael Kelly, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 1995, 211; Jon Simmons, *Foucault & the Political*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, 13.

7 Jürgen Habermas, 'Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present: On Foucault's Lecture on Kant's *What is Enlightenment?*', in *Critique and Power*, 150.

8 Habermas, 'Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present', 150.

9 Onora O'Neil, 'Vindicating Reason', in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, edited by Paul Guyer, New York: The Cambridge University Press, 1992, 298.

In his essay, Foucault asks us to imagine that the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* still exists today and is asking its readers: "Qu'est-ce que la philosophie moderne?" (DE II 1381). In what follows, it should be borne in mind: what does Foucault find so intriguing about Kant's essay, certainly not a defence of enlightened despotism? How does Foucault define modern philosophy?

In the eyes of Foucault, Kant's reflection on *Aufklärung* is a reflection on the present. However, instead of explaining the present as a totalization or a future achievement, Foucault states that "Kant définit l'*Aufklärung* d'une façon presque entièrement négative, comme une *Ausgang*, une «sortie», une «issue»" (DE II 1383). According to Foucault, the exit that Kant seeks is characteristic of the Enlightenment and its search for an escape from its state of immaturity. Enlightenment desires to escape the grasp of someone else's authority and to lead one to a state of maturity: where reason can be put to use. Foucault notes that Kant presents this way out in an ambiguous manner – it is introduced as an obligation, but one that is at the same time never completely fulfilled, since it is also an ongoing task. Maintaining that Kant recognizes man himself is responsible for his state of immaturity, Foucault claims that man will only escape this state by bringing about a change in himself, and observes that, according to Kant, man must abide by the motto of *Aufklärung* -- "*Aude sapere* «aie le courage, l'audace de savoir»" (DE II 1384).

Foucault admits that what he finds intriguing in Kant's occasional piece is the distinction made between the private and the public use of reason.¹⁰ Far from endorsing enlightened despotism, Foucault argues that Kant, by claiming that reason must be free in its public use and submissive in its private, reverses the order traditionally associated with the freedom of conscience of the Enlightenment. Man makes use of his private reason – "lorsqu'il a un rôle à jouer dans la société et des fonctions à exercer" (DE II 1385). In this scenario reason is subjected to a particular end in view, and one follows commands such as paying taxes because one is a member of society. However, as

¹⁰ "The *public* use of one's reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among human beings; the *private* use of one's reason may, however, often be very narrowly restricted without this particularly hindering the progress of enlightenment" (Immanuel Kant, *An answer to the question: What is Enlightenment?*, in *Practical Philosophy*, 18).

qualified by Foucault: "quand on ne raisonne que pour faire usage de sa raison ... quand on raisonne comme membre de l'humanité raisonnable, alors l'usage de la raison doit être libre et public" (*DE II* 1385). In other words, Enlightenment is not the process whereby individuals see their own personal freedom and thought guaranteed, rather, it is a political problem. At the heart of this matter, in the words of Foucault: "se pose de savoir comment l'usage de la raison peut prendre la forme publique qui lui est nécessaire" (*DE II* 1386).

Foucault, being careful not to either suggest that Kant's essay is an adequate historical description of the Enlightenment or to exaggerate its importance in light of the Kantian corpus, proposes the hypothesis that Kant's "petit texte" is in a sense located at the crossroads of critical reflection and reflection on history (*DE II* 1387). Explaining that Kant's essay is linked to the three *Critiques* in the vein that it seeks to define the legitimate use of reason, Foucault argues that Kant is the first philosopher to contemplate the implications of his work in light of the "moment singulier" at which he is writing. Kant reflects on today in order to contemplate the task of philosophy. This feat is the outline of "l'attitude de modernité" (*DE II* 1387). Foucault suggests that modernity might be better envisaged as an attitude rather than a historical period, and elaborates upon such a proposal:

je veux dire un mode de relation à l'égard de l'actualité; un choix volontaire qui est fait par certains; enfin une manière de penser et de sentir, une manière aussi d'agir et de se conduire qui, tout à la fois, marque une appartenance et se présente comme une tâche. Un peu, sans doute, comme ce que les Grecs appelaient un «*ēthos*» (*DE II* 1387).

The attitude of modernity is a task to be carried out in relation to reality – an undertaking related to choice, a way of acting, and resembling somewhat the *ēthos* of the Ancient Greeks.

To further illustrate this *ēthos*, Foucault turns to the indispensable example of Charles Baudelaire. According to Foucault, being modern for Baudelaire entails adopting a certain attitude in recognition of "«le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent»" (*DE II* 1388). Such a disposition resides in the ability to capture something eternal within the present. Citing Baudelaire's example of Constantin Guys, Foucault argues that Guys' insight as a painter lies in his transfiguration of the

difficult interplay between the truth of what is real and the exercise of freedom. This insight, explained as "l'attitude de modernité", holds that:

la haute valeur du présent est indissociable de l'acharnement à l'imaginer, à l'imaginer autrement qu'il n'est et à le transformer non pas en le détruisant, mais en le captant dans ce qu'il est (*DE II* 1389).

"La modernité baudelairienne", as interpreted by Foucault, is an exercise in which the attention to what is real is confronted with the practice of a liberty that at once respects this reality and violates it. Reality is no longer seen as something that cannot be changed. Of equal importance, Foucault argues that modernity for Baudelaire is not just a relation to the present but also "un mode de rapport qu'il faut établir à soi-même" (*DE II* 1389).

While clarifying that he is not trying to either summarize in a few lines the complex historical event that was the Enlightenment or simplify the attitude of modernity, Foucault explains that he is emphasizing:

que le fil qui peut nous rattacher de cette manière à l'*Aufklärung* n'est pas la fidélité à des éléments de doctrine, mais plutôt la réactivation permanente d'une attitude; c'est-à-dire un *ēthos* philosophique qu'on pourrait caractériser comme critique permanente de notre être historique (*DE II* 1390).

This *ēthos* implies the refusal of what Foucault describes as the "chantage" of the Enlightenment, and he stresses the importance of not falling into the false dichotomy of being either "pour" or "contre" the Enlightenment (*DE II* 1390). Instead, Foucault cautions that we must proceed with an analysis that recognizes that we are beings who are, to a certain extent, historically determined by the Enlightenment.

In expanding upon this warning, Foucault argues that our determination in light of the Enlightenment should not be equated with humanism.¹¹ Humanism, in the words of Foucault, "a toujours été obligé de prendre son appui sur certaines conceptions de l'homme qui sont empruntées à la religion, à la science, à la politique" (*DE II* 1392) and, in doing so -- in its various guises since the seventeenth-century -- has provided man with a human nature in which he is obliged to take

11 Foucault's explanation of 'humanism' will be further discussed in subsection iii of this section.

recourse. The thematic of humanism, according to Foucault, should be seen in a state of tension with the principle that he sees at the heart of the Enlightenment: "le principe d'une critique et d'une création permanente de nous-mêmes dans notre autonomie" (*DE II* 1392).

Foucault describes this principle of the Enlightenment as "un *ēthos* philosophique" and defines it as "une *attitude-limite*" (*DE II* 1392-93). Acknowledging that the Kantian question was "de savoir quelles limites la connaissance doit renoncer à franchir", Foucault stresses that the present critical question must be turned into a positive one which asks: "dans ce qui nous est donné comme universel, nécessaire, obligatoire, quelle est la part de ce qui est singulier, contingent et dû à des contraintes arbitraires" (*DE II* 1393). Criticism will function to expose as contingent, limits thought to be necessary. Criticism will no longer search for "des structures formelles qui ont valeur universelle", but will function as an "enquête historique à travers les événements qui nous ont amenés à nous constituer et à nous reconnaître comme sujets de ce que nous faisons, pensons, disons" (*DE II* 1393). The motive of criticism in this form: "dégagera de la contingence qui nous a fait être ce que nous sommes, la possibilité de ne plus être, faire ou penser ce que nous sommes, faisons ou pensons" (*DE II* 1393). Criticism will present the possibility that we can become something else other than what we are in the present. This task is defined by Foucault as "le travail indéfini de la liberté". In his eyes, this undertaking has to be conceived -- not as a theory or a doctrine -- but as a critical ontology of ourselves:

comme une attitude, un *ēthos*, une vie philosophique où la critique de ce que nous sommes est à la fois analyse historique des limites qui nous sont posées et épreuve de leur franchissement possible (*DE II* 1396).

As recognized by Foucault, the 'undefined work of freedom' is a form of critique that seeks to determine those historical limits which can possibly be surpassed.

From the above review of 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?', it is evident that this essay reflects a new attitude for Foucault. Front and centre in this essay are the concepts of critique and freedom – notions that were, at best, implicit in earlier works. Moreover, the mention of autonomy certainly signifies a new direction. All the same, the mixed posture expressed by Foucault in 'Qu'est-ce que

les Lumières?' strikes an odd pose. Usually Kant – the rigid German philosopher – and Baudelaire – the infamous French poet – are not discussed in the same context. But in his clever way, Foucault argues that Baudelaire exemplifies the 'attitude of modernity' that, in his eyes, is initiated by Kant. This *āthos*, as it has been noted, relates to the task of philosophy – determining what should be done in the present.

Before considering further the implications of the project of freedom as outlined in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?', it is pertinent to examine the ramifications of another important later essay by Foucault.

(ii) The Subject – Not Power!

Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow explain the 1982 essay, 'Le sujet et le pouvoir', as being the result of Foucault admitting that his concept of power remained "elusive but important".¹² To remedy this situation, Foucault agreed to write a piece that would clarify his thought on this subject. At the outset of this work, Foucault – somewhat surprisingly – announces that his goal of the last twenty years has not been to analyse "les phénomènes de pouvoir", or to provide a foundation for such an analysis (*DE II* 1041). Rather, he declares that his objective has been to create a history of the different modes by which human beings are made subjects in our culture. In proceeding in this manner, Foucault recognizes his work as having dealt with three modes of objectification by which humans are transformed as subjects. Respectively, these are explained as "les différents modes d'investigation qui cherchent à accéder au statut de science", the objectification of the subject via les "pratiques divisantes", and "la manière dont un être humain se transforme en sujet" (*DE II* 1042).

12 Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Second Edition, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983, xiii.

Because his work has concentrated on these areas, Foucault argues that therefore "le thème général" of his research is "le sujet" -- not "pouvoir".¹³ (*DE II* 1042).

Foucault's claim about the status of the subject is quite radical for the reason that it implies that his oeuvre has a specific purpose. Works such as *Les mots et les choses* and *L'archéologie du savoir* fall into the first mode of inquiry. The second line of investigation -- related to: "le fou et l'homme sain d'esprit, le malade et l'individu en bonne santé, le criminel et le «gentil garçon»" (*DE II* 1042) -- respectively pertains to *Folie et déraison*, *Naissance de la clinique* and *Surveiller et punir*. The third project of investigation concerns Foucault's recent research carried out in the eventual three volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité*. Accordingly, when Foucault divides his life-long work into three, and explains these areas of research interest as centring on the subject, he is a far cry from the thinker who desires to escape all interpretative categories. Rather, he literally spells out -- in five letters in French (seven in English) -- the theoretical presupposition that informs his work.¹⁴

This admission regarding the subject is also quite astonishing for the reason that six years earlier, power seemed to be Foucault's focus. In a lecture from 1976, he had explained the individual as one of the "effets premiers" of power (*DE II* 180). Presumably, at this point, a theory of power which would encompass the subject would be next on the agenda. Such an account would seemingly imply determinism. Yet, in 'Le sujet et le pouvoir', Foucault explains that a theory of power is not a priority, as power is a conceptualization that is subservient to critical thought -- it is a tool

13 Foucault's admission in 'Le sujet et le pouvoir' is interesting in the sense that it suspiciously echoes a previous account he had provided. For instance, in 1977, he had stated: "Quand j'y repense maintenant, je me dis de quoi ai-je pu parler, par exemple dans l'*Histoire de la folie* ou dans la *Naissance de la clinique*, sinon du pouvoir" (*DE II* 146).

14 In one of his final interviews in 1984, Foucault, commenting on the new direction of *L'Histoire de la sexualité* -- in light of previous studies such as *L'Histoire de la folie*, *Les mots et les choses*, and *Surveiller et punir* -- admits that there is a certain intentionality throughout his oeuvre that often alludes his readers, and explains: "Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait une grande différence entre ces livres et les précédents. On désire beaucoup quand on écrit des livres comme ceux-là modifier du tout au tout ce qu'on pense et se retrouver à la fin tout autre que ce qu'on était au départ. Puis on s'aperçoit qu'au fond on a changé relativement peu. On a peut-être changé de perspective, on a tourné autour du problème, qui est toujours le même, c'est-à-dire les rapports entre le sujet, la vérité et la constitution de l'expérience" (*DE II* 1550).

employed by critique.¹⁵ Had Foucault refined his perspective on the topic of power and the subject?

Remarks made in a lecture from 1981 lead one to think so. In 'Sexualité et solitude', he states:

J'ai peut-être trop insisté, lorsque j'étudiais les asiles, les prisons, etc., sur les techniques de domination. Il est vrai que ce que nous appelons «discipline» est quelque chose qui a une importance réelle dans ce type d'institutions. Mais ce n'est qu'un aspect de l'art de gouverner les gens dans nos sociétés. Ayant étudié le champ de pouvoir en prenant comme point de départ les techniques de domination, j'aimerais, au cours de prochaines années, étudier les rapports de pouvoir en partant des techniques de soi (*DE II* 990).

Foucault acknowledges he may have exaggerated the issue of domination in his previous studies, and admits that this aspect is only a part of the art of government – the intrinsic rational principles that govern the state. He explains that there is another entity related to this art – the techniques of the self. Previously, in a lecture delivered at Dartmouth College in 1980, Foucault reiterated the above reasoning concerning the possible embellishment of the techniques of domination, and – alluding to the second and third volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité*, undoubtedly in progress at this point – that, in the years to come, he desires to study government, as it relates to the self in the field of sexuality.¹⁶

It is important to be aware, as Hanssen astutely points out, that in his later phase Foucault is engaged with two different, but not incompatible projects of study. On the one hand, his interest lies in studying the origins of modern political discourse about the art of government, while on the other, his concern rests in discerning an ethics of self-government.¹⁷ A crucial work that concerns this former field of study is Foucault's Tanner lecture from 1979 entitled '«*Omnes et singulatim*»: vers une critique de la raison politique'. In this lecture Foucault argues that, since the development of modern states and political management, the role of philosophy has been to keep watch over the excessive powers of political rationality. He acknowledges that the relationship between

¹⁵ It is pertinent to note that in 'Le sujet et le pouvoir' Foucault equates power with freedom. This topic will be addressed in chapter five.

¹⁶ Foucault, 'About the beginnings of the hermeneutics of the self', in *Religion and Culture: Michel Foucault*, selected and edited by Jeremy R. Carratte, New York: Routledge, 1999, 162-163.

¹⁷ Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 57.

rationalization and excess of political power is evident, and – leaving little doubt about the ethical charge of his thought at this point – adds: "et nul n'est besoin d'attendre la bureaucratie ou les camps de concentration pour reconnaître l'existence de telles relations" (*DE II* 954). In this lecture, by tracing the evolution of the figure of the shepherd throughout history, Foucault's analysis arrives at the conclusion that pastoral power evolved into the reason of the state, and as a consequence:

le but de l'art moderne de gouverner, ou de la rationalité étatique: développer ces éléments constitutifs de la vie des individus de telle sorte que leur développement renforce aussi la puissance de l'État (*DE II* 978).

Foucault's thesis is that since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the reason -- or the art of government -- of the state has been to increase the state's strength by means of rational knowledge. This knowledge, in the eyes of Foucault, resides in techniques of individualization that affect the lives of individuals – a procedure that is the result of the political rationality embedded within Western history. Foucault concludes this lecture by stating: "La libération ne peut venir que de l'attaque non pas de l'un ou l'autre de ces effets, mais des racines mêmes de la rationalité politique" (*DE II* 980). In light of previously inherited identities, new forms of subjectivities – free from the dictates of pastoral power¹⁸ – must be promoted.

It is difficult to understand the notion of refusal suggested in 'Le sujet et le pouvoir' without taking into account the above analysis. In advocating a refusal, Foucault -- foreshadowing the reasoning already observed in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?' -- admits that what whets his curiosity is Kant's originality in asking the question: "Qui sommes-nous, à ce moment précis de l'histoire?" (*DE II* 1050-51). Foucault notes that this question is possibly "le problème philosophique le plus infaillible", and proposes the hypothesis that the principal philosophical objective of the present should not to be discover what we are, but refuse what we are (*DE II* 1051). In elaborating upon this project, Foucault states:

On pourrait dire, pour conclure, que le problème à la fois politique, éthique, social et philosophique qui se pose à nous aujourd'hui n'est pas d'essayer de libérer

¹⁸ Power certainly undergoes some modifications within Foucault's oeuvre, and these changes will be addressed in chapter five.

l'individu de l'État et de ses institutions, mais de nous libérer *nous* de l'État et du type d'individualisation qui s'y rattache. Il faut promouvoir de nouvelles formes de subjectivité en refusant le type d'individualité qu'on nous a imposé pendant plusieurs siècles (*DE II* 1051).

In short, in nothing less than the name of freedom, Foucault desires to rethink the Western political tradition.

All the same, though Foucault certainly invokes freedom in the later stages of his thought, how does he seek to implement such a project? How, if at all, does freedom relate to Foucault's admission regarding the subject? Is there a connection between this topic and Foucault's interest in Kant and the Enlightenment?

(iii) Foucault's *Enlightened* Vision of Freedom

Alexander Nehamas remarks that Foucault's re-evaluation of the Enlightenment is intriguing in the sense that "for more than twenty years, Foucault seemed dedicated to exposing the seamy side of the Enlightenment, conceding to it no positive accomplishment and refusing any vision of a better future".¹⁹ According to Nehamas, "'the undefined work of freedom'", as sketched in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?', "represents a stunning reversal for the philosopher who had earlier argued that the Enlightenment's reforms did not in reality liberate the spirit but subjugated the body in darker and more efficient ways. Foucault had clearly come to a new view of human progress".²⁰ In commenting on Foucault's engagement with the Enlightenment, Daniel Touey remarks that:

it is an apology in the best Socratic sense: an argument on the part of Foucault that his life's work was not meant to destroy the critical tradition handed down by the Enlightenment but to reinterpret it in contemporary terms, just as Socrates insisted that his criticism of the norms and traditions of Athenian society was inspired by a

19 Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1998, 174. Perhaps Nehamas' remark would be more suitably phrased to read "any vision of a 'better' present". Future implies a teleological explanation of history which Foucault certainly does not subscribe to.

20 Nehamas, *The Art of Living*, 176. 'Possibility', for the same reasoning as in the footnote above, might be the better choice of a word than 'progress'.

social need for a more rational understanding of Virtue and the Good, and was not impious or traitorous.²¹

On the one hand, Nehamas portrays Foucault's interlocutions with the Enlightenment as a sign that Foucault had turned one-hundred and eighty degrees. On the other, Touey claims that 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?' is a key to interpreting the Foucauldian oeuvre. In light of these distinct interpretations, the following questions should be considered: if Foucault's interpretation of the Enlightenment is intended to be an apology, how sincere is it? What is the positive – as opposed to “seamy” – side of the Enlightenment that Foucault seeks to preserve and reinterpret? But before addressing these queries, perhaps the question that should be raised is: how does Foucault's interest in the Enlightenment relate to the priority of the subject in his research?

In an entry for the *Dictionnaire des philosophes*, written almost entirely by Foucault,²² it is stated:

[Si Foucault s'inscrit bien dans la tradition philosophique, c'est dans la tradition *critique* qui est celle de Kant et l'on pourrait] nommer son entreprise *Histoire critique de la pensée*. ... La question est de déterminer ce que doit être le sujet, à quelle condition il est soumis, quel statut il doit avoir, quelle position il doit occuper dans le réel ou dans l'imaginaire, pour devenir sujet légitime de tel ou tel type de connaissance; bref, il s'agit de déterminer son mode de «subjectivation» (*DE II* 1450-51).

Far from depicting himself as destroying the critical tradition, Foucault aligns himself with the Kantian tradition of critique. From this entry, it can be seen that it is the topic of the subject that Foucault recognizes as linking him with Kant. In the name of Kantian critique, Foucault illustrates the circumstances that demarcate the subject. Of related interest from the above entry is the explanation given for "jeux de vérité", and the issue which they address: "quels sont les processus

21 Daniel Touey, 'Foucault's Apology', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 28:1, 1998, 88.

22 The editors of *Dits et écrits* explain: "Au début des années 1980, Denis Huisman proposa à F. Ewald de rédiger la notice qui serait consacrée à Michel Foucault dans le *Dictionnaire de philosophes*, qu'il préparait pour les Presses universitaires de France. F. Ewald, alors assistant au Collège de France de M. Foucault, fit part de cette proposition à ce dernier. À l'époque, M. Foucault avait rédigé une première version de volume II de l'*Histoire de la sexualité* qu'il savait devoir retravailler. Une section de l'introduction qu'il avait rédigé pour cet ouvrage était une présentation rétrospective de son travail. C'est ce texte qui fut donné à Denis Huisman, complété par une courte présentation et une bibliographie. Il fut convenu de le signer «Maurice Florence», qui donnait la transparente abréviation «M.F.». C'est ainsi qu'il fut publié. Ne figure ici que le texte rédigé par M. Foucault" (*DE II* 1450).

de subjectivation et d'objectivation qui font que le sujet peut devenir en tant que sujet objet de connaissance" (*DE II* 1452). Elsewhere, in one of his final interviews – 'L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté', twice reworked and edited by Foucault before he authorized its publication²³ – Foucault, while repeating again that the subject has been the problem of his thought, explains that he has sought to discover how the subject enters into 'games of truth'. Confronted with the accusation that he refuses to discuss the subject, Foucault maintains that his denial extends to formulating a theory of the subject in the vein of phenomenology and existentialism – where the subject is *a priori* the one that knows. Instead, Foucault explains his motive as being:

ce que j'ai voulu essayer de montrer, c'est comme [sic] le sujet se constituait lui-même, dans telle ou telle forme déterminée, comme sujet fou ou sujet sain, comme sujet délinquant, à travers un certain nombre de pratiques qui étaient des jeux de vérité (*DE II* 1537).

Seemingly, the mention of the practices and processes of how the subject constitutes itself implies an account of agency – an element that Foucault's pronouncement of the "mort de l'homme" in *Les mots et les choses* appeared to deny.

In 1978 Foucault, in an extensive interview with the Italian journalist Duccio Trombadori, provides an important (and often over-looked) clarification of what he means by the "mort de l'homme". In this interview, Foucault acknowledges that he was wrong in *Les mots et les choses* to present this 'death' as something that was under way in our time. In *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault's archaeology of thought had shown that man is "une invention récente", and one whose time was perhaps coming to an end (*MC* 399). In some circles this announcement has been equated with the death or end of the subject. Although Foucault's critique in *Les mots et les choses* is certainly directed toward a specific formulation of the 'subject', it is not intended to endorse the assumption that the subject does not exist. The concept 'man' is a subjectivity representative of a general cultural experience of the eighteenth-century and onwards. However, if this specific depiction of the subject is erased, subjects will nevertheless continue to exist in different guises and

23 Thomas McCarthy, 'The Critique of Impure Reason', in *Critique and Power*, 278n48.

configurations. As aptly put by Ian Hacking: “Foucault said that the concept of man is a fraud, not that you and I are nothing”.²⁴ To this point, Foucault – echoing the claim of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels that “circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances”²⁵ – states:

les hommes n’ont jamais cessé de se construire eux-mêmes, c’est-à-dire de déplacer continuellement leur subjectivité, de se constituer dans une série infinie et multiple de subjectivités différentes et qui n’auront jamais de fin et ne nous placeront jamais face à quelque chose qui serait l’homme. Les hommes s’engagent perpétuellement dans un processus qui, en constituant des objets, le déplace en même temps, le déforme, le transforme et le transfigure comme sujet (*DE II* 894).

It is pertinent to note that Foucault does not see this process in a Hegelian/Marxist teleological manner -- he does not, for reasons to be seen shortly, view it in terms of progress. Rather, in the eyes of Foucault, it is simply a process in which subjects are engaged with their social-historical circumstances that, in turn, relates to the establishment of identities. Although this infinite series of historical activity does not lead the subject to discover something like a true identity or a nature such as ‘man’, at the same time it does not imply that the subject is not involved in its configuration.

Thus, when Foucault says that his work of the last twenty years has dealt with the subject, he means that in various ways his studies have been concerned with illustrating the different truth games that subjects enter into. By proceeding in this fashion, Foucault elucidates the practices that enable subjects in specific historical circumstances to become certain kinds of subjects, along the lines of sane or insane subjects, healthy or sick, and so on. But why is Foucault so unyielding in claiming that his research has proceeded in this manner? What are the stakes of such analyses?

According to Olivia Custer, the very elucidation of the practices of how the subject constitutes itself entails a belief in freedom. Custer argues that Foucault, like Kant before him, invokes freedom to describe the crux of his critical analysis, and maintains that while it is well

24 Ian Hacking, ‘The Archaeology of Foucault’, in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, 39. As well, Gutting states that “the critique developed in *Les mots et les choses* is not directed against the notion of individual human beings as free agents but against a particular philosophical conception of human beings” (Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 277).

25 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, edited by C.J. Arthur, New York: International Publishers, 1995, 59.

known that the “point” of critical thinking for Kant is “to fully exploit the possibility of self-realization and thus depends on there being freedom”, it is less than obvious that Foucault takes a similar position.²⁶ In the words of Custer, “to understand how individuals constitute themselves as subjects of their practices, or on the contrary refuse the practices offered them is to hold a solid belief in human freedom”.²⁷ Custer observes that despite the fact that many of Foucault's readers misread his analyses of power as implying determinism, these analyses are intended to displace the “basic model” of the subject presupposed in many discussions of liberation, but not freedom itself.²⁸

At this point, the main reason why Foucault rejects the “basic model” of the human subject in theories of freedom should be considered.

As seen in ‘Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?’, Foucault expresses a reservation towards humanism. In this essay, Foucault's recognition of what counts as humanism is wide and encompassing – Christianity, Marxism, Existentialism, Personalism, National Socialism and even Stalinism are all, in the eyes of Foucault, humanistic modes of thought. Although Foucault may be guilty of a hasty generalization by including such a broad spectrum of thought under the general rubric of humanism, his target is evident – a metaphysics of human nature. The common motive of the above ‘humanisms’ is that they seek to provide the subject with a metaphysical conception of its nature towards which it is obliged to turn. According to Custer, Foucault rejects such a portrayal of the subject on the grounds that the scenario of liberation implied by this subject is one where “liberation requires that it be the liberation of a previously extant subject, a subject who is, therefore, constituted independently of the constraints to which he/she is subject”.²⁹ Theories of freedom along these lines, as recognized by Foucault, postulate the subject has having something like an inner self that is

26 Olivia Custer, ‘Exercising Freedom: Kant and Foucault’, *Philosophy Today*, SPEP Supplement, Volume 24, 1998, 137.

27 Custer, ‘Exercising Freedom: Kant and Foucault’, 138.

28 Custer, ‘Exercising Freedom: Kant and Foucault’, 138.

29 Custer, ‘Exercising Freedom: Kant and Foucault’, 139.

repressed, alienated, or simply unrealized. The key, in such accounts, is for the object or mechanism of repression to be removed which, in turn, will enable the subject to achieve its full potential and reconcile itself (*DE II* 1529). In these theories is a notion of human nature which dictates what needs to be done to advance liberty.

One of the main reasons that Foucault is highly critical of a formulation of the subject in this light is because it perpetuates a scandalous belief in the advancement of freedom or progress. All of Foucault's histories can be read as exposing this myth as fraudulent. For example, Foucault's critique in *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* exposes the chimera of liberation typically associated with the insane at Bicêtre and York in the early 1790s. In this specific example, liberation related to the removal of the forms of physical constraint that had become common place in the confinement of the mad. This event was looked upon as signifying a more humane treatment of the insane, as were the future remedies they received. However, Foucault convincingly shows that although the mad had their chains removed in the dungeons, their punishment would continue in more subtle and penetrating forms. In lieu of physical restraint, the methods advocated by Pinel and Tuke consisted of the use of systematic control in which the insane would be monitored, and eventually judged by agents of bourgeois morality. In the eyes of Foucault, in dealing with the mad there was no progress – the methods just became more subtle and complex.

It can be seen that Foucault's rejection of humanism does not imply a refusal of freedom. Instead, as explained by Custer:

Foucault's work appears as a catalogue of instances in which freedom was exercised insofar as it documents displacements that, *a posteriori*, can be taken as acts of freedom.³⁰

It can be understood that when Foucault adamantly claims that the subject is at the core of his studies, he sees himself as describing, after the fact, the various games of truth (or practices) that the subject has entered into. In the name of freedom, he documents the practices of subjects. All the same, if – as Custer suggests – Foucault holds a 'solid belief' in human freedom then surely he is not

30 Custer, 'Exercising Freedom', 140.

content to simply depict *a posteriori* acts of freedom. Certainly his critique of the dangers of humanism is intended to have an ethical slant. What about the way out proposed in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières'? The suggestion of a refusal in 'Le sujet et le pouvoir'?

In 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?', in an important move, Foucault advocates the principle that he sees at the heart of the historical consciousness of the Enlightenment -- the principle of critique (*DE II* 1392). This principle, "*une attitude limite*", as opposed to referring to a human nature, appeals to what can be termed a historical nature. To this point, Touey explains that Foucault's thought advances a concept of the "historicization of human nature" -- "the idea that there is nothing essential about human beings, that they have no fixed essence or nature, and are instead the result of local, contingent histories".³¹ Along similar lines, Nehamas argues that Foucault never abandoned the belief that the "true self" is a chimera but instead recognized the subject as a construct of history, and explains that one of the central premises that guides the thought of Foucault is that "most of the situations in which we find ourselves are products of history, though we are convinced that they are natural facts".³² Where others see only nature and necessity in history, Nehamas notes that Foucault's ability lies in discerning contingency. It is precisely this ability that, according to Rajchman, invokes Foucault's notion of freedom in the sense that in taking up of the idea of freedom, Foucault sought to rethink it along the lines that one's freedom would not lie in one's essence but in one's historical contingent singularity.³³ Freedom in this sense, argues Rajchman, "would not be an experience of an identity or a natural or a pre-given state, but, on the contrary, an experience of the fragility of a kind of identification taken for granted".³⁴ In other words, by bringing to light the dubious nature of identity, Foucault illustrates the possibility that one may become something other than what one is.

31 Touey, 'Foucault's Apology', 84.

32 Nehamas, *The Art of Living*, 169, 177.

33 John Rajchman, *Truth and Eros*, New York and London: Routledge, 1991, 109.

34 Rajchman, *Truth and Eros*, 109.

Indeed, 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?' is an apology. In fact, it is a user guide for Foucault's oeuvre which brings to the fore the notion that the motive of his works is not purely descriptive. According to Gutting, each of Foucault's histories -- the second and third volumes of *Histoire de la sexualité* being no exception -- can be defined as a history of the present. Gutting explains that the motive of history in this fashion is to begin with the perception that "something is terribly wrong in the present" and then "show the contingency, and hence surpassability, of what history has given us".³⁵ One takes stock of the current situation and then proceeds to show the avenues by which change can be achieved. Foucault, by illustrating the contingency of truth games, seeks to illuminate the fragility of the subject's nature or identity. For instance, in the *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, by showing the contingency of the concept of madness, the aim is to encourage the reader to rethink his assumptions regarding the confinement and treatment of the mad. Therefore, the goal of the undefined work of freedom is to present the possibility that the subject can go beyond its present historical limit. Like the dandy, Foucault sees his work as disrupting the 'truth' of what is real, as he challenges commonly held assumptions concerning the present. Rajchman explains that Foucault's histories share an aim with fiction in the sense that they show how things might be otherwise, beyond our self-evidences.³⁶ It is exactly this aim -- the attitude of modernity -- that Foucault sees as the positive side of the Enlightenment, and of contemporary importance. Contrary to Nehamas' assessment that Foucault's engagement with the Enlightenment signifies a radical change, Foucault's life-long work can be seen as carrying out the project of showing how things might be otherwise. Admittedly, this motive is only rendered explicit by Foucault towards the end of his oeuvre.

It is evident that towards the end of his oeuvre, Foucault makes it clear that he is concerned with freedom. In the eyes of Hanssen, Foucault's later dialogues with Kant signify a "positive phase

35 Gutting, 'Michel Foucault: A User's Manual', 10.

36 Rajchman, 'Foucault's Art of Seeing', *October* 44, 95.

of critique".³⁷ At the heart of this critique, is Foucault's desire to reinvigorate Kantian critique, and to reconnect his own project to the first generation of the Frankfurt School.³⁸ But more importantly for the purpose at hand, Hanssen maintains that in the later "quasi-Kantian writings" – such as 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?' and 'Le sujet et le pouvoir' – Foucault outlines a new ethico-political attitude that might open up an "unfettered", "unconstrained field of freedom".³⁹ It has been noted that Foucault describes this project in terms of a historical ontology that seeks to bring to light the contingency of historical limits in order that they may be overcome. But all the same, how does Foucault seek to implement this strategy?

It may be recollected that in 'Le sujet et le pouvoir', Foucault, in light of the techniques of individualisation identified in his studies on the art of government, proposes a notion of refusal for the present. Hanssen explains that this suggestion entails a requisite measure of self-government to match the art of not being governed too much and, accordingly, Foucault shifts his emphasis from a study of the art of government towards a study of the art of self-government.⁴⁰ Not being governed too much or in such a way, as Hanssen relates, pertains to the issue of spurious identities or fabricated individualities – those identities inherited from pastoral power. Hanssen notes that in 'Le sujet et le pouvoir' Foucault, via the concept of agonism, sketches an identity-politics that strives to unmask the oppressive patterns of social alienation.⁴¹ However, when it comes to clarifying how such a task can be carried out in a historical and political sense, Foucault abandons Kantian terrain and resorts to a Nietzschean conception of self-fashioning, mediated through Baudelaire's

37 Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 53.

38 This incidentally reflects the larger goal of Hanssen's *Critique of Violence* which is to bridge the distance typically thought to exist between poststructuralism and critical theory. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to carry out such an ambitious task. *Critique of Violence* is of interest for this thesis in the vein that Hanssen provides a sensitive and lucid reading of Foucault's later writings that relate to Kant and freedom.

39 Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 53.

40 Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 75.

41 The concept of agonism will be discussed in chapter five.

aestheticism.⁴² Hanssen argues that Foucault's call – in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?' – for a "new *ascetic elaboration of the self*", is a call to action for the modern subject to invent and produce itself.⁴³ In the eyes of Hanssen, this proposal of "ethical self-recreation", is an attempt to synthesize aesthetics and ethics. However, she observes that in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?', it is all but transparent how exactly Foucault hopes to manufacture this synthesis.⁴⁴ In order to cast light on this matter, Hanssen advises that the project of the second and third volumes of Foucault's *Histoire de la sexualité* must be considered. Following this advice, it is these writings which will presently be considered.

1.3 The Reorientation of a Project

(i) Traversing New Terrain

In the introduction to the second volume of *Histoire de la sexualité* (subtitled *L'usage des plaisirs*), Foucault informs the reader: "cette série de recherches paraît plus tard que je n'avais prévu et sous une tout autre forme" (UP 9). Eight years had passed since the publication of the first volume in 1976 -- a volume which had been originally projected as an introduction to a five-volume work.⁴⁵ Explaining that he never intended the study to be a history of sexual behaviours or representations, Foucault claims that his aim was to analyse the history of the experience of sexuality. In carrying out this project, he sought to examine sexuality along the three axes that constitute it: the correlation between the fields of knowledge that refer to it; the normativity or systems of power that regulate its practice; and the forms of subjectivity in a particular culture (UP 10).⁴⁶ While recognizing that

42 Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 75.

43 Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 79.

44 Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 79.

45 Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, translated by Betsy Wing, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991, 317.

46 Here again it can be seen that just as in 'Le sujet et le pouvoir', Foucault divides his work into three.

his previous work had provided him with the tools for the first two points, he encountered a dilemma with the third.

Foucault admits that when he came to study the way in which individuals recognize themselves as sexual subjects, he came across the theme of the desiring subject. This theme seemed an oddity, since it provided a generally accepted theoretical framework -- colouring not only traditional theories, but even those seeking to detach themselves from such an orientation. As a consequence, Foucault noted that before he could analyse the experience of sexuality from the eighteenth-century onward, he would first have to do an historical and critical study dealing with desire and the desiring subject:

en somme, pour comprendre comment l'individu moderne pouvait faire l'expérience de lui-même comme sujet d'une «sexualité», il était indispensable de dégager auparavant la façon dont, pendant des siècles, l'homme occidental avait été amené à se reconnaître comme sujet de désir (UP 11-12).⁴⁷

A genealogy seemed the natural choice to investigate how an individual could experience himself as a subject of desire. All the same, Foucault recognized that a genealogy would steer him too far from his original project. Accordingly, he had the following choice: either follow the initial plan and supplement it with a brief history of desire, or "réorganiser toute l'étude autour de la lente formation, pendant l'Antiquité, d'une herméneutique de soi" (UP 12). Foucault opted for the latter.

Referring to the publications of volumes 2 and 3 of *Histoire de la sexualité*, Arnold I. Davidson observes that "many of Foucault's readers must have been bewildered by their content to say the least".⁴⁸ Along similar lines, Hanssen states that "the final two installments" of Foucault's history of sexuality "at first met with wonder, short of encountering veritable disapproval, even from

47 This explanation, corresponds to the third mode of inquiry in the oeuvre of Foucault, as identified in 'Le sujet et le pouvoir', and relates to the manner in which subjects turn themselves into subjects (DE II 1042).

48 Arnold I. Davidson, 'Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, The History of Ethics, and Ancient Thought', in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, 117.

long-time sympathizers".⁴⁹ As both Hanssen and Davidson note, what threw readers was the chronological reorientation of the project.

Undoubtedly, following the first volume of the *Histoire de la sexualité* (subtitled, *La volonté de savoir*) readers would have been perplexed by the subsequent volumes, as in *La volonté de savoir*, Foucault had been on familiar territory, and doing what he had become renowned for -- unearthing and exposing the scandals of the modern age by showing how, in this case, the repressive hypothesis was not the liberatory process originally thought to be, but ultimately an intricate mechanism for controlling sexual behaviour and, more specifically, the body. In candid fashion, Foucault had written:

la sexualité est liée à des dispositifs récents de pouvoir; elle a été en expansion croissante depuis le XVIIe siècle ... il a été lié dès l'origine à une intensification du corps -- à sa valorisation comme objet de savoir et comme élément dans les rapports de pouvoir (*HS* 141).

Moreover, the final section of this work -- 'Droit de mort et pouvoir sur la vie' -- would in no way foreshadow Foucault's reworking and remapping of the next volumes, as in this section he had argued that "les guerres n'ont été plus sanglantes pourtant que depuis le XIXe siècle et, même toutes proportions gardées, jamais les régimes n'avaient jusque-là pratiqué sur leurs propres populations de pareils holocaustes" (*HS* 179). The introduction of the concept of "bio-pouvoir" would certainly not lead one to surmise that Ancient Greece and Rome would be the focus of the following volumes.

49 Hanssen, *Critique and Violence*, 80.

One cannot underestimate just how radical Foucault's reorientation of his original project is.⁵⁰ It signifies a new direction for his thought,⁵¹ and also draws upon a new area in history that until this point one would not associate with Foucault. Justifiably, it might be asked: why did he turn his attention to this era?

(ii) A Project with an Ethical Impetus

In his comprehensive study, *Histoire du structuralisme*, François Dosse outlines how, during the seventies, Foucault's view of the role of the intellectual underwent change.⁵² Instead of acting like a specific intellectual – a concept of the intellectual that Foucault, along with Gilles Deleuze, advocated⁵³ – Dosse maintains that under the influence of the profound changes of the day, Foucault was moving towards the role of the complete intellectual. According to Dosse: "cette évolution permettra la réunion des deux figures jusque-là anti-thétiques dans leur engagement respectif, celles de Sartre et de Foucault".⁵⁴ Dosse makes such a claim by noting Foucault's embracement in the

50 Arnold I. Davidson explains: "the first volume of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* was published in 1976. The back cover of that volume announced the titles of the five forthcoming volumes that would complete Foucault's project. Volume 2 was to be called *The Flesh and the Body* and would concern the prehistory of our modern experience of sexuality, concentrating on the problematizations of sex in early Christianity. Volumes 3 through 5 were to focus on some of the major figures (of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) around which problems, themes, and questions of sex had come to circle. Volume 3, *The Children's Crusade*, would discuss the sexuality of children, especially the problem of childhood masturbation; volume 4, *Woman, Mother, Hysteric*, would discuss the specific ways in which sexuality had been invested in the female body; volume 5, *Perverts*, was planned to investigate exactly what the title named, the person of the pervert, an ever present target of nineteenth-century thought. Finally, volume 6, *Population and Races*, was to examine the way in which treatises, both theoretical and practical, on the topics of population and race were linked to the history of what Foucault had called 'biopolitics'" (Davidson, 'Ethics as Ascetics', 117).

51 Frédéric Gros describes Foucault's project in the second and third volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité* as signifying a conceptual revolution for Foucault. For an account of the background and circumstances leading to this revolution see Gros' 'Situation du cours', in *Michel Foucault: L'herméneutique de sujet: Cours au Collège de France (1981-1982)*, Paris: Hautes Études, 2001, 489-526.

52 François Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme, tome 2: le chant du cygne, 1967 à nos jours*, Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1992, 424.

53 Foucault, 'Les Intellectuels et le pouvoir', (*DE I* 1174-1183).

54 Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme, tome 2*, 424.

seventies, alongside Sartre, with the cause of human rights.⁵⁵ Corresponding to this overt political involvement was Foucault's sketching of a new vision of his original historical program in the first volume of the *Histoire de la sexualité*. Referring to Foucault's new project, Dosse explains that "il abandonne la perspective du biopouvoir, celle du sujet en tant qu'assujetti par les diverses modalités du pouvoir, pour lui substituer une problématisation du sujet lui-même".⁵⁶ As Dosse recognizes, what was new in this shift of perspective was the subject's relation to ethics.

It can be recalled that, although circa the publication of *La volonté de savoir* one would hazard a guess that Foucault would next focus on ethics and Ancient Greece, one can sense that after the publication of this first volume, he was starting to rethink earlier assumptions.⁵⁷ Already it has been noted that in lectures from 1980 and 1981, Foucault acknowledges that he may have embellished the role of power. In a course, 'Subjectivité et vérité', given at the Collège de France in 1981, Foucault elaborates upon the direction of his future studies:

L'histoire du «souci» et des «techniques» de soi serait donc une manière de faire l'histoire de la subjectivité: non plus, cependant, à travers les partages entre fous et non-fous, malades et non-malades, délinquants et non-délinquants, non plus à travers la constitution de champs d'objectivité scientifique donnant place au sujet vivant, parlant, travaillant; mais à travers la mise en place et les transformations dans notre culture des «rapports à soi-même», avec leur armature technique et leurs effets de savoir (*DE II* 1033).

Indeed, as Dosse identifies, Foucault's history of the self is certainly a new direction for him -- no longer will Foucault focus on dividing practices, power, discourse and so on. Aspects readily associated with his thought. Also, the mention of techniques and sources of the self implies that the subject will be presented in an active – not passive – manner. But what is the precise relation

55 A more detailed account of Foucault's involvement with the cause of human rights can be found in Didier Eribon's biography of Foucault, specifically in chapters 16-19 (Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, 224-295).

56 Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme*, tome 2, 432.

57 Commenting on this shift in Foucault, Dosse explains: "Les intitulés de ses cours au Collège de France révèlent la radicalité du tournant que Foucault accomplit, même si aucune parution ne vient l'étayer avant 1984. En 1980-1981, le cours est consacré à: «Subjectivité et vérité», l'année suivante: «L'herméneutique du sujet», puis en 1982-1983: «Le gouvernement de soi et des autres»" (Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme*, tome 2, 433).

between the subject and ethics that Dosse associates with the later Foucault? As well, what is the ethical orientation that Foucault seeks to bring to light?

Davidson argues that "Volumes 2 and 3 of *The History of Sexuality* are about sex in roughly the way that *Discipline and Punish* is about the prison".⁵⁸ In order to flesh out this claim, the conclusion of *Surveiller et punir* can be turned to, specifically, the final footnote where Foucault informs the reader:

J'interromps ici ce livre qui doit servir d'arrière-plan historique à diverses études sur le pouvoir de normalisation et la formation du savoir dans la société moderne (SP 315n1).

In *Surveiller et punir* the prison serves as the occasion for Foucault to address a more fundamental issue -- it is a backdrop for a study of power, normalization and knowledge in modern society. While the prison enables Foucault to address these issues, Davidson argues that the theme of "ancient sex" -- in volumes 2 and 3 of *Histoire de la sexualité* -- "functions as the material around which Foucault elaborates his conception of ethics".⁵⁹

Foucault's conceptualization of ethics derives from the difference he sees between morality and ethics. The ambiguity of the word morality, according to Foucault, entails that it can be understood in three ways. First, morality can be grasped as "un ensemble de valeurs et de règles d'action qui sont proposées aux individus et aux groupes par l'intermédiaire d'appareils prescriptifs

58 Davidson, 'Ethics as Ascetics', 114. It should be noted that Davidson provides a very different interpretation of Foucault's project of ethics. To the questions 'What kind of subjects should we be?' and 'How should we govern ourselves?', Davidson recognizes that Foucault offers a history of ethics equipped with the concepts of an aesthetics of existence and style of existence. Maintaining that these notions are far more "complex" and "multilayered" than most commentators have acknowledged, Davidson stresses the importance of a 'style of existence' over an 'aesthetics of existence'. According to Davidson, though it seems that Foucault advocates an aesthetics of existence, such an appearance is a result of a "defect in interpretation". Influenced by the work of Pierre Hadot and Jean-Pierre Vernant, Davidson argues that "one of the most distinctive features of that care of the self studied by Foucault in volume 3 of *The History of Sexuality* is its indissociable link with this cosmic consciousness; one's philosophical aim of this care of the self is to transform oneself so that one places oneself in the perspective of the cosmic Whole". It seems unlikely that Foucault is advocating such a spiritual project. But nevertheless Davidson, provides an interesting argument that brings to light Foucault's misinterpretations of Ancient Greek, and also highlights the conspicuous absences of certain historical figures in Foucault's studies (See Davidson, 'Ethics as Ascetics', 119-130; Jean-Pierre Vernant, 'The Individual within the City-State', in *Mortals and Immortals, Collected Essays*, edited by Froma I. Zeitlin, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, 330; and -- cited by Davidson as -- Pierre Hadot, *Titres et Travaux de Pierre Hadot*. Privately printed by the Collège de France, 28).

59 Davidson, 'Ethics as Ascetics', 115.

divers" (UP 32). Next, it can be understood as the behaviour of individuals in relation to rules and values which are prescribed to them. Finally, morality can be thought of in the manner "dont on doit «se conduire», -- c'est-à-dire la manière dont on doit se constituer soi-même comme sujet moral agissant en référence aux éléments prescriptifs qui constituent le code" (UP 33).

Along with studies of moral behaviours and codes, Foucault sees the self's relation to itself as one of the three ways in which morality can be studied. Foucault maintains that this relation of the self to itself has four aspects: la *détermination de la substance éthique*; le *mode d'assujettissement*; les formes de l'*élaboration du travail éthique*; et la *téléologie* du sujet moral (UP 33-34). According to Foucault, these aspects -- at once, relational and independent -- combine in the self formation of the ethical subject:

dans laquelle l'individu circonscrit la part de lui-même qui constitue l'objet de cette pratique morale, définit sa position par rapport au précepte qu'il suit, se fixe un certain mode d'être qui vaudra comme accomplissement moral de lui-même; et, pour ce faire, il agit sur lui-même, entreprend de se connaître, se contrôle, s'éprouve, se perfectionne, se transforme (UP 35).

For Foucault there is no moral action that does not consist of these forms of self-activity and, further, they are present in every morality. Foucault therefore argues that a history of the way in which individuals constitute themselves as moral subjects must focus on the techniques and practices of the subject. Referring to a history in this fashion, Foucault explains:

C'est là ce qu'on pourrait appeler une histoire de l'«éthique» et de l'«ascétique», entendue comme histoire des formes de la subjectivation morale et des pratiques de soi qui sont destinées à l'assurer (UP 36).

Accordingly, Foucault, via his study of sexuality, brings to the fore the ethical actions that enable subjects to become subjects.

Up to this point, it has been discerned that Foucault's motive in the second and third volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité* rests on concentrating on the ethical practices of the self on the self. Also, it has been noted that to elaborate upon these practices, Foucault focuses on what he sees as one of three domains of a history of morals – a history of ethics. A history that presumes the ethical

activity of the subject. This much has been seen. The question that still lingers is: why choose Ancient Greece and Rome for a presentation of ethics?

(iii) An Aesthetics of Existence

In raising the question "comment, pourquoi et sous quelle forme l'activité sexuelle a-t-elle été constituée comme domaine moral?" (UP 16), Foucault explains that it occurred to him that the problematization of sexuality was linked to the "arts d'existence" in Greek and Greco-Roman culture:

Par là il faut entendre des pratiques réfléchies et volontaires par lesquelles les hommes, non seulement se fixent des règles de conduite, mais cherchent à se transformer eux-mêmes, à se modifier dans leur être singulier, et à faire de leur vie une oeuvre qui porte certaines valeurs esthétiques et réponde à certains critères de style (UP 17).

Recognizing that although such "arts d'existence", or "techniques de soi", lost some of their importance beginning with their assimilation into the exercise of priestly power in early Christianity, Foucault informs us that "l'étude de la problématisation du comportement sexuel dans l'Antiquité pouvait être considérée comme un chapitre -- un des premiers chapitres -- de cette histoire générale des «techniques de soi»" (UP 17).

Foucault states his objective as being: "marquer quelques traits généraux qui caractérisent la manière dont le comportement sexuel a été réfléchi par la pensée grecque classique comme domaine d'appréciation et de choix moraux" (UP 39). Noting that although the Greeks did not have anything that we would equate with our present notions of "sexualité" or "chair", Foucault explains that they did have a "catégorie d'ensemble" that covered the act of sex: "les Grecs utilisent volontiers un adjectif substantivé: *ta aphrodisia*" (UP 43). While acknowledging the difficulties in providing a sound translation of this term -- for the reason that our idea of sexuality applies to a reality of a different type, and "elle a, dans notre morale et notre savoir, de tout autres fonctions" (UP 44) -- Foucault explains that *aphrodisia* can be pragmatically translated as "choses" or "plaisirs de l'amour", "rapports sexuels", "actes de la chair", "voluptés" (UP 43-44). It is precisely this concept that Foucault considers in relation to the Ancient Greeks' general form of moral inquiry.

Explaining that although Plato recognized that the desires which led to the *aphrodisia* were natural and necessary, Foucault observes that *aphrodisia* nonetheless became an object of moral concern (UP 48). In contemplating the moral question -- "Comment prendre son plaisir «comme il faut»?" -- he notes that the Ancient Greeks were not concerned with establishing "un code systématique" inasmuch as they were interested in defining a style for what they termed *chrēsis aphrodisiōn*, that is, "l'usage des plaisirs" (UP 63). In elucidating this style, Foucault takes into account that the Greeks of Antiquity did not depend upon a text which would guide their actions, but rather a "*technē*" or "une pratique". In their formulation of morality:

l'individu se constitue comme sujet éthique; c'est au contraire par une attitude et par une recherche qui individualisent son action, la modulent, et peuvent même lui donner un éclat singulier par la structure rationnelle et réfléchie qu'elle lui prête (UP 73).

To illustrate further the practices of Ancient Greece, Foucault juxtaposes the Greek form of morality over against that of Christianity. In doing so, he argues that while moral subjection in Christianity takes the form of recognizing the law and obeying pastoral authority, in Ancient Greece moral subjection is oriented toward "une stylisation de l'attitude" and "une esthétique de l'existence" (UP 106).

As one would suspect, in *Le souci de soi* one finds Foucault continuing with similar lines of reasoning. For instance, in this work he discusses Plutarch's writings on the topic of marriage, and establishes that what Plutarch proposed were not regulations which implied a division between permitted and forbidden acts. Rather, Plutarch suggested a "manière d'être", "un style de rapports" (SS 215). As recognized by Foucault, Plutarch's views on marriage are representative of "l'universalité sans loi d'une esthétique de l'existence" (SS 215).

It is evident that in the second and third volumes of *Histoire de la sexualité*, Foucault's emphasis lies in elucidating the practices whereby individuals take themselves as ethical subjects. Foucault is keen to portray the differences between these practices and Christianity. With Christianity individuals passively obey a code of conduct. However, with an aesthetics of existence, individuals actively shape their conduct. The priority attributed by Foucault to a history of ethics –

as practised by the Greeks – over a history of moral codes – as obeyed by Christians – is obvious. He recognizes that while the latter revolve around a rather small number of rather simple principles, with the former: "il y a tout un champ d'historicité complexe et riche dans la manière dont l'individu est appelé à se reconnaître comme sujet moral de la conduite sexuelle" (*UP* 39). Foucault's originality in these works rests in his ability to shift the history of morals -- in terms of behaviours and codes -- to a history of ethics that describes the ethical practices by the self on the self. Ancient Greece is therefore chosen to emphasize this mode of ethical self-fashioning. Yet what is the importance of Foucault drawing upon these seemingly archaic practices of Antiquity? Of what consequence are they for the present?

1.4 An Ethics for the Present

(i) The Ethical Motive of An Aesthetics of Existence

In an interview from 1984 – 'Une esthétique de l'existence' – Foucault discusses his interest in Ancient Greece as deriving from its relation with Christianity. According to Foucault, with Christianity one sees a slow progressive change brought about in relation to ancient morality (*DE II* 1550). This alteration is characterized by a gradual movement away from an ethics as a practice of liberty towards a morality that is a form of obedience to a code of rules. In a telling statement, Foucault elaborates on his curiosity in the historical era of Antiquity:

si je me suis intéressé à l'Antiquité, c'est que, pour toute une série de raisons, l'idée d'une morale comme obéissance à un code de règles est en train, maintenant, de disparaître, a déjà disparu. Et à cette absence de morale répond, doit répondre une recherche qui est celle d'une esthétique de l'existence (*DE II* 1551).

Although Foucault would shudder at the suggestion, this explanation relates to the normative dimension of his thought. Foucault appropriates aspects of the culture of Antiquity to show a way out of the present. Previously in 1983, in 'À propos de la généalogie de l'éthique', the same reasoning had been reiterated, as Foucault had wondered if we are not presently confronted with a problem similar to that of ancient Greece in the sense that "nous ne croyons pas qu'une morale puisse être fondée sur la religion et nous ne voulons pas d'un système légal qui intervienne dans notre vie

morale, personnelle et intime" (*DE II* 1430). Moreover, Foucault explains that recent liberation movements have suffered from the fact that they cannot find an ethics other than one that is founded upon a scientific knowledge of what the self is. Foucault proposes that the issue of ethics does not have to relate to scientific knowledge, and elaborates:

Pendant des siècles, nous avons eu la conviction qu'il y avait entre notre morale, notre morale individuelle, notre vie de tous les jours et les grandes structures politiques, sociales et économiques, des liens analytiques et que nous ne pouvions rien changer ... Je crois que nous devons nous débarrasser de l'idée d'un lien analytique et nécessaire entre la morale et les autres structures sociales, économiques ou politiques (*DE II* 1211).

Upon asked what kind of moral can be formulated in light of there being no necessary relation between ethics and other structures, Foucault responds:

Ce qui m'étonne, c'est le fait que dans notre société l'art est devenu quelque chose qui n'est en rapport qu'avec les objets et non pas avec les individus ou avec la vie; et aussi que l'art est un domaine spécialisé fait par des experts qui sont des artistes. Mais la vie de tout individu ne pourrait-elle pas être une oeuvre d'art? Pourquoi une lampe ou une maison sont-ils des objets d'art et non pas notre vie? (*DE II* 1211).

(ii) Ethical Freedom

Hanssen explains that in his late phase, Foucault "repeatedly admitted" that his main interest lay in recovering an "aesthetics of existence".⁶⁰ Hanssen maintains that in concentrating on the self in the second and third volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité*, Foucault sought to reclaim a "primordial ethical sensibility or attitude"⁶¹ Paul Veyne provides a lucid and concise reading of Foucault's final project that complements Hanssen's analysis, and brings to light the ethical impetus in the latter volumes. According to Veyne, as a philosopher, Foucault's role is to make a diagnosis of present possibilities and to draw up a strategic map -- "avec l'espoir secret d'influencer le choix

⁶⁰ Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 80.

⁶¹ Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 84, 86.

des combats".⁶² In elucidating this *modus operandi* in relation to the second and third volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité*, Veyne states: "le diagnostic de l'actualité est à peu près celui-ci: dans le monde moderne, il semble devenu impossible de fonder une morale".⁶³ In light of this impossibility, Veyne argues that Foucault did not claim to be delivering "une morale armée de pied en cap" – an academic pursuit whose time had passed – but rather an exit for the present that relates to the idea of a style of existence.⁶⁴ Style is to be taken in the sense of the Ancient Greeks – "pour qui un artiste était d'abord un artisan et une oeuvre d'art, une oeuvre".⁶⁵ Veyne argues that even though Foucault deemed it undesirable to totally resuscitate Greek ethics, at the same time he did consider one of its elements -- the idea of a work on the self -- to be of contemporary importance.⁶⁶ According to Veyne, the self taking itself as a work of art could sustain an ethics that would not be reliant upon reason or tradition and – "il jouirait de cette autonomie dont la modernité ne peut plus se passer".⁶⁷

It can be recollected that in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?' Foucault recognizes that modernity for Baudelaire is a relation to one's self, related to "un ascétisme indispensable" in which one takes oneself as an object of complex and difficult elaboration (*DE II* 1389). The dandy makes his very

62 Paul Veyne, 'Le dernier Foucault et sa morale', in *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments. Volume VII*, edited by Barry Smart, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, 273. Veyne's explanation derives from Foucault's admission in *Surveiller et punir* where he maintains that the past is of interest to him in terms of it enabling him to write "l'histoire du présent" (*SP* 35).

63 Veyne, 'Le dernier Foucault et sa morale', 273.

64 Veyne, 'Le dernier Foucault et sa morale', 274.

65 Veyne, 'Le dernier Foucault et sa morale', 274.

66 This is a point that is lost on the likes of Hayden White who argues that the second and third volumes of *Histoire de la sexualité* "tell the story of the failure of Classical thought to escape the lure of ethics" (Hayden White, *The Content of the Form*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987, 136). The crux of White's argument rests upon the commonly held assumption that Foucault recounts historical tales in which things get 'progressively' worse -- not better. This argument completely fails to acknowledge the motive of Foucauldian histories of the present. In the specific case of the second and third volumes of *Histoire de la sexualité*, White's argument overlooks the fact that Foucault illustrates a point in history where individuals acted as ethical agents without having to appeal to a moral code. The precise reason why Foucault illustrates this point is because -- as he sees it -- in contemporary society individuals no longer believe that there is a traditional moral structure to which they can appeal. Accordingly, in hopes of influencing the present, Foucault desires to show that there was another point in history when individuals acted ethically without having to appeal to a moral code or structure.

67 Veyne, 'Le dernier Foucault et sa morale', 274.

existence a work of art and does not attempt to discover himself or hidden truths, but invents himself: "cette modernité ne «libère pas l'homme de son être propre»; elle l'astreint à la tâche de s'élaborer lui-même"⁶⁸ (*DE II* 1390). It is this possibility – the autonomy that modernity cannot do without – that Foucault brings to light by means of the aesthetics of existence in the second and third volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité*.

Accordingly, the moral of the history of the present that Foucault elucidates in the second and third volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité* can be stated as follows: what is wrong in the present is that morality cannot be grounded in a necessary way. By illustrating an era where morality was not contingent upon necessary structures for its validity, Foucault shows the possibility of a different avenue that can be taken for ethical action.

As it has been observed, Foucault explains that the Greek style of existence is concerned with making one's self a work of art – it is an exercise by the self, on the self, in which the self attempts to attain a certain mode of being. Jeanette Colombel observes that Foucault's proposal to create one's self as a work of art demonstrates an affinity with the thought of Sartre. Both philosophers, according to Colombel, seek a morality that does not appeal to universal laws but is contingent upon the creativity or choice of the self.⁶⁹ Dreyfus and Rabinow, in fact, confront Foucault with this similarity, and ask:

si l'on doit se créer soi-même sans le recours à la connaissance et aux lois universelles, en quoi votre conception est-elle différente de l'existentialisme sartrien?
(*DE II* 1211).

Foucault downplays any resemblance, and maintains that his view is much closer to Nietzsche's than Sartre's. According to Foucault, Sartre's notion of authenticity harbours a concept of a true self – presumably, along the lines of humanism (which, as it has been seen, Foucault equates existentialism

⁶⁸ Foucault certainly had a change of heart regarding the subject, as in a debate with Noam Chomsky in 1971, he had admitted: "Je voudrais simplement dire ceci: dans les études historiques que j'ai pu faire, ou que je me suis efforcé de faire, j'ai sans aucun doute laissé très peu de place à ce que vous appelez la créativité des individus, à leur capacité de création" (*DE I* 1348).

⁶⁹ Jeanette Colombel, *Michel Foucault, La clarté de la mort*, Paris: Éditions Odile Jacob, 1994, 269-270.

with) – and, as a result, Sartrean creativity is hindered by this authentic self. As opposed to Sartre, Foucault explains that creativity should be established as a relation, or practice of the self on the self. One can practice this relation without drawing upon a source of the self, according to Foucault, because one is free. Moreover, this relation of the self to the self is an ethical practice, for the reason that "la liberté est la condition ontologique de l'éthique" (*DE II* 1531).

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter it has been seen that freedom is an important part of Foucault's later thought. When he argues that the subject has always been the motive of his research, he places himself within the tradition of freedom. As has been seen, Foucault mentions an ethical project of freedom in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?' that is grounded in the second and third volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité*. This ethical orientation, as found in Antiquity, is of contemporary importance because it provides a way out of the present by which subjects can ethically transform themselves along the lines of a work of art.

Although freedom is important for Foucault's thought, a certain ambivalence can be sensed on this topic. Typically, a concept of the subject is of utmost importance for a theory of freedom. Yet, as it has been observed, even though Foucault sees the subject as being the focus of his oeuvre, at the same time, he makes it clear that a concept of freedom that appeals to a nature of the subject is a dead-end venture. Foucault simply assumes the subject, and in light of the fragility of its historical identity, he suggests an ethical motive that encourages creativity. It has been observed that this proposal invokes a comparison with Sartre, a resemblance that Foucault sees no grounds for. Is Foucault right in claiming that the ethics of an aesthetics of existence differs from Sartrean existentialism? Is there a precise model of art that Foucault bases this mode of ethical self-fashioning upon? Does this ethical orientation really provide an exit from the processes of individualization? These questions will guide this thesis in the future. But at this point, let us proceed and contemplate

the early thought of the French philosopher with whom Foucault's project of an 'aesthetics of existence' invokes a comparison.

CHAPTER TWO

Jean-Paul Sartre and the Ethics of Freedom

Qu'est-ce que signifie ici que l'existence précède l'essence? Cela signifie que l'homme existe d'abord, se rencontre, surgit dans le monde, et qu'il se définit après. L'homme, tel que le conçoit l'existentialiste, s'il n'est pas définissable, c'est qu'il n'est d'abord rien. ...Ainsi, il n'y a pas de nature humaine, puisqu'il n'y a pas de Dieu pour la concevoir. L'homme est seulement.

Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*

Aussi sommes-nous déjà sur le plan de la morale, mais concurremment sur celui de la mauvaise foi, car c'est une morale qui a honte d'elle-même et n'ose dire son nom.

Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant*

2.1 Introduction

Although the question of freedom may not be immediately transparent until later in the thought of Michel Foucault, with the case of Jean-Paul Sartre the matter is clear from the start. In his philosophical opus, *L'être et le néant*, Sartre argues that we are condemned to be free. In his notorious lecture, *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, he declares: "l'homme est libre, l'homme est liberté" (EH 36-37). According to Thomas W. Busch, freedom for Sartre's philosophy is both the "starting point" and "ultimate goal".¹ Jeannette Colombel argues that "la réaffirmation de la liberté est fondamentale dans la pensée de Sartre".² It is certain that freedom is the defining point of the thought of Sartre, and his greatest achievement as a thinker.

1 Thomas W. Busch, 'Sartre: The Phenomenological Reduction and Human Relationships', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 6, No. 1, January 1975, 55.

2 Jeannette Colombel, *Jean-Paul Sartre, Un homme en situations*, Paris: Le livre de poche, 1985, 19.

George Steiner, commenting on the unprecedented fame that Sartre – as a philosopher – attained, remarks:

What other philosopher in history has earned, spent, given away, generally mislaid millions? What other ontologist or moralist has crossed and recrossed the planet, mesmerizing stadium size audiences from Paris to Lisbon, from Prague to Havana, from Athens to Marrakech?³

Sartre, in a film from 1972 (entitled *Sartre*), reflecting on the fame he gained, admits that though he sought celebrity he realizes that the measure he achieved has a negative side.⁴ He explains that with fame one loses the recognition of one's self, and recounts the rumours he has heard about himself: "Très souvent, le Sartre célèbre a touché à l'ambassade des États Unis, ou a fait partie de l'Intelligence Service".⁵ On the other hand, he notes that Sartre, the celebrity, has been portrayed as a Communist who was close to Stalin and Khrouchtchev. When one is famous, Sartre observes, one encounters a double or a second self.⁶

As a thinker Sartre wore many hats: aside from philosophical works, he wrote numerous plays and novels, occasional pieces in journalism, essays on a range of topics, biographies, and his autobiography. The multifaceted nature of Sartre's writings convey his interest in utilizing various media to express his thought. But more importantly, the multifarious character of Sartre's intellectual output cast light on his one consuming passion.⁷ As it will be seen in this thesis, it does not make

3 George Steiner, *Times Literary Supplement*, May 19, 2000, No. 5068, 3.

4 Sartre, *Sartre, un film réalisé par Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1977, 77.

5 Sartre, *Sartre, un film réalisé par Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat*, 77.

6 Sartre, *Sartre, un film réalisé par Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat*, 77-78.

7 Gutting describes Sartre's oeuvre as follows: "all his work, both philosophical and literary, even if it does not achieve a comprehensive ethical vision, establishes the centrality of freedom as a moral value" (Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 387).

sense to talk of a second Sartre. There is only one – a Sartre who is deeply committed to the idea of freedom.⁸

During his life, the question of freedom, and its implications were never far from Sartre's mind. Yet, he never was able to formulate an ethical theory. At the end of *L'être et le néant*, a future work devoted to the ethical plane was promised – an undertaking that was never completed.⁹ All the same, Gary Gutting observes that in *L'être et le néant* Sartre did suggest that an ethics could be generated by taking freedom itself as the ultimate value (EN 692).¹⁰ In this chapter, it is precisely the implications of this ethical proposal that will be contemplated. It will be seen that Sartre, by establishing a nothingness at the heart of the being-for-itself's existence, argues that this subject is free in the sense that its identity is not defined in advance. In light of this lack, Sartre proposes an ethical motive in which the being-for-itself avoids *mauvaise foi* by expressing its existence in an authentic manner -- a way in which it bases its existence on nothing other than its freedom to create itself.

8 It is pertinent to note that Bernard-Henri Lévy, in *Le siècle de Sartre*, identifies many Sartres. Of specific interest is his notion of two Sartres. The former applies to Sartre's earlier existential writings while the latter relates to Sartre's embracement of the communist ideology. In the eyes of Lévy, the good Sartre is an antihumanist thinker while the bad Sartre, sympathetic to a Marxist account of history, succumbs to humanism. As it will be argued in chapter five of this thesis, Sartre's attempt to synthesize existentialism with Marxism, did not, as Lévy maintains, necessarily lead Sartre to renounce aspects of his earlier thought. In fact, as it will be shown, though many of Sartre's earlier assumptions receive a socio-historical grounding, all the same, these assumptions are not entirely abandoned.

9 The last two lines of *L'être et le néant* are: "Toutes ces questions, qui nous renvoient à la réflexion pure et non complice, ne peuvent trouver leur réponse que sur le terrain moral. Nous y consacrerons un prochain ouvrage" (EN 692). Sartre made three attempts at formulating a morality: his first, written in 1947 and 1948, resulted in the *Cahiers pour une morale* which were published posthumously in 1984. Sartre's second attempt, which remains unpublished, is known as *The Rome Lectures* and *The Cornell Notes*. A third effort, a set of interviews by tape recorder – due to the blinding stroke that Sartre suffered in 1974 – with the ex-Maoist Benny Lévy was carried out in the mid-1970s, and has only been released in small fragments. For an account of Sartre's unpublished ethical endeavours see Elizabeth A. Bowman and Robert V. Stone, "'Making the Human' in Sartre's Unpublished Dialectical Ethics", in *Writing the Politics of Difference*, edited by Hugh J. Silverman, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991, 111-122.

10 Gutting adds that "Simone de Beauvoir, in her *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté*, had sketched out how such a move could generate plausible moral norms" (Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 124; Simone de Beauvoir, *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté*, Paris: Gallimard, 1947).

To carry out this goal,¹¹ this chapter will proceed as follows: first, (2.2) the intimations of two of Sartre's earliest works will be considered. In his philosophical debut, *La transcendance de l'ego*, it will be shown that Sartre, by ridding the subject of any internal nature, argues that because consciousness never coincides with its self, it continually reveals to its self the creation of a new existence. In *L'imaginaire* it will be seen that Sartre establishes that consciousness, via the imagination, has the capacity to escape from the world of perceptual reality. At this point, the implications of what Philip Knee describes as Sartre's clearest expression of freedom will be considered.¹² Having distinguished this idea of freedom in the early Sartre, the next task (2.3) will be to discern the ethical implications that Sartre attributes to this rendering of freedom in *L'être et le néant*. As it will be shown, the non-coincidence of the consciousness (as established in *La transcendance de l'ego*) and the ability of consciousness to remove itself from perceptual reality (as elucidated in *L'imaginaire*) combine in leading Sartre to argue that nothing in the consciousness or in the world of the being-for-itself influences what it will be. Though Sartre does not directly elaborate an idea of artistic freedom in *L'être et le néant*, he does juxtapose the explicit concept of *mauvaise foi* with the allusive notion of authenticity. In the faith of the former, the being-for-itself attempts to deny its freedom by patterning its existence upon the realm of the being-in-itself, while existing in the mode of the latter, the being-for-itself acknowledges its obligation to continually make its self in light of the nothingness of its existence. At this point (2.4), the question of whether or not Sartrean existentialism is a humanism will be addressed. As it will be observed, this is a contentious question for the reason that Sartre does not appeal to the idea of a human nature for an

11 Admittedly, this chapter will not be novel in its interpretation of Sartre's early existentialism. As it has been mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, it is important to see Sartrean freedom in terms of an evolution. Accordingly, commencing with Sartre's early thought is justified on the grounds that it initiates an interpretation along these lines. Also, it is crucial to observe the tension that Sartre encounters between pure freedom and freedom-in-situation – a topic that will be addressed in chapters three and four. Of equal importance, the reader may be reminded of the intentionality of the structure of this thesis: it is set up to depict convergences in the thought of Foucault and Sartre. For instance, in the following chapter it will be argued that Foucault, in his later thought, arrives at a similar ethical quandary that Sartre had encountered in his early philosophy.

12 Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 141.

ethical orientation. In fact, he rules out such a concept. Yet, Sartre does propose an ethical route that calls upon what, in his eyes, is a defining characteristic of humanity.

2.2 The Early Sartre and the Freedom of Consciousness

(i) The Status of the Ego

The thought of Edmund Husserl, along with that of Martin Heidegger, bear a great influence on Sartre's early philosophy. Sartre recounts the feeling of excitement he experienced when, out for drinks with Raymond Aron and Simone de Beauvoir, Aron informed him that the work of Husserl enabled one to study "les choses mêmes"; such as a glass of beer or an apricot cocktail.¹³ In 1933 Sartre's interest in Husserl would lead him to the French Institute in Berlin, where he would study phenomenology, and begin his first major philosophical text.

In *La transcendance de l'ego*, Sartre declares that while most philosophers see the ego as an inhabitant of consciousness, he wishes to show: "que l'Ego n'est ni formellement ni matériellement dans la conscience: il est dehors, dans le monde; c'est un être du monde, comme l'Ego d'autrui" (*TE* 13). In this work, Sartre agrees with the Husserlian notion of intentionality which dictates that all consciousness is consciousness of something, but parts ways with Husserl on the status of the ego. In the eyes of Sartre, Husserl errs by postulating an ego – along the same lines as a Kantian "I" – that stands behind the subject and is materially a part of consciousness.

Sartre acknowledges that because consciousness is normally recognized as our consciousness, it is typically thought that an "I" is necessary to guarantee its unity and individuality. This explanation implies that the "I" is prior to any synthesizing activity of the subject – it is a basic unifying structure of the subject. Sartre recognizes that:

¹³ Sartre, *Sartre, un film réalisé par Alexandre Astruc and Michel Contat*, 39. Although whether they were drinking beer or apricot cocktails remains unclear, it is certain, as Annie Cohen-Solal reports, that because of this meeting with Raymond Aron, Sartre discovered the German philosopher Husserl, the only philosopher he will read for six years -- "Sartre va explorer les *Méditations cartésiennes*, les *Idées directrices pour une phénoménologie*; il va s'affronter à ces lectures difficiles avec une obsession unique, il va plonger dans Husserl, s'y immerger totalement" (Cohen-Solal, *Sartre, 1905-1980*, 181-182).

il est possible que ceux qui croient que « 2 et 2 font 4 » est le *contenu* de ma représentation soient obligés de recourir à un principe transcendantal et subjectif d'unification, qui sera alors le Je. Mais précisément Husserl n'en a pas besoin (TE 22).

According to Sartre, Husserl fails to recognize that, contrary to a Kantian formulation of the subject, an "I" or an ego is not necessary for a consciousness that is defined by intentionality. Because consciousness functions primarily on an unreflective level, it is, in the eyes of Sartre, spontaneous and absorbed in the world. In this mode, "le Je est absent de la conscience irréfléchie" (TE 31).

In opposition to Husserl, Sartre explains that "l'Ego n'est pas propriétaire de la conscience, il en est l'objet" (TE 77). This argument implies that the ego arises with reflective consciousness – when consciousness reflects upon itself as an object of consciousness. Expanding upon the attitude of the reflective consciousness, Sartre explains that its essence:

est exprimée correctement par cette fameuse phrase de Rimbaud (dans la lettre du voyant) «Je est *un autre*». Le contexte prouve qu'il a simplement voulu dire que la spontanéité des consciences ne saurait émaner du Je, elle *va vers* le Je, elle le rejoint, elle le laisse entrevoir sous son épaisseur limpide mais elle se donne avant tout comme spontanéité *individuée* et *impersonnelle* (TE 78).

Though the "I" arises with reflective consciousness, and though this "I" may lend the appearance of unifying consciousness, Sartre argues that because consciousness is intentional, it is for the most part engaged with the world on an unreflective level, and thus any unity that consciousness may experience is temporary and impersonal. Consciousness does not originate from the ego, but rather the ego comes into existence through consciousness' engagement with the world. The ego is therefore transcendent -- an object of consciousness that is like any other object that consciousness comes across in the world. From this line of reasoning, Sartre maintains that "chaque instant de notre vie consciente nous révèle une création ex nihilo. Non pas un *arrangement* nouveau, mais une existence nouvelle" (TE 79). Conscious life implies a new existence in the sense that consciousness always discovers itself in different relations to itself and to the things of the world – consciousness is perpetually in a state of otherness or difference.

As Dominick LaCapra notes, "the early works of Sartre explode the notion of identity and individuality in the ordinary sense".¹⁴ Indeed, it can be sensed that a streak of radicalism underlies the thought of the young Sartre. His jettisoning of the "I" from consciousness entails a loss of baggage normally associated with subject-centred theories. No longer does the subject have an inner structure that it can draw upon for its identity. In fact, the Sartrean subject is fractured – no longer does it have a stable identity. Before leaving *La transcendance de l'ego* it is pertinent to observe that Sartre concludes this work by stating:

Cette conscience absolue, lorsqu'elle est purifiée du Je, n'a plus rien d'un *sujet* ... elle est tout simplement une condition première et une source absolue d'existence. ... Il n'en faut pas plus pour fonder philosophiquement une morale et une politique absolument positives (*TE* 87).

The subject, stripped of its I, is the grounds for a positive political and moral orientation. Just how such a task will be carried out remains vague in this work. All the same, it can be sensed that such a motive will possibly draw upon consciousness' ability to constantly reveal a new existence.

Shortly, it will be seen that the non-coincidence of the self with itself serves as the basis for Sartre's ontological explanation of freedom in *L'être et le néant*. However, another aspect in the young Sartre that directly relates to the idea of freedom in *L'être et le néant*, and which it would be pertinent to consider at this point, is the role of the imagination.¹⁵

14 Dominick LaCapra, *A Preface to Sartre*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1978, 48. For more in-depth and critical studies on the role of the imagination in Sartre's early works see Edward S. Casey, 'Sartre on Imagination', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1981, 139-166 and Paul Ricoeur, 'Sartre and Ryle on the Imagination', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, 167-178.

15 LaCapra explains that Sartre's early theoretical study *L'imaginaire* is a "crucial supplement" to *L'être et le néant* for the reason that the conceptions of freedom and nothingness in *L'être et le néant* are directly related to Sartre's analysis of the imagination (LaCapra, *A Preface to Sartre*, 55). It is pertinent to note that though LaCapra provides an adequate reading of the Sartrean oeuvre, at the same time he purposefully downplays some of the more radical aspects in Sartre. As it is been noted, LaCapra recognizes that Sartre partakes in dismantling the traditional understanding of the subject. Yet, LaCapra nevertheless fails to follow through with a sympathetic reading of Sartre, and in the conclusion of *A Preface to Sartre* portrays Sartre as a thinker wholly wedded to the modern tradition. The prime goal of *A Preface to Sartre* is to portray Sartre's oeuvre in such a way that it can be deconstructed via the thought of Jacques Derrida. This task may have been a timely project in 1978, but some two decades later it appears dated, and superficial (See LaCapra, *A Preface to Sartre*, 'In Lieu of a Conclusion', 219-228).

(ii) The Power of the Imagination

In *L'imaginaire* Sartre observes that psychologists and philosophers have for the most part accepted David Hume's claim that ideas are faint images, and as a consequence, the subsequent view that:

mon idée actuelle de chaise ne se rapporte que du dehors à une chaise existante. ... Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire, sinon que, pour Hume, l'idée de chaise et la chaise en idée sont une seule et même chose. Avoir une idée de chaise, c'est avoir une chaise dans la conscience (*I* 16-17).

According to Sartre, to suggest that a chair occurs in consciousness as an idea is absurd for the reason that it presumes a notion of 'chairness' in consciousness that corresponds to all chairs in reality. Sartre argues that such a claim relies upon a naïve metaphysics which dictates that the essence or form of the object enters or is already in consciousness. An explanation along these lines, suffers from what he terms the illusion of immanence whereby:

nous sommes nécessairement conduits à constituer le monde de l'esprit avec des objets tout semblables à ceux du monde extérieur et qui, simplement, obéiraient à d'autres lois (*I* 18).

It is precisely this illusion that Sartre seeks to dispel.

In carrying out this task, Sartre elucidates consciousness as having the ability to perceive and imagine: what he describes as two attitudes of consciousness that are irreducible and excluded from one another (*I* 231). Perception enables one to observe matters in the physical world as they occur to consciousness. Demonstrating the influence of having read Husserl's *Ideen*,¹⁶ Sartre explains that in perception one observes objects, and states: "Il faut entendre par là que l'objet, quoiqu'il entre tout entier dans ma perception, ne m'est jamais donné que d'un côté à la fois" (*I* 21). The completeness of the object, as perceived, is bounded by one's perspective. This explanation implies that the existence of things as they appear to consciousness are just as they seem – there is no idea or essence that coalesces with an appearance.

16 Edmund Husserl, *Ideen I*, translated by F. Kersten, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1983.

While perceptual consciousness is receptive and passive, the attitude of the imagination is described by Sartre in an active fashion: "elle est spontanée et créatrice; elle soutient, maintient par une création continuée les qualités sensibles de son objet" (I 36). The imagination relates to the ability of the *imaginer* to experience a sense of observing when, in fact, he is not observing at all. Uncritically, Sartre explains that the imagination is "un acte magique" for the reason that the objects of the imagination do not occur from a particular angle, but rather "les objets imagés sont vus de plusieurs côtés à la fois ... il sont «présentifiés» sous un aspect totalitaire" (I 240). The images of the imagination are a pure presence, and though they may suffer from an essential poverty, since they have no relationship to the world of perception, they are powerful in the vein that they derealize the world (I 24) .

In summoning something to the imagination, Sartre argues that this thing appears as an "irréellement" (I 241). Providing the example of experiencing an image of Pierre, Sartre explains that this phenomenon does not imply that Pierre himself is unreal. Nor does it entail that there are two PIERRES. Rather, it entails that the *imaginer*, in imagining Pierre, can imagine Pierre as he may really be wherever he actually is. One imagines the real Pierre, but all the same, the Pierre who is imagined is the Pierre who is not physically in the presence of the *imaginer*:

Il n'y a qu'un Pierre et c'est celui-là qui, précisément, n'est pas là; *n'être pas là* est sa qualité essentielle ... Et cet absentéisme de Pierre, que je perçois directement, qui constitue la structure essentielle de mon image, c'est précisément une nuance qui le colore tout entier, c'est ce que nous appelons son irréalité (I 243).

It is Pierre's absence from the presence of the *imaginer*, that makes him a direct and an unreal object to the imagination. This trait of consciousness, to imagine things other than how they are presented in reality, is explained by Sartre as consciousness's ability to grasp "*rien*", to posit "*le rien*" (I 349). In the words of Sartre, to posit an image:

c'est constituer un objet en marge de la totalité du réel, c'est donc tenir le réel à distance, s'en affranchir, en un mot le nier (I 352).

For a consciousness to imagine, its very nature enables it to escape from or withdraw from the world of perceptual reality. A condition of consciousness being able to perform this act is: "il faut qu'elle soit libre" (I 354).

Sartre concludes *L'imaginaire* with a discussion of the work of art. He admits that though it is not his aim to discuss the work of art in its entirety, it can nevertheless be immediately formulated as a principle in which: "l'oeuvre d'art est un irréel" (I 362). The object of aesthetic appreciation, what is beautiful, according to Sartre, "c'est un être qui ne saurait se donner à la perception et qui, dans sa nature même, est isolé de l'univers" (I 363). What is grasped in a painting, despite its technical aspects, is an unreal whole – something that is separate from the world of perception. For instance, Sartre elucidates that though the painting is an "*analogon*", when contemplated:

ce qui se manifeste à travers lui c'est un ensemble irréel de *choses neuves*, d'objets que je n'ai jamais vus ni ne verrai jamais mais qui n'en sont pas moins des objets irréels, des objets qui n'existent point *dans le tableau*, ni nulle part dans le monde, mais qui se manifestent à travers la toile et qui se sont emparés d'elle par une espèce de possession. Et c'est l'ensemble de ces objets irréels que je qualifierai de *beau* (I 366).

The work of art reveals a host of novel things that do not exist anywhere in the world. As recognized by Sartre, this observation is the source of the celebrated disinterestedness of aesthetic experience discussed by Kant. From his observations about the work of art, Sartre concludes that the real is never beautiful, and that "la beauté est une valeur qui ne saurait jamais s'appliquer qu'à l'imaginaire et qui comporte la néantisation de monde dans sa structure essentielle" (I 372). Beauty does not belong to the world, but to the negation of the world.

(iii) A Consciousness Modelled Upon the Freedom of the Artist

From the above reviews of *La transcendance de l'ego* and *L'imaginaire* it does not seem that a project with moral or political overtures plays on the philosophical register of Sartre. One might say that such a task is the farthest thing from his mind, or more specifically, his elucidation of consciousness. Yet, Knee argues that "the structuring thesis" of Sartre's politics, what he terms as

Sartre's "philosophical anarchism" -- the non-coincidence of consciousness with itself and the freedom of the imagination whereby consciousness holds the real at a distance and brings it about that everything is possible -- is best expressed by Sartre even prior to *L'être et le néant*.¹⁷ The model employed by Sartre, according to Knee, is the creative freedom of the artist.¹⁸

Knee's analysis will certainly be returned to when a more global view of Sartre's thought has been presented. Presently, however, it is pertinent to fill out the implications regarding his observation about the most lucid presentation of the structuring thesis in the thought of Sartre.

In carrying out a comparison between Sartre and Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, Kurt W. Foster explains that both thinkers recognize art as a specific privilege of man, his freedom to negate the density and opaqueness of reality and to set up his imaginary world.¹⁹ According to Foster, for both Schiller and Sartre, "art is final unto itself, fundamentally set off against all categories which apply to 'being-in-the-world'".²⁰ Admitting the difficulty of summarizing Sartre's scattered theoretical writings on aesthetics, Foster argues that consciousness for Sartre possesses the unique and privileged capacity to suspend the real.²¹ As recognized by Foster, the freedom of Sartrean consciousness is accomplished purely in art. It can certainly be sensed that in *L'imaginaire* the work of art is meant to serve as a prototype for the freedom of Sartrean consciousness. According to Sartre, when considering a work of art, consciousness undergoes a radical change in which the

17 Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 141.

18 As recounted by Knee, it is on the basis of the creative freedom of the artist that Sartre attempts to think his own existence (in *La Nausée* and *Les Mots*), existence in general (*L'être et le néant*), and finally the political sphere. According to Knee, a reason that Sartre's political thought exerts fascination and, at the same time, repulsion is that it proceeds from the fundamental fantasy of self-creation which Sartre projects into the debates of modern political theory. As noted in the introduction of this thesis, the pressing question that Knee sees Sartre addressing is the political problem of modernity: the self-institution of a society without a transcendent framework. Instead, of being understood in terms of institutional or juridical solutions, Sartre's political thought, Knee argues, belongs to a tradition for which political legitimacy is ultimately grounded in a moral or aesthetic characterization of existence (Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 141).

19 Kurt W. Foster, 'The Image of Freedom: An Inquiry into the Aesthetics of Schiller and Sartre', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 5, 1965, 46.

20 Foster, 'The Image of Freedom', 46.

21 Foster, 'The Image of Freedom', 48.

world becomes imaginative – the world is negated or presented as otherwise. However, as it has been seen, the work of art is not necessary for consciousness to undergo this imaginative mode, as Sartre argues that the imagination is a fundamental trait of consciousness. To this point, Charles D. Tenney describes the Sartrean consciousness of the imagination as an "aesthetic consciousness", since it can elude the massive body of the world and withdraw from the impermeability of being.²²

Shortly, it will be seen that though in *L'être et le néant* the consciousness of the imagination is not discussed, the ability of consciousness to withdraw from the opacity of being remains a fundamental idea. Presently, it can be discerned that indeed Sartre's idea of consciousness demonstrates an affinity with the creative freedom of the artist. Because consciousness never coincides with itself, it has the ability to continually reveal a new existence. Although Sartre does not say as much, it can be gathered that the imagination is the means to this end, since it entails that consciousness can tear itself away from the reality of the world of perception. Sartrean consciousness – like the freedom of the artist – presents the subject with the means to escape the conventions of everyday life, as it can disconnect from the brute being of the world. As it will be seen, in *L'être et le néant* this aesthetic rendering of consciousness receives an ethical colouring.

2.3 The Ethical Ontology of *L'être et le néant*:

(i) The Relation between Freedom and Nothingness

Why return to *L'être et le néant*? This question is certainly one worth asking. It is a text that is difficult, long and, it may be added, flawed.²³ Numerous secondary sources have been devoted to

22 Tenney, 'Aesthetics in the Philosophy of Sartre', 124.

23 One of the main reasons for its defective nature is that it is fraught with ambiguity regarding the notions of pure freedom and freedom-in-situation, as Sartre never consistently holds these two concepts together in a coherent manner. In chapter four, the specific implications of this shortcoming will be addressed. Despite its weak points, Gutting describes *L'être et le néant* as Sartre's greatest achievement as a philosopher, and adds that "it is also at the core of all Sartre's subsequent philosophizing, which refines and develops its central theses but never simply rejects them" (Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 128).

L'être et le néant and, therefore, an intricate overview of this work will not be carried out.²⁴ As it has been seen, in the *La transcendance de l'ego* and *L'imaginaire* Sartre initiates a project that is related to the creative freedom of the artist. In the following analysis of *L'être et le néant*, it will be argued that the ethical implications of this view of freedom come to the fore. Admittedly, addressing *L'être et le néant* from the angle of ethics may appear baffling. For instance, in the conclusion of this work Sartre states:

l'ontologie ne saurait formuler elle-même des prescriptions morales. Elle s'occupe uniquement de ce qui est, et il n'est pas possible de tirer des impératifs de ses indicatifs. Elle laisse entrevoir cependant ce que sera une éthique qui prendra ses responsabilités en face d'une *réalité humaine en situation* (EN 690).

Usually, as Sartre acknowledges, ontology does not formulate a moral theory and, least we forget, *L'être et le néant* is subtitled, *Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*. As Bill Martin realizes, with an ontological study, "first one gets the ontology right, then one can perhaps turn to ethical or social concerns".²⁵ All the same, Sartre would certainly not be the first philosopher to allow an ethical motive to influence his ontology.²⁶

In the introduction to *L'être et le néant*, 'A la recherche de l'être', Sartre commences with an in-depth discussion on the topic of being. Just the subject one would expect in an ontological study. After some dense and – at times – muddled exposition, Sartre's ontological inquiry arrives at what is, undoubtedly, his main area of interest. Initially, Sartre proposes:

la condition nécessaire et suffisante pour qu'une conscience connaissante soit connaissance *de* son objet, c'est qu'elle soit conscience d'elle-même comme étant de cette connaissance (EN 18).

24 For a good secondary source that provides a comprehensive over view of each section of *L'être et le néant* see Joseph S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's "Being and Nothingness"*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974.

25 Bill Martin, *The radical project, Sartrean investigations*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000, 1.

26 Of course the case of Martin Heidegger comes to mind. See Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

By reiterating the argument put forth in *La transcendance de l'ego*, Sartre argues that this necessary and sufficient condition implies that there is an immediate consciousness -- what he terms a pre-reflective cogitio. Consciousness in this mode is a direct awareness of something and, at the same time, an implicit awareness of itself as engaged with the something of the world. In the eyes of Sartre, Descartes was mistaken to say that one knows one's self through explicit acts of reflection. Rather, it is the immediate or pre-reflective consciousness that renders possible a reflective awareness of consciousness, that is, before one can reflect upon one's self, one must already have an implicit awareness of one's being-in-the-world.

This illustration of consciousness leads Sartre to conclude that "la conscience naît *portée sur* un être qui n'est pas elle" (EN 28), and to refine Heidegger's definition of *Dasein* along the following lines:

la conscience est un être pour lequel il est dans son être question de son être en tant que cet être implique un être autre que lui (EN 29).

Consciousness' birth must be sustained by something that it is not, since its very nature involves a being other than what it is. Sartre establishes that consciousness, as being intentional and among-the-world, meshes with and reveals the things of the world: what he terms the *être-en-soi*. But, at the same time, because it is aware of being a being other than a pure being of consciousness, it is different than the *être-en-soi*, it is an *être-pour-soi*. As succinctly put by Gutting, Sartre's "fundamental position" is that "consciousness is always of something, but it itself is not something".²⁷

Having established the regions of being of the *être-pour-soi* and the *être-en-soi*, Sartre concludes the introduction by noting that the following questions must be addressed:

quel est le *sens* profond de ces deux types d'êtres? Pour quelles raisons appartiennent-ils l'un et l'autre à *l'être* en général? Quel est le sens de l'être, en tant qu'il comprend en lui ces deux régions d'être radicalement tranchées? (EN 34).

27 Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 134.

Replying to these questions, explained by Sartre as the *raison d'être* of *L'être et le néant*, will throw light upon the condition of being-in-the-world. As recognized by Gutting, at this point Sartre's methodology takes an important shift. Instead of proceeding with the austere logical analyses of abstract ontology, Sartre now turns to concrete phenomenological expositions of lived experience.²⁸ And it is these phenomenological clarifications which enable Sartre to quickly establish the centrality of freedom in his ontology.

In considering the above queries, Sartre notes that an initial issue that should be addressed is that of non-being or negation, since it is a crucial component of lived reality. One puts one's hand in one's pocket expecting to find fifteen hundred francs, but discovers only thirteen hundred. Some would explain this phenomenon as simply a quality of judgement -- there is not fifteen hundred francs in my pocket. Sartre, however, seeks to elucidate that this notion of 'notness' is intimately related to consciousness. To illustrate such an assertion, he provides the example of looking for Pierre in a café:

J'ai rendez-vous avec Pierre à quatre heures. J'arrive en retard d'un quart d'heure: Pierre est toujours exact; m'aura-t-il attendu? Je regarde la salle, les consommateurs et je dis: «Il n'est pas là». ... Il est certain que le café, par soi-même, avec ses consommateurs, ses tables, ses banquettes, ses glaces, sa lumière, son atmosphère enfumée, et les bruits de voix, de soucoupes heurtées, de pas qui le remplissent, est un plein d'être (EN 43-44).

By itself the café is a plenitude of being. It is a synthetic organization of its objects, and the ground upon which the figure of Pierre is expected to stand out. As explained by Sartre, upon entering the café, one interrogates it: is Pierre at his usual table by the door? No. Is he standing at the bar? No. In questioning the café in this manner, one nihilates the things that one encounters in the vein that:

je suis témoin de l'évanouissement successif de tous les objets que je regarde, en particulier des visages, qui me retiennent un instant («Si c'était Pierre?») et qui se décomposent aussitôt précisément parce qu'ils «ne sont pas» le visage de Pierre (EN 44).

28 Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 137.

Though upon entrance the café appears as a fullness of being, as one looks for Pierre, the parts of the café where Pierre is absent dissolve in the sense that they do not present Pierre. Eventually, one discovers that Pierre is not in the café, and according to Sartre:

son absence fige le café dans son évanescence, le café demeure *fond*, il persiste à s'offrir comme totalité indifférencié à ma seule attention marginale, il glisse en arrière, il poursuit sa néantisation (EN 44-45).

Pierre's absence results in what Sartre describes as "une double néantisation": the café establishes a sense of absence for the reason that it is the ground that does not present Pierre. And the individual searching for Pierre experiences the absence of Pierre as a real event (EN 45). As argued by Sartre, Pierre's absence is a concrete reality. Nothingness or non-being does not come to things by a negative judgement, but rather a negative judgement is conditioned and supported by non-being. But how does this nothingness originally arise?

From *La transcendance de l'ego* it can be recalled that Sartre argues that consciousness, because it is intentional, never absolutely coincides with itself. Expanding upon this argument in *L'être et le néant*, Sartre -- borrowing from Heidegger -- explains that "la caractéristique de l'ipséité, en effet (*selbstheit*), c'est que l'homme est toujours séparé de ce qu'il est par toute la largeur de l'être qu'il n'est pas" (EN 52). Sartre recognizes consciousness or the self as a being that is and is not. What such a seemingly puzzling statement means is that the self is a being who exists but, at the same time, is a being whose existence never coincides with itself for the reason that a gap or distance always separates itself from itself. This explanation, a variation of what Gutting describes as Sartre's fundamental position, entails that though the subject (the being-for-itself) is involved with a world of things (the being-in-itself), it never totally becomes one with the things of the world or -- for that matter -- itself.²⁹ Sartre explains this definition of the self as the emergence of human reality in nothingness, and in his view, "*l'être par qui le Néant vient au monde doit être son propre Néant*" (EN 58). Man is the being that brings negation into the world, as nothingness lies at the heart of his

29 Thomas W. Busch notes that "Sartre is a philosopher of difference, as one refers to that term today, but his is a psychological rather than linguistic sense of difference" (Busch, 'Jean-Paul Sartre and Judith Butler: Phenomenological and Poststructuralist Existentialism', in *Circulating Being*, New York: Fordham University Press, 1999, 46-47).

existence. This nothingness is the very reason why man is always separated from himself and the things of the world.

Before seeing why Sartre equates nothingness with freedom, at this point it would be pertinent to briefly contemplate Sartre's analysis in *L'être et le néant* in light of his arguments in *La transcendance de l'ego* and *L'imaginaire*. It has been seen that in *La transcendance de l'ego* the non-coincidence of consciousness reveals a creation out of nothing. In *L'être et le néant*, it has been observed that Sartre continues with this line of reasoning by describing the being-for-itself as a being that is always separated from itself by a distance or gap. Shortly, it will be seen that the nothingness of the being-for-itself is indeed a source of creation out of nothing. However, it is important to observe that in *L'être et le néant* Sartre blends the non-coincidence of the consciousness with the power of the imagination. From *L'imaginaire* it can be recalled that the imagination has the ability to withdraw from or hold at a distance the world of perceptual reality. In *L'être et le néant*, in a subtle move, Sartre describes this ability of the imagination as a basic structure and a common occurrence of the being-for-itself. The consciousness of the being-for-itself, by negation, can withdraw from the fullness of the being-in-itself. Because of the nothingness of its being, it can break off from the continuity of the world.

Sartre explains the separation of the being-for-itself from itself as a result of the nothingness of its existence. This nothingness is equated with freedom, and discovered in anguish,³⁰ it is the realization that the being-for-itself is both literally and figuratively bound by nothing. For instance, Sartre argues that "ce moi, avec son contenu *a priori* et historique, c'est l'essence de l'homme"³¹ (EN 70). However, because this essence is what the self has been in the past, and the self exists in a perpetual mode of distance from what it is and has been, Sartre states:

30 The notion of anguish demonstrates Sartre's affinity to Heidegger, circa *Sein und Zeit*, and of course Søren Kierkegaard.

31 It will be seen in chapter four that the essence of the subject – what it has been – becomes complicated in light of Sartre's discussion of the gaze.

l'angoisse, en effet, est la reconnaissance d'une possibilité comme *ma* possibilité, c'est-à-dire qu'elle se constitue lorsque la conscience se voit coupée de son essence par le néant ou séparée du futur par sa liberté même (EN 71).

Anguish is the recognition that the self, as always separated from its essence, is the sole foundation of the possibilities of what it will be. Although the self finds itself engaged in a world of values that make demands on its possibilities, there is nothing in the world that ultimately justifies the self adopting one set of values over another. As a consequence, Sartre explains that "ma liberté s'angoisse d'être le fondement sans fondement des valeurs" (EN 74). Freedom, as illustrated by Sartre, is a groundless foundation for value. This paradoxical explanation raises the following question: how should one approach this mode of existence?

In a way, foreshadowing Michel Foucault's characterization of freedom as a relation that the self must establish with its self, Sartre argues:

si l'on demande quel est ce *rien* qui fonde la liberté, nous répondrons qu'on ne peut pas le décrire, puisqu'il *n'est pas*, mais qu'on peut au moins en livrer le sens, en tant que ce rien *est été* par l'être humain dans ses rapports avec lui même (EN 70).

Because freedom is based upon a nothingness it cannot be described in advance, but all the same, Sartre hints that such a concept of freedom pertains to a relation that the self must establish with its self. In elaborating upon this proposal, Sartre explains that this characterization of freedom: "se caractérise par une obligation perpétuellement renouvelée de refaire le *Moi* qui désigne l'être libre" (EN 70). Freedom provides this possibility for the reason that: "tout projet de la liberté est *projet ouvert*, et non projet fermé" (EN 564). Freedom entails the imperative that because the subject is free, it must continually make itself anew. Why the obligatory nature of freedom and the stress on novelty, one might ask? At this point, Sartre provides no explanation. However, he proceeds to examine instances where individuals refuse to acknowledge the possibility of freedom, cases where subjects act as if their existence is determined or has a solid foundation.

(ii) **The Faith of *Mauvaise foi***

This open project of freedom, as illustrated by Sartre, implies a continual becoming of existence. All the same, Sartre observes that many individuals refuse to recognize this aspect of existence and he explains that this phenomenon should be addressed. The attitude, whereby individuals seek to suppress their freedom is described along the lines of a lie. Like a lie, *mauvaise foi* – the term Sartre ascribes to this activity – is related to deception. However, while a lie entails deceiving another, *mauvaise foi* is a lie to one's self. The first act of *mauvaise foi* is described as an attempt by the being-for-itself to flee what it cannot flee, to flee what it is. It has been shown that the being-for-itself is what it is in the mode of not being what it is. However, this mode of being engenders the possibility of *mauvaise foi*, since the self's freedom entails that the nothingness of its existence can be denied. It can act as if it has a foundation that determines what it will be. To illustrate this mode of behaviour, Sartre describes patterns of *mauvaise foi* and, in one example, observes the actions of a waiter in the café:

Il a le geste vif et appuyé, un peu trop précis, un peu trop rapide ... Toute sa conduite nous semble un jeu. Il s'applique à enchaîner ses mouvements comme s'ils étaient des mécanismes se commandant les uns les autres ... Mais à quoi donc joue-t-il? ... Il joue à être garçon de café (EN 95).

The waiter plays the role of the waiter because this is the role that the public expects him to play.³² He represents himself to others in his role of a waiter. In doing so, Sartre argues, he acts as there is some kind of essence that dictates what he – the waiter – must be. He behaves as if he is a mechanical thing that has been programmed how to function. *Mauvaise foi* is explained as making one's self a victim of "l'évidence *non persuasive*" (EN 105). In other words, to lead one's self to believe that there is a form or guide upon which one's existence must be based. The café waiter is in *mauvaise foi*, since a café waiter is a being-for-itself – a being that is not a thing and, accordingly, does not have to pattern its existence upon something such as a non-existent essence of waiterhood.

32 For a discussion of the function of role-playing throughout Sartre's oeuvre see Robert D. Cumming, 'Role Playing: Sartre's transformation of Husserl's phenomenology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 39-66.

Elsewhere, in *Réflexions sur la question juive*, Sartre argues that agents of *mauvaise foi*, such as anti-Semites, in expressing their hatred toward Jews, choose to reason falsely. Sartre maintains:

ils ont peur du raisonnement, ils veulent adopter un mode de vie où le raisonnement et la recherche n'aient qu'un rôle subordonné, où l'on ne cherche jamais que ce qu'on a déjà trouvé, où l'on ne devient jamais que ce que déjà, on était (*RQJ* 21).

The reasoning of anti-Semites leads them to discover what they already know – that immutable values such as good and evil exist without question in the world. Because of this 'fact', the anti-Semite wants to define and see himself as good – as an object of goodness and superiority. However, to reinforce his goodness, he must see and define something as inferior and evil in the world. Accordingly, Jews serve this role. According to Sartre, the anti-Semite is afraid "non des Juifs, certes", but "de lui-même, de sa conscience, de sa liberté" (*RQJ* 62). He does not acknowledge the anxiety of existence, and the fact that values are not ready-made in the world, but ready-to-be-created.

It can be sensed that Sartre's conception of *mauvaise foi* is intended to promote freedom in terms of a fluid – not fixed – existence. At this point, the ethical implications of this recognition of freedom should be contemplated.

(iii) Freedom and its Ethical Motive

David Jopling recognizes that Sartre's concerns with "the ethics of character", "the conditions of self-determination" and "human agency" place him with the tradition of moral and philosophical psychology.³³ In outlining these aspects in Sartre's philosophy, Jopling maintains that in *L'être et le néant*, Sartre argues that the freedom we enjoy as moral agents consists in "an autonomous and creative agency".³⁴ As noted by Jopling, Sartre maintains that our identities as individuals are not "ready made", "imposed", or "discovered", but are rather chosen as a project -- the way in which we make ourselves and define our lives by projecting ourselves toward the future and constantly going

33 David Jopling, 'Sartre's Moral Psychology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, 103.

34 Jopling, 'Sartre's Moral Psychology', 105.

beyond the given situations that we find ourselves in.³⁵ Jopling observes that Sartre's rejection of "all forms" of "essentialism" and "foundationalism" entails that our identity is open in the sense that "nothing concerning our identities as persons and moral agents is immune to change or radical revision".³⁶

Jopling rightly points out that Sartre's rejection of essentialism implies that identities are not ready made or discovered. This argument, as Jopling observes, dictates that an identity is by no means sealed and, as a consequence, can be remade or radically revised. In fact, Sartre argues that the self, as an open project of freedom, is obliged to constantly renew its existence. Saying that, it is important to recognize that Jopling's assertions, regarding Sartre's moral and philosophical psychology, pertain to an individual in good – not bad – faith.

The attitude of *mauvaise foi*, is an ethical illustration of how not to approach existence. In what Ronald Aronson recognizes as Sartre's "most famous description of freedom",³⁷ Sartre states:

Ainsi, au nom de cette volonté de liberté, impliquée par la liberté elle-même, je puis former des jugements sur ceux qui visent à se cacher la totale gratuité de leur existence, et sa totale liberté. Les uns qui se cacheront, par l'esprit de sérieux ou par des excuses déterministes, leur liberté totale, je les appellerai lâches; les autres qui essaieront de montrer que leur existence était nécessaire, alors qu'elle est la contingence même de l'apparition de l'homme sur la terre, je les appellerai des salauds (*EH* 84-85).

In the eyes of Sartre, those who hide from their freedom are ethically culpable. The normative dimension of Sartre's thought dictates that the subject ought to approach its existence in an authentic manner – in the faith of good faith. All the same, and remarkably enough, in the words of Robert V. Stone, "Sartre tells us little of positive character about authenticity".³⁸ In fact, at one point in *L'être et le néant*, in a cryptic footnote, Sartre states that a description of authenticity "n'a pas place ici" (*EN*

35 Jopling, 'Sartre's Moral Psychology', 111.

36 Jopling, 'Sartre's Moral Psychology', 115.

37 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Truth and Existence*, translated by Adrian van den Hoven, edited with an introduction by Ronald Aronson, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, xxxiv.

38 Robert V. Stone, 'Sartre on Bad Faith and Authenticity', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, 252.

107n1). Nevertheless, the ethical underpinning of this concept is clear. According to Gutting, "authenticity" amounts to a recognition of "freedom" as the "sole value" of human existence and, accordingly, "provides a basis for a positive Sartrean ethics".³⁹ Gutting explains:

Humans are authentic when they recognize – and live out in their actions – the basic truth that they have no essential reality or nature but are fully and solely free agents. If I have this attitude, I will avoid bad faith, because I will always recognize my complex reality as being what I am in the mode of not being it (and hence being entirely responsible for what I am).⁴⁰

Authenticity implies that one should not behave as if one is a static being in a predetermined universe, but act with the understanding of the indeterminacy of existence – the acknowledgment that one is a contingent being in a contingent world. Akin to a risk or a gamble:

l'authenticité, cela va de soi, consiste à prendre une conscience lucide et véridique de la situation, à assumer les responsabilités et les risques que cette situation comporte, à la revendiquer dans la fierté ou dans l'humiliation, parfois dans l'horreur et la haine (RQJ 109).

An authentic or lucid consciousness of the situation entails the realization that there are no guarantees – things may not turn out as planned. All the same, it implies taking responsibility for the situation by acknowledging that nothing compels one to choose in a predetermined way.

It is not surprising that Sartre has much to say about *mauvaise foi*, and little about authenticity. In light of his ontological analysis, by establishing freedom (or nothingness) at the heart of existence, Sartre can show that *mauvaise foi* is an erroneous mode of existence, since it attempts to deny a crucial part of this existence. However, with authenticity, Sartre cannot prescribe – with the exception of not acting in *mauvaise foi* – what must be done, since it is up to the subject, in each and every instance to make this decision.

It has been shown that Sartrean freedom, based upon authenticity, entails an ethical orientation that is related to the subject. Is Sartre advocating a humanism? If so, what are its

39 Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 144.

40 Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 143.

implications? These questions can be addressed by turning to the lecture of Sartre's whose very title leads one to believe that existentialism is a humanism.

2.4 Is Sartrean Existentialism a Humanism?

Sartre's lecture from 1945, entitled *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, is infamous for various reasons. James Miller provides the following account:

The night was warm and air scarce: as women fainted, they were piled on a convenient grand piano. The drama of the occasion captured the imagination of the press: TOO MANY ATTEND SARTRE LECTURE was the headline of one story: FAINTING SPELLS, POLICE. LAWRENCE OF ARABIA AN EXISTENTIALIST.⁴¹

Although Sartre's lecture would capture the imagination of the press and the public, it would also raise the ire of his contemporary, Martin Heidegger. In fact, Heidegger would eventually write the 'Letter on Humanism' to distance himself from Sartre's thought, as presented in *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*.⁴² In this notorious lecture, Sartre clarifies what existentialism for him entails:

L'existentialisme athée, que je représente, est plus cohérent. Il déclare que si Dieu n'existe pas, il y a au moins un être chez qui l'existence précède l'essence, un être qui existe avant de pouvoir être défini par aucun concept et que cet être c'est l'homme ou, comme dit Heidegger, la réalité humaine (EH 21).

"La réalité humaine" is the expression that Henri Corbin (the translator of Heidegger into French), under the influence of Alexandre Kojève's lectures on Hegel, used for Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*.⁴³ Sartre's appropriation of Corbin's "la réalité humaine" would lead Jacques Derrida to

41 James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993, 43.

42 Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', in *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993. Tom Rockmore notes that Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism' is directed specifically at *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme*, as there is no evidence that Heidegger read *L'être et le néant* (Tom Rockmore, *Heidegger and French Philosophy*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, 96). Alain Renaut remarks that Sartre must have been surprised when he discovered that Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism' condemned all ethical interrogations. As Renaut notes, Heidegger's introduction of authenticity in *Being and Time* certainly implicated a humanist and ethical orientation. An orientation that Sartre would take-up in *L'être et le néant* (Alain Renaut, *Sartre, le dernier philosophe*, Paris: Grasset, 1993, 186-187).

43 Tom Rockmore notes that "Corbin was a student in Kojève's seminar. His revised translation of 'Dasein' as 'réalité-humaine' can be traced to the influence of Kojève's view of Heidegger (Rockmore, *Heidegger and French Philosophy*, 73).

chastise him for formulating a humanism based upon a monstrous translation of Heidegger.⁴⁴ All the same, Allan Stoekl argues that Derrida presents a "naive thematic presentation" of Sartre's thought,⁴⁵ while Gutting maintains that "the freedom of Sartrean consciousness", as elaborated in *L'être et le néant*, is not very far from a "manifestation" of Derridean *différance*.⁴⁶ Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage Sartre with Derrida,⁴⁷ let alone Heidegger,⁴⁸ these points are brought to light in order to emphasize that too often Sartre's thought has received a somewhat cursory treatment that downplays its originality⁴⁹ and, at the same time, fails to acknowledge any debt.⁵⁰ One

44 Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972, 136. For a discussion of Derrida's uncharitable and unfair assessment of Sartre, see Allan Stoekl, *Agonies of the Intellectual*, Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992, 199-217. Later in his life, when confronted with the criticism pertaining to his adaption of the German philosophical language in *L'être et le néant*, Sartre -- while not directly addressing the issue of the mistranslation of Heidegger's Dasein -- does state that "nous devons pouvoir faire violence à la langue et lui faire dire des choses qui ne seraient pas dans le sens français" (Sartre, 'L'écrivain et sa langue', in *Situations, IX*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1972, 72). Lending credence to Sartre's assessment of the violence that one must be allowed to perform when translating a language, Tilottama Rajan explains: "That Sartre enlisted Heidegger on the side of existentialism is as puzzling as his own self-vulgarization in *Existentialism is a Humanism* -- though Sartre has always seen Heidegger as a kind of humanist, and with reason. But it is clear three years earlier in *Being and Nothingness*, when politics is not the issue, that Sartre -- after an initial enthusiasm for Heidegger in the mid-thirties -- does not misunderstand him so much as radically disagree with him. Sartre borrows from Heidegger's 'What is Metaphysics?' the terms *nothing* and *nihilation*. But his phenomenology of negativity translates the latter's postmetaphysical idealism only in the sense that Heidegger himself uses the word *translation* to denote a process by which one cultural experience is transferred into 'a different way of thinking' -- in this case, French, not German. Far from mistaking *Dasein* for his own *réalité humaine*, Sartre draws attention to the difference between spirit and consciousness, being and existence" (Rajan, *Deconstruction and the Reminders of Phenomenology*, 57).

45 Stoekl, *Agonies of the Intellectual*, 209.

46 Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 389.

47 Christina Howells has taken up this very task. See Howells, 'Conclusion: Sartre and the deconstruction of the subject', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, 318-352 and Howells, *Derrida*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999.

48 For a good discussion of the philosophical legacies of Sartre and Heidegger, and a critical evaluation of the "bankruptcy" of Heidegger's later philosophical program -- a program that originally derives from the 'Letter on Humanism' see Richard Wolin, *The Terms of Cultural Criticism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, 137-146. For another good discussion of Heidegger and Sartre see Alain Renaut, *Sartre, le dernier philosophe*, Paris: Grasset, 1993, 29-70.

49 "Sartre's translation, while objectively 'wrong', was nevertheless appropriate for the time. It served to awaken French thought from its anthropological slumber, to ready it for the encounter with Heidegger and the entry into a post-humanist postmodernism" (Neil Levy, 'Untimely Meditations: Periodising Recent French Thought', *Symposium*, II, 1, 1998, 65).

50 For a discussion of this point see Brian Seitz, 'The Identity of the Subject After Sartre', *Philosophy Today*, Winter 1991, 362-371.

of the more distinct aspects of the thought of Sartre is the humanism which is derived from his theory of freedom.

As it has been noted above, Sartre describes himself as a representative of atheistic existentialism. This type of existentialism heeds the implications of Friedrich Nietzsche's pronouncement of the death of God,⁵¹ and differs from humanism on the issue of human nature. As seen by Sartre, in the likes of Diderot, Voltaire and Kant one finds a conception of humanity with a nature. In these humanisms, each man is a particular example of the universal concept of "l'homme" (EH 20). In this scenario, man partakes in the essence of Man – he is a being who represents the universal nature of men. Atheistic existentialism, on the other hand, holds the view that "il n'y a pas de nature humaine, puisqu'il n'y a pas de Dieu pour la concevoir" (EH 22). Without God, man is abandoned in the world without a nature or an essence in which to take recourse – he just is. This abandonment also entails the impossibility of finding values in an intelligible heaven for the reason that: "il ne peut plus y avoir de bien *a priori*, puisqu'il n'y a pas de conscience infinie et parfaite pour le penser" (EH 35-36). The finite plane of existence suggests that good and evil have not been defined in advance. Traditionally, human nature and God function to furnish man with a metaphysical shelter that can be appealed to for moral imperatives. But how, one might ask, is an individual to make himself without a shelter in which to seek recourse?

It has been noted that in *L'être et le néant* Sartre insinuates that freedom compels the subject to establish a relation with its self – an authentic relation by which the being-for-itself bases its self upon freedom. In *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* Sartre argues that man is free to choose – to invent. Does he provide any guide in this lecture for how one should choose in a particular situation? In a way -- yes. In an acknowledged digression, Sartre compares "le choix moral" with the construction of "une oeuvre d'art" (EH 75). Maintaining that he is not propounding "une morale esthétique", Sartre explains that he mentions the work of art simply as a means for comparison. In the eyes of Sartre, no one accuses the artist of not following established *a priori* rules for the reason

51 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage Books, 1974, 181.

that in art there is no such thing: "il est bien entendu qu'il n'y a pas de valeurs esthétiques a priori" (EH 77). Moreover, with respect to the relation of art to morality, Sartre elaborates:

Quel rapport cela a-t-il avec la morale? Nous sommes dans la même situation créatrice. Nous ne parlons jamais de la gratuité d'une oeuvre d'art. Quand nous parlons d'une toile de Picasso, nous ne disons jamais qu'elle est gratuite; nous comprenons très bien qu'il s'est construit tel qu'il est en même temps qu'il peignait, que l'ensemble de son oeuvre s'incorpore à sa vie. Il en est de même sur le plan moral. Ce qu'il y a de commun entre l'art et la morale, c'est que, dans les deux cas, nous avons création et invention. Nous ne pouvons pas décider a priori de ce qu'il y a à faire (EH 77).

Sartre invokes this comparison to stress that in a moral situation one should rely upon the same form or – better put – lack of form found in aesthetics: one should invent without recourse to established rules or conventions.

As recognized by Sartre, "l'homme est toujours le même en face d'une situation qui varie et le choix reste toujours un choix dans une situation" (EH 79). Man is always the same in the vein that his freedom implies that his existence is perpetually in process. Though the situation may change, man, always in existential limbo, is constantly faced with the task of making himself. However, he can endeavour to deceive himself about the implications of his existence, and see it as already defined.⁵² In doing so, he denies the creativity of existence, and refuses to see that existence is akin to a work of art. Sartre proposes a universal morality that is without any specific normative dimension save creativity. Moreover, in a Kantian twist, he adds that in choosing, one chooses for the whole of humankind. By this assertion Sartre means that one desires that everybody else choose in an inventive way. In existing in a creative manner, subjects exist as subjects – not objects that pattern their existence upon the realm of the being-in-itself. One therefore chooses to be an open and creative project for the simple reason that this is the choice one wants others to make.⁵³ One does not

52 "si nous avons défini la situation de l'homme comme un choix libre, sans excuses et sans secours, tout homme qui se réfugie derrière l'excuse de ses passions, tout homme qui invente un déterminisme est un homme de mauvaise foi" (EH 81).

53 In the fourth chapter we will see that this imperative is complicated by the implications of Sartre's description of the gaze in *L'être et le néant*.

want to be looked upon as an inferior being and therefore one does not look upon the other in this way.

Sartrean existentialism is certainly not a humanism that draws upon a foundation such as a human nature or God. These notions are rejected from the beginning. The humanism, advocated by Sartre, is one in which "l'homme est constamment hors de lui-même, c'est en se projetant et en se perdant hors de lui qu'il fait exister l'homme" (EH 92).⁵⁴ Sartre formulates a humanism based upon nothing other than freedom. A concept that presumes an ethical outlook which is related to creativity. As explained by Knee, although Sartre heeds the Nietzschean message of the death of God, unlike a philosopher such as Foucault (circa *Les mots et les choses*), Sartre does not see this theme as implying the death of man.⁵⁵ Instead, Knee relates that "Sartre attempts to redirect his original position towards humanism, in an effort to construct after the war a morality and politics on a philosophical basis which constantly undermines what it is supposed to underpin".⁵⁶ The morality that Sartre tries to construct, as Knee observes, is a "difficult philosophical posture", since it is literally based upon the nothingness of human existence.⁵⁷

Although Knee and Gutting, for example, recognize Sartre's early works as sympathetic to a project of ethics, others have not been so generous. Richard J. Bernstein, for instance, argues that Sartre, in *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, makes a feeble attempt at outlining the ethics he promised at the end of *L'être et le néant*.⁵⁸ As argued by Bernstein, in *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, freedom no longer has the neutral value it had in *L'être et le néant*, but is clearly a moral

54 Just how much individuals lose themselves in their projects is a point that Sartre will not fully appreciate until the writing of the *Critique de la Raison dialectique*.

55 Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 151.

56 Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 151.

57 Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 151.

58 Richard J. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, London: Duckworth, 1972, 153.

concept. According to Bernstein, "the chasm between the ontological and the moral is an unbridgeable one".⁵⁹

Bernstein's analysis misses the mark in several respects: first, freedom is never morally neutral in Sartre's thought. As it has been seen, even prior to *L'être et le néant*, Sartre advances a moral motive that is based upon the creative freedom of the artist. Freedom is an ethical concept that Sartre employs against everything that attempts to define existence in advance – anything that makes an effort to blunt the creativity of human existence. Moreover, Bernstein is mistaken to claim that the logical conclusion of Sartre's thought is that the chasm between the ontological and moral is unbridgeable. Gutting argues that in *L'être et le néant*, the "problem" was not, as so many critics thought, the "radical view of freedom" and its inconsistency with any ethical values.⁶⁰ As Gutting points out, Sartre explains that freedom itself could be taken as the ultimate value. Indeed, Sartre states:

une liberté qui se veut liberté, c'est en effet un être-qui-n'est-pas-ce-qu'il-est et qui-est-ce-qu'il-n'est-pas qui choisit, comme idéal d'être, l'être-ce-qu'il-n'est-pas et le n'être-pas-ce-qu'il-est (*EN* 692).

Sartre's ontology, as we have seen, places freedom at the heart of human existence, and as his analysis of *mauvaise foi* demonstrates, it is always ethically charged and never morally neutral. The ontological description of freedom in *L'être et le néant* is consistent with the ethical explanation of freedom in *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*. In fact, they are one the same.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the ethics of freedom that motivates the thought of the early Sartre has been examined. It has been shown that in two of Sartre's earliest works – *La transcendance de l'ego* and *L'imaginaire* – the freedom of the subject is linked to the creative freedom of the artist. In *L'être et le néant*, it has been seen that Sartre fills out the lines of reasoning established in his earlier works,

⁵⁹ Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, 153-154.

⁶⁰ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 124.

as Sartre's ontological analysis, by establishing nothingness at the base of existence, illustrates that the subject is freedom. Sartrean freedom is the only ethical value, and relates to the faith of authenticity. This faith encourages the subject to approach its freedom as an open-ended process, as opposed to *mauvaise foi*, whereby it views its existence as sealed and determined. In *L'existentialisme est un humanisme* it has been noted that Sartre attempts to establish a humanism that is based upon the nothingness of the subject. This humanism advocates that in light of there being no human nature, the subject should model itself along the lines of a work of art. In doing so, the subject practices its freedom ethically, as it does not rely upon a priori established rules, but instead abides by a creative mode of existence.

Does Sartre grant too much freedom to the subject? Can he really sidestep the realms of the social and historical in the manner that his formulation of the subject implies? What exactly is the model that Sartre bases this notion of artistic freedom upon? These questions should be kept in mind as this study progresses. At this point though, let us proceed and see if any similarities between Sartre and his intellectual heir apparent can be detected. Specifically, let us see if Foucault – in his later thought – advances the question of freedom any further than Sartre's early existentialism.

CHAPTER THREE

Foucault, Sartre, and the Subject of Freedom

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me*. I do not need to search for them as though they were veiled in obscurity or in the transcendent region beyond my horizon; I see them before me and connect them immediately with the consciousness of my existence.

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*

Dans ses formes conventionnelles, le dandysme avoue la nostalgie d'une morale.

Albert Camus, *L'Homme révolté*

3.1 Introduction

In an interview from 1983, 'Structuralisme et poststructuralisme', Foucault, while explaining the influence that Nietzsche had on his thought, in an offhand comment expresses a rare sense of admiration toward Sartre. He makes the following observation:

Je ne sais pas si vous savez que le premier texte écrit par Sartre, quand il était jeune étudiant, était un texte nietzschéen: *La Légende de la vérité*, petit texte qui fut publié pour la première fois dans une revue de lycéens vers les années trente (*DE II* 1263).

In this interview, Foucault notes that although Sartre began, as he himself did, with a history of truth, Sartre's approach shifted toward phenomenology. Foucault remarks on the oddity that he and Sartre commenced with the same philosopher and a similar problem, but proceeded in such different manners (*DE II* 1263).

In the previous two chapters it has been shown that the philosophies of Foucault and Sartre certainly move along distinct courses. The thought of Foucault, for the most part, precludes any elaboration of the subject. Instead, the subject is explained in terms of the games of truth it enters. Foucault discloses what the subject has historically become with the hope of presenting an exit for the present. Sartre's thought, on the other hand, makes scant reference to the realms of the social and historical. Instead, to promote an authentic mode of being, the pressing issue for Sartre is to elucidate the nothingness that is the subject's existence. It is evident that Foucault and Sartre have very different methodological assumptions. Simply put, one can say that Foucault provides in-depth historical studies of the subject, while Sartre provides an in-depth ontological formulation of the subject. All the same, as original as the intellectual trajectory of each thinker is, some resonances in their itineraries may be sensed. Freedom is an important issue for both. Moreover, the topic of identity, in the eyes of both, is a contentious issue. Could subjects such as these possibly reunite Foucault and Sartre, thinkers whose thought, as Foucault recounts, once shared a common starting point, but is commonly portrayed as worlds apart?

In this chapter, it will be brought to light that Foucault's proposal for an aesthetics of existence, a defining point of his later thought, places him firmly alongside Sartre's early philosophy. It will be shown that both thinkers arrive at a similar problem which derives from Nietzsche. Specifically, the dilemma that both encounter is how to formulate an ethical orientation without any transcendental grounding. The argument will be that the project of ethical self-fashioning which Foucault proposes is implicit in the thought of Sartre. Furthermore, it will be shown that both philosophers put forth an ethics of creativity based upon artistic freedom. By tracing the idea of art which these two model their ethical orientations upon, it will be seen that though this conception may provide an insight into the ethical impetus that motivates their thought, art in this rendition is a dubious model for ethics. It will be argued that Foucault's project of an aesthetics of existence does not advance the question of freedom any further than Sartre's early existentialism. In fact, it raises the same problems and criticisms.

This chapter will proceed as follows: first (3.2), it will provide a brief review of some of the ground that has been covered in the first two chapters. Next (3.3), an explicit comparison between Foucault and Sartre will begin. It will be noted that Foucault, when confronted with a resemblance to Sartrean existentialism, denies any similarity. Yet, as it will be shown, Foucault's denial rests on a misinterpretation, specifically of Sartre's concept of authenticity. It will be illustrated that the philosophies of Foucault and Sartre lead them both to a similar conception of the subject as having no essential nature. In light of this shared perception, it will be noted that in both thinkers there can be discerned an ethical direction relating to the subject's freedom to create itself. It will be shown that this common motive relates to Nietzsche and Kant. Having established this argument, the next task (3.4) will be to trace the idea of creative autonomy which is linked to the Kantian realm of aesthetics. By briefly engaging with writings on art history, it will be shown that idea of creative freedom in Foucault and Sartre relates to a modern understanding of art and the artist. It will be argued that the extent of the freedom which modern art promises is a debatable issue. At this point, it will be seen that Foucault's proposal for an aesthetics of existence only reiterates the problems in Sartre's early philosophy. One of the main dilemmas that face both philosophers is that their respective projects for ethical creativity fail to provide any concrete guidelines, and as a consequence, reduce freedom to an abstract concept.

3.2 Review: Foucault, Sartre, and the Issue of Freedom

Before proceeding with an explicit confrontation between Foucault and Sartre, it will be useful to recap some of the ground covered in the preceding two chapters.

Despite the fact that the implications of the supposed shift in Foucault's later thought have not, as of yet, been seriously considered,¹ a change in the tone of the later works by Foucault has been noted. As observed, in his dialogues with Kant he advocates a refusal for the present, and outlines the indefinite work of freedom. At this point in his thought, Foucault claims that his main

¹ Specifically, if his oeuvre is as coherent as he likes to describe it. This issue will be addressed in chapter five.

area of research interest is the subject. In fact, he doggedly maintains that this topic has been his motive from the start. Foucault's placing of the subject at the core of his research, aligns his studies with the Kantian tradition of critique, and enables his thought to be recognized as addressing the concept of freedom in that an understanding of the practices by which individuals constitute themselves as subjects assumes a sense of agency. All the same, Foucault's assessment with respect to the status of the subject in his studies seemingly flies in the face of the philosopher who had previously, in *Les mots et les choses*, extended Nietzsche's pronouncement of the death of God to include the death of Man. Yet, man's death is greatly exaggerated in the sense that Foucault's criticism is intended for a specific rendition of man, specifically, Man as presented by humanism. According to Foucault, implied in humanist theories is a hypothesis that provides man with a framework for how he should live in order that he may reconcile himself to his nature. Foucault is highly critical of humanism in this form, since it fraudulently advocates a notion of progress. Instead, his histories of the present expose this chimera by illustrating the historical contingencies that have resulted in certain formations of the subject.

In Foucault's journey back to Ancient Greece and Rome, in the second and third volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité*, ethics becomes his focus. Here he zeroes in on the practices whereby the self constitutes itself as an ethical agent. The project in these works, in conjunction with his analyses of Kant and Baudelaire in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?', is a response to the present impossibility of grounding a morality. Accordingly, the motive of Foucault's later studies is to present an ethical alternative in the guise of a mode of being that relates to a style or an aesthetics of existence – a way of existence that assumes the freedom of the subject to transform itself along the lines of a work of art.

In the thought of Sartre it has been shown that in his philosophical debut, *La transcendance de l'ego*, he establishes that the intentionality of consciousness dictates that the subject is without an ever-present "I" or an ego. Any unity that consciousness may experience is temporary and fleeting and, as a consequence, consciousness' lack of identity implies that it continually reveals to itself a

new existence. As seen in *L'imaginaire*, Sartre argues that consciousness, via the imagination, has the ability to hold the world of perceptual reality at bay. Moreover, it has been observed that this power of consciousness is the result of freedom, and it is linked by Sartre to the work of art.

In *L'être et le néant*, Sartre, building upon the lines of reasoning that are established in his two early works, illustrates that the being-for-itself is a being whose being-in-the-world is characterized by the fact that it never coincides with its self or anything else. This definition of human reality, as aptly described by Alain Renaut, relates to the fact that “le propre de l’homme est de ne pas avoir de propre, la définition de l’homme est de ne pas avoir de définition, son essence est de ne pas avoir d’essence”.² This existence, related to the nothingness which lies at the core of the being-for-itself, implies that the being-for-itself does not have to pattern its existence upon anything save its own freedom. In light of this formulation, Sartre proposes that the being-for-itself approach its existence in an authentic manner -- a way by which it recognizes its freedom, and acknowledges its obligation to continually make itself anew.

Although it has been noted that Sartre is vague in spelling out the precise implications of authenticity, it has been observed that he is explicit in illustrating the opposite of an authentic mode of existence. The concept of bad faith, akin to a lie to one's self, is a mode of being in which the being-for-itself refuses to acknowledge the possibilities of its freedom. In bad faith, the being-for-itself acts as if its existence has a ground and is predetermined. In this faith, the being-for-itself refuses to confront the nothingness of its existence.

Like Foucault, Sartre is very critical of humanism which, at one point, he equates with fascism (*EH* 92). In fact, the central tenet of Sartrean existentialism is that there is no human nature. Yet, Sartre attempts to formulate an ethics for humanity that is based upon this paradoxical assumption. By acknowledging the impossibility of the reconciliation of the subject – for the reason that its nothingness always ensures it never coincides with its self – and assigning freedom as the ultimate moral value, Sartre proposes that the subject invents itself.

² Renaut, *Sartre, Le dernier philosophe*, 237.

This is roughly the terrain that has been covered in the preceding chapters. Let us now examine the subject of freedom in the thought of Foucault and Sartre.

3.3 The Subject of Freedom in Foucault and Sartre

Near the end of Chapter One, it was noted that Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, in a series of working sessions entitled 'À propos de la généalogie de l'éthique', asked Foucault about a possible affinity to Sartre.³ Specifically, they had posed the following question to Foucault:

mais si l'on doit se créer soi-même sans le recours à la connaissance et aux lois universelles, en quoi votre conception est-elle différente de l'existentialisme sartrien? (DE II 1211).

As observed, to this question Foucault denied any resemblance to Sartrean existentialism, and explained that his view was more akin to Nietzsche. Interestingly enough, as Jeannette Colombel brings to light, the transcript from this session was published on two occasions, and while the query regarding Sartrean existentialism remains the same in both publications, two different responses are attributed to Foucault.⁴

In the first instance, Foucault responds that "du point de vue théorique, je pense que Sartre écarte l'idée de soi comme quelque chose qui nous est donné" (DE II 1211). At this point, Foucault's assessment is certainly on the mark, since Sartre clearly argues that the self is not something given a priori. This is a point that Sartre develops in his first major work. Foucault, however, continues his response by noting:

mais, grâce à la notion morale d'authenticité, il se replie sur l'idée qu'il faut être soi-même et être vraiment soi-même. À mon avis, la seule conséquence pratique et acceptable de ce que Sartre a dit consiste à relier sa découverte théorique à la pratique créatrice et non plus à l'idée d'authenticité. Je pense qu'il n'y a qu'un seul débouché pratique à cette idée du soi qui n'est pas donné d'avance: nous devons faire de nous-mêmes une oeuvre d'art (DE II 1211).⁵

³ These sessions, between Dreyfus, Rabinow and Foucault, took place at Berkeley in 1983.

⁴ Colombel, *Michel Foucault*, 270.

⁵ It is worth noting that this response is the one that most English speakers would be familiar with, since this is the reply that is found in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* and *The Foucault Reader*.

In the eyes of Foucault, Sartre's introduction of the concept of authenticity hinders the possibility that the self can have a creative relation to itself. Authenticity, according to Foucault, implies a moral that promotes the idea of a true self that the self must be. Presumably, it entails that the subject may be alienated from itself or repressed, but through the proper procedures can eventually reconcile itself with itself (*DE II* 1529). As noted, Foucault is dubious about such a theory of the subject. From the transcription of this session, Foucault argues:

nous ne devrions pas lier l'activité créatrice d'un individu au rapport qu'il entretient avec lui-même, mais lier ce type de rapport à soi que l'on peut avoir à une activité créatrice (*DE II* 1212).

Instead of a morality by which the subject attempts to uncover its true self, Foucault advocates a relation of the self that is a *carte blanche*, a creative activity, a mode of being which is based upon nothing but creativity.

From the project carried out in the second and third volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité*, it is clear that Foucault distances himself from the view that the subject, for a moral bearing, must appeal to a structure that already exists within society. Commenting on the ethical practices of Antiquity, he states:

ce travail sur soi avec l'austérité qui l'accompagne n'est pas imposé à l'individu au moyen d'une loi civile ou d'une obligation religieuse, mais c'est un choix que fait l'individu (*DE II* 1221).

As it can be recalled, in *L'usage des plaisirs*, Foucault highlights that the ethical practices of the Ancient Greeks were distinct in the sense that individuals themselves fashioned their lives. By reference to this *ēthos*, Foucault elucidates an era where ethics was a deliberate part of freedom, and a choice that was not contingent upon codes of morality, such as those found in Christianity. He explains:

les Grecs, en effet, problématisaient leur liberté, et la liberté de l'individu, comme un problème éthique. Mais éthique dans le sens où les Grecs pouvaient l'entendre: l'*ēthos* était la manière d'être et la manière de se conduire. C'était un mode d'être du sujet et une certaine manière de faire, visible pour les autres. ... L'homme qui a un bel *ēthos*, qui peut être admiré et cité en exemple, c'est quelqu'un qui pratique la liberté d'une certaine manière (*DE II* 1533).

In Antiquity freedom was an ethical and individual problem that related to how an individual should conduct himself. Freedom was an admirable practice that had the goal of making one's life beautiful. In a contemporary world where, according to Foucault, a universal morality is impossible, but subjects are nonetheless free, the model from Antiquity is presented as a viable ethical orientation. This motive is evident in Foucault's later works. But all the same, is it as clear as Foucault argues, that this project bears no resemblance to Sartrean existentialism?

Foucault's accusation with respect to the concept of authenticity is puzzling.⁶ From the previous chapter it may be recalled that Sartre has little to say about authenticity, but much to say about bad faith. Bad faith is meant to be juxtaposed over against authenticity: the former is intended to illuminate how the being-for-itself should not approach its existence, while the latter is meant to illustrate the way in which the being-for-itself should lead its existence. The being-for-itself should not deny its freedom, and act as if its existence has already been defined in advance. In *La Nausée*, a novel laden with his philosophical assumptions, Sartre writes:

L'essentiel c'est la contingence. Je veux dire que, par définition, l'existence n'est pas la nécessité. Exister, c'est *être là*, simplement ... Il y a des gens, je crois, qui ont compris ça. Seulement ils ont essayé de surmonter cette contingence en inventant un être nécessaire et cause de soi.⁷

In *L'être et le néant*, the essentiality of contingency is translated into the nothingness that is at the heart of human existence. Bad faith is a rejection of this contingency, since it attempts to invent a necessary casual explanation for the being-for-itself which explains that it is subject to the realm of the being-in-itself. Authenticity, on the other hand, is an acknowledgment of the nothingness that permeates existence. It is the realization that the being-for-itself is a being that does not have an essential reality or nature: that it is a contingent being in a contingent world. In light of this acknowledgement, Sartre argues that the being-for-itself should approach its existence in way that

⁶ The topic of authenticity does receive a more thorough treatment in Sartre's works *Vérité et existence* and *Cahiers pour une morale*. But both of these works were published posthumously. It is impossible that Foucault would be familiar with the former, as it was published in 1989 -- five years after his death. The latter, on the other hand, was published in 1983 the same year that Foucault conducted these working sessions with Dreyfus and Rabinow. According to Colombel it is highly unlikely that Foucault was aware of this work (Colombel, *Michel Foucault*, 271).

⁷ Sartre, *La Nausée*, Paris: Gallimard, 1938, 185.

involves perpetually renewing, inventing, or creating itself. This type of existence manifests the recognition that, save acting in bad faith, there are no a priori guidelines for how the subject should carry out this task. Accordingly, Sartre would readily accept the "seul débouché pratique" that Foucault proposes for an ethical motive – create oneself as a work of art (*DE II* 1211). In fact, many years before Foucault, in *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, he had already entertained such a suggestion.

From the above transcription of 'À propos de la généalogie de l'éthique', it can be gathered that Foucault misinterprets the gist of Sartrean authenticity. Others have recognized an affinity with Foucault's later project to Sartre's early existentialism. Phyllis Sutton Morris, for instance, recognizes that in his later work:

Foucault not only shares with the early Sartre the view that there is no fixed original essence of an individual, but also shares the view that instead of seeking to discover a nonexistent, original, true self, one might engage in actively forming the self as a work of art.⁸

According to Neil Levy, "Sartre's subject meets exactly the criteria Foucault demands of it", since authenticity entails the rejection that the self is given and therefore implies a creative existence.⁹

Let us now turn to the second transcription of this session.

The editors of *Dits et écrits* inform us that for the French publication of this session, Foucault himself modified certain aspects.¹⁰ Levy testifies that the recording held by the Bibliothèque de Saulchoir of the original English session contains nothing like the passage about to be considered.¹¹ From this second transcription, while the question regarding a resemblance with Sartrean existentialism remains the same, Foucault's response is now presented as follows:

⁸ Phyllis Sutton Morris, 'Self-Creating Selves: Sartre and Foucault', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. LXX, No. 4, 1997, 544.

⁹ Neil Levy, *Being-Up-To-Date: Foucault, Sartre, and Postmodernity*, New York: Peter Lang, 2001, 157.

¹⁰ "Pour l'édition française de cet entretien ... M. Foucault apporta un certain nombre de modifications" (*DE II* 1428).

¹¹ Neil Levy, *Being-Up-To-Date*, 193-194n2.

Il y a chez Sartre une tension entre une certaine conception du sujet et une morale de l'authenticité. Et je me demande toujours si cette morale de l'authenticité ne conteste pas en fait ce qui est dit dans la transcendance de l'ego. [sic] Le thème de l'authenticité renvoie explicitement ou non à un mode d'être du sujet défini par son adéquation à lui-même. Or il me semble que le rapport à soi doit pouvoir être décrit selon les multiplicités de formes dont l'«authenticité» n'est qu'une des modalités possibles; il faut concevoir que le rapport à soi est structuré comme une pratique qui peut avoir ses modèles, ses conformités, ses variantes, mais aussi ses créations. La pratique de soi est un domaine complexe et multiple (*DE II* 1436).

Once more, Foucault's criticism of Sartre hinges upon authenticity. In this particular case, he argues that the moral of authenticity hinders Sartre's formulation of the subject in *La transcendance de l'ego*. Again, Foucault argues that via authenticity, Sartre encourages a true self that the self must pattern itself upon – an authentic subject of morality. In addition to a self that can structure itself upon various models, like the Sartrean authentic self, Foucault sees the possibility of a self that can approach itself in a creative manner. His self is possibly similar to the Sartrean subject of *La transcendance de l'ego* which constantly reveals to itself a new existence. The presumption in Foucault's above assessment is that with authenticity, Sartre introduces a morality that was not present in *La transcendance de l'ego*. All the same, though in *L'être et le néant* Sartre expounds an ethical orientation that may not have been explicit in *La transcendance de l'ego*, its motive is consistent with the argument of *La transcendance de l'ego*.

It may be recollected that in the conclusion of *La transcendance de l'ego* Sartre explains that once consciousness is purified of its "I", nothing more is needed for a positive moral and political philosophy (*TE* 87). The non-coincidence of consciousness is the basis for the authentic mode of being in *L'être et le néant*, as in this work, nothingness, equated with freedom, is the cause of the being-for-itself's continual separation from itself. This paradoxical explanation implies that there is no true self which the being-for-itself must be, and it is, therefore, free to make itself. Similar to Foucault's exercise of the self toward the self, Sartre hints at how this feat can be accomplished by saying that it is the made-to-be by the human in "ses rapports avec lui-même" (*EN* 70). The authentic subject realizes that because its identity is not fixed, it is constantly open to revision. The concept

of authenticity in *L'être et le néant* does not, as Foucault claims, dispute the argument of *La transcendance de l'ego*. In fact, the argument in the latter directly points to that of the former.

From these working sessions with Dreyfus and Rabinow, any difference that Foucault sees between himself and Sartre on how to create one's self without any recourse to knowledge or universal rules is certainly a nuance, rather than a significant break. Admittedly, Foucault's remarks occur in a conversational setting,¹² but at the same time, they reflect his search for an ethical orientation.

Jeannette Colombel, commenting on the typical portrayal of Sartre and Foucault, advises that it is necessary to get rid of the clichéd idea that is set in stone and perpetuates the view that Sartre is the last of the metaphysicians, and Foucault is a structuralist who excludes the subject.¹³ Instead, she proposes that the itineraries of Foucault and Sartre can be seen as centering on the question of the subject.¹⁴ Indeed, as this thesis has shown, it can be seen that on the issue of the subject and freedom the thought of Foucault and Sartre revolves around a similar axis that involves the subject. Yet, it must be stressed that they arrive at this point from different avenues. Sartre, by locating contingency in the consciousness of the subject, elaborates a concept of freedom that derives from the subject having no necessary essence or nature. Foucault certainly does not elaborate any concept of the subject along the lines of consciousness. In fact, he purposefully avoids any explicit formulation of the subject. Yet, it is always assumed, and he acknowledges that it is "une chose complexe, fragile, dont il est si difficile de parler, et sans laquelle nous ne pouvons pas parler" (*DE II* 1024). In the eyes of Foucault, as complex as the subject may be, there is nothing essential about it – it has no fixed essence or nature. Like Sartre, Foucault envisions contingency as having a direct relation with the subject and its freedom. Foucault's idea of freedom derives from the fragility of the

¹² However, as it has been noted on a couple of occasions in this thesis, Foucault was quite fastidious about re-editing his interviews before they were published.

¹³ Jeanette Colombel, 'Sartre et Foucault', *Magazine littéraire*, no 384, février 2000, 50.

¹⁴ Colombel, 'Sartre et Foucault', 50.

subject in that, by demonstrating the contingency of specific historical assumptions of the present, he brings to light the spurious nature of identity and thus presents the possibility that because the subject is free, it can be something else.

As noted, in the second and third volumes of the *Histoire de la sexualité*, Foucault elucidates an ethics that is not bounded by reason or found in specific dictates; rather, ethics is something that is to be practised or created through freedom. In 'À propos de la généalogie de l'éthique' Foucault remarks that his point of view is closer to Nietzsche's than Sartre's (*DE II* 1212, 1437). Foucault's proposal for an aesthetics of existence certainly strikes a chord with Nietzsche, specifically, Nietzsche's call in *The Gay Science* that individuals engage in the "great" and "rare art" of giving style to their character.¹⁵ However, in attempting to distance himself from Sartre, might Foucault be overlooking the fact that Sartre may also have an affinity to Nietzsche?

According to Knee, when discussing Sartre it is too often forgotten that his original philosophy has a resemblance with the thought of Nietzsche in the vein that –

his critique of any substantial Ego as a unified subject, his critique of morality as flight from contingency, his critique of humanism as 'spirit of seriousness' – is itself deeply akin to Nietzschean nihilism.¹⁶

In light of there being no immutable subject, no absolute morality and no humanism, Sartre critically re-evaluates the concepts of the subject, morality and humanism. These critiques, as Knee notes, are carried out in the name of "a freedom of spontaneity, of creativity".¹⁷ This freedom of spontaneity and creativity, it may be added, parallels what Nietzsche describes as "the *free spirit* par excellence" – the possibility of a power of "self-determination", "a *freedom* of the will" whereby the spirit leaves faith and every wish for certainty and dances near the abysses.¹⁸ Also, the "*esprit de sérieux*" which

¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 232.

¹⁶ Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 151.

¹⁷ Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 151.

¹⁸ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 289-290.

Sartre describes in *L'être et le néant* is surely a nod to Nietzsche's idea of the "spirit of gravity".¹⁹ The spirit of seriousness perpetuates an ethics that is ashamed of itself and does not dare speak its name. Abiding by the dictates of this spirit, individuals consider values as transcendent givens which are independent of human subjectivity (*EN* 690). In other words, they do not confront the abyss that is their existence and create themselves, but instead cling to and become weighed down by the values they encounter as already-in-the-world. Nietzsche certainly has an influence on Sartre – an influence that Foucault seemingly overlooks.

Knee explains that as different as the philosophies of Sartre and Foucault may be, they echo each other by pointing to an aesthetic sphere of existence.²⁰ It is evident that Foucault's aesthetics of existence points to this realm, as it literally entails that one become an artist of one's existence. Moreover, in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?', his final words on Baudelaire are revealing:

cette héroïsation ironique du présent, ce jeu de la liberté avec le réel pour sa transfiguration, cette élaboration ascétique de soi, Baudelaire ne conçoit pas qu'ils puissent avoir leur lieu dans la société elle-même ou dans le corps politique. Ils ne peuvent se produire que dans un lieu autre que Baudelaire appelle l'art (*DE II* 1390).

According to Foucault, Baudelaire brings to light the important point that art is a distinct sphere where the freedom of ethics can take place. Though Sartre does not elaborate a relation between existence and art in the explicit manner of Foucault, the work of art is always in the background. As noted, in *La transcendance de l'ego*, each instant of conscious life reveals a creation ex nihilo. In *L'imaginaire*, he equates the work of art with consciousness's freedom to transcend the world of perceptual reality. In this work, the beautiful is described as never existing in reality, but rather in the world of the imagination, since this world reveals a vast array of novel things and relations that cannot be found in reality. In *L'existentialisme est un humanisme*, he implores that an ethical decision should be made by using the same criteria employed in art. In this lecture, he argues that

¹⁹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Penguin Books, 1976, 303-308.

²⁰ Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 152.

everyone knows that there is no such thing as a priori aesthetic values (EH 77). According to Sartre, ethics has in common with art the fact that both deal with creation and invention.

Moreover, the work of art seems to be an apt model for a freedom that is described as a groundless foundation. But more importantly, it would indeed be a great and rare art, if an individual could ever exist in the authentic manner that Sartre postulates. Why the importance of artistic freedom for Foucault and Sartre? Why might their thought point to the aesthetic realm?

Mark Poster explains that what is significant in the last phase of Foucault's theory of the subject is that "one senses a return of sorts to the problematic of Sartre and the existentialists".²¹ Poster argues that, like the arguments put forth by the existentialists, this stage of Foucault's thought is characterized by an affirmative effort to comprehend a process of self-constitution that is, in essence, a "genuine search for an ethics". Although Poster does not elaborate, it can be stated that the quandary which Foucault, like Sartre, encounters is: how to formulate an ethics without a foundation, specifically, without appealing to the subject's nature? In the darkness of Nietzsche's claim that there are no transcendental values, how does one elucidate a moral orientation? Throwing light upon these queries, Colombel explains that what is discovered in the ethical inquiries of Foucault and Sartre is:

en effet, deux morales tentées dans la finitude, sans recours à des valeurs «plantées dans le ciel intelligible», ni à la connaissance rationnelle, ni aux lois universelles (tout au plus pourrait-on dire que leur démarche tient du jugement réfléchissant selon Kant, qui concerne justement l'esthétique, non la morale).²²

Colombel argues that in the cases of Foucault and Sartre, the concern is to construct a morality, in light of the death of God, that appeals to the internal movement of creation.²³ For two thinkers influenced by Nietzsche, this claim is certainly not disputable. However, what is of interest, is Colombel's assertion that the ethical postures in Foucault and Sartre relate to the aesthetic judgement

²¹ Mark Poster, *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989, 54-55.

²² Colombel, *Michel Foucault*, 269-270.

²³ Colombel, *Michel Foucault*, 271.

of Kant, as elucidated in *The Critique of Judgement*. Why the importance of this judgement, one might ask?

If one accepts Jon Simons' argument that modern political philosophy is distinctly Kantian in nature, then Colombel's recognition of the common ethical route found in Foucault and Sartre is astute and telling. Simons explains that this Kantian inspired philosophy can be explained as having the following triangular parameters that enclose the subject: aesthetics (judgements), truth (pure reason), and morals (practical reason).²⁴ Remarking on the two latter points, he explains:

the place of truth and morals in the genre is clearer than that of aesthetics. We can define the political good life according to the truth about the human being, according to what is most suitable to human nature. In this case, the "ought" is defined by the "is". Alternatively, we can focus on ethics, on the transcendental nature of the essential human being and his or her capacity for good. Here the aim is to bring the "is" into line with the "ought".²⁵

The reasons why Foucault and Sartre reject pure and practical reason are obvious: the subject has no human or essential nature. However, what is curious Simons argues, is that aesthetics has an independent focus, and it therefore implies a protest against practical and pure reason. In the words of Simons, "the Kantian system allows aesthetic judgements an independent role by describing it as lacking objective standards and resting on subjective standards".²⁶ Moreover, Simon explains that in isolation aesthetics can be seen as a celebration of the subject as an unbounded creator.²⁷

Up to this point, it has been shown that the thought of Foucault and Sartre meets on the subject of freedom; that standing in the shadow of Nietzsche, their ethical itineraries imply a search for a new ethics; that this quest leads to the aesthetic sphere of existence – a sphere which is related to Kantian aesthetics. Presently, this thesis will shed light on what Ludwig Wittgenstein would call

²⁴ Jon Simons, 'From Resistance to Polaesthetics: Politics after Foucault', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, no. 1 vol. 17, 1991, 45.

²⁵ Simons, 'From Resistance to Polaesthetics', 45.

²⁶ Simons, 'From Resistance to Polaesthetics', 45.

²⁷ Simons, 'From Resistance to Polaesthetics', 45.

"the picture" that holds these two captive.²⁸ As will be shown, Foucault and Sartre are enamoured by the promises of aesthetic modernity.

3.4 Modern Art

(i) A Brief Historical Synopsis

To define modern art is a vast if not impossible proposition, one that is in fact probably tantamount to squaring the circle. In what follows, the task of elucidating what it is about modern art that appeal to Foucault and to Sartre will be carried out.

Karsten Harries, in *The Meaning of Modern Art*, explains that "the modern artist no longer has an obvious, generally accepted route to follow. ... This lack of direction has given the artist a new freedom".²⁹ In the eyes of Harries, modern art is open in the sense that there is no one style -- such as the schools of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, or Baroque -- that dictates how it must proceed. William Barrett accounts for modern art as an immense movement toward the destruction of forms, that is, of what is received and traditional.³⁰ Jürgen Habermas recognizes that "in the history of modern art one can detect a trend towards ever greater autonomy in the definition and practice of art".³¹ Perhaps the essence of modern art can best summed up by the modern artist par excellence, Charles Baudelaire:

L'artiste ne relève que de lui-même. Il ne promet aux siècles à venir que ses propres oeuvres; il ne cautionne que lui-même. Il meurt sans enfants. Il a été son roi, son prêtre et son Dieu.³²

Modernity, as related to art, can be captured as a new dawning that signifies the curtailment of a previous era. The modern artist is recognized as an individual who is free from the constraints of

²⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, 48e.

²⁹ Karsten Harries, *The Meaning of Modern Art*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968, xiii-xiv.

³⁰ William Barrett, *Irrational Man*, New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1962, 46.

³¹ Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity – An Incomplete Project', in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, New York: The New Press, 1998, 9.

³² Lionello Venturi, Preface to *Cézanne: son art – son oeuvre*, 2 volumes, Paris, 1936, 15.

form and tradition. As recognized by Baudelaire, the artist is his own king and God – both ruler and creator.

In the *Five Faces of Modernity*, Matei Calinescu argues that although it is impossible to date the existence of two "distinct" and "conflicting" modernities, it is nevertheless evident that in the first half of the nineteenth century an "irreversible split" occurred between modernity as a "doctrine of progress" and modernity as an "aesthetic concept".³³ According to Calinescu, the former – bourgeois modernity – exhibited confidence in, among other things, the "cult of reason" and freedom within the framework of an "abstract humanism".³⁴ In contrast, the latter – which would bring into being the avant-gardes – manifested itself toward radical antibourgeois attitudes and, in the words of Calinescu, "expressed its disgust through the most diverse means, ranging from rebellion, anarchy, and apocalypticism to aristocratic self-exile".³⁵

To lend credence to his analysis regarding the split of modernity, Calinescu focuses on the term itself. He notes that in France the term was not used before the middle of the nineteenth century.³⁶ Citing the writings of Chateaubriand, he observes that '*modernité*' in France originally referred to the banality of everyday modern life. This rendering of modernity – as alienation – derives from the romantic movement, specifically, preromantic and romantic Germany where the object of hatred and ridicule was *philistinism*. While in Germany *philistinism* was eventually transformed into an instrument of ideological and political criticism, in postrevolutionary France the opposite trend prevailed.³⁷ In the France of this era, various kinds of antibourgeois political radicalism underwent a process of aestheticization. Calinescu argues that these movements, such as *l'art pour art* and the later *décadentisme* and *symbolisme*, can be best understood as reactions against

³³ Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1987, 41.

³⁴ Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 41.

³⁵ Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 42.

³⁶ Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 42.

³⁷ Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 44.

the expanding modernity of the middle class and its utilitarian preconceptions and mediocre conformity.

Calinescu illustrates that during this period, the idea of art's autonomy or *l'art pour art*, as advocated by the Bohemian poets and painters in the France of the 1830s, can be traced back a half century earlier to Kant who, in the *Critique of Judgement*, had affirmed the disinterestedness of art by formulating it as a concept of "purposiveness without a purpose".³⁸ As explained by Calinescu, in France, Kant's affirmation developed into a concept of beauty that asserted art's total gratuitousness. Baudelaire, by recognizing romanticism as the most contemporary expression of beauty, became one of the prime supporters of this movement. According to Calinescu, "Baudelaire's explicit identification of romanticism with *modern art* puts a new and radical emphasis on the idea of modernity and on the value of novelty".³⁹

**(ii) The Subject of Freedom Revisited:
Modern and Romantic Remnants?**

As observed, Kant's postulation of art as purposiveness without a purpose was interpreted in France as implying a concept of beauty that postulated art as totally free. Baudelaire's passion for romanticism led him to develop a view that this movement was the prime expression of the Kantian ideal of beauty which, at the same time, implied art's absolute autonomy. From the above synopsis it can be detected that the history of modern art implies a current towards a greater sense of autonomy. The evolution of Kant's formulation of art in France exemplifies such an interpretation. All the same, how might Baudelaire's interpretation of Kant relate to the ethical postures in Foucault and Sartre? Before contemplating this query, it might be pertinent to reflect briefly on one of Baudelaire's main influences.

³⁸ Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 45.

³⁹ Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity*, 47.

On the "precise meaning" of romanticism,⁴⁰ Gordon Wright acknowledges that "no two scholars" would arrive at a consensus of this term, for the reason that its essential spirit was one of revolt against an established order of things -- against precise rules, laws, dogmas, formulas.⁴¹ In the words of Wright, "a mood or movement whose central characteristic is revolt, and whose stress is on self-expression and individual uniqueness, does not lend itself to precise definition".⁴² Saying that, Wright recognizes that as opposed to a static and mechanical thing, along the lines of a Newtonian machine, the romantics preferred an image of the world as an organism in the process of uninterrupted change, growth, evolution. One can see how Baudelaire's fascination with novelty developed from a movement whose defining characteristics are uniqueness and fluidity. But how, if at all, does such a movement relate to ethics?

According to Albert Camus, dandyism is part and parcel with romanticism and, moreover, expresses a nostalgia for an ethics.⁴³ To satisfy this yearning, Camus explains that the task of the artist is not only to create a world and exalt beauty for the sake of beauty, but also to define an attitude. The artist, by his exemplary self-disposition, becomes a model: "il se propose en exemple: l'art est sa morale".⁴⁴ The artist revolts against the established order of things, and answers to no one but his art. He sees the world as a continual flow, and perpetually strives to bring novelty to his art.

⁴⁰ On the topic of romanticism, Wright provides an analysis that complements Calinescu's. Wright reports that although the years of the revolution and the Napoleonic wars diverted most Frenchmen from intellectual and cultural pursuits, early nineteenth century France signified a frenzied return -- on par with the rich artistic and literary achievements of the generation of 1660 -- to these occupations. According to Wright, while rationalism in thought and neoclassicism in the arts had marked eighteenth century France, by 1830 -- with the election of the young romantic poet Lamartine to the French Academy -- romanticism had become a predominant mode of thought that would pervade for a generation thereafter to those French individuals concerned with ideas and the arts. Like Calinescu, Wright explains that romanticism was by no means a peculiar French product, as its outlook had previously manifested itself in England and Germany. Wright adds that romanticism in France had its "own forebears" -- specifically, Rousseau -- and would have doubtless come to dominate France, since a generation of revolution and war had undermined the certainty that the age of reason had upheld and, in turn, provided fertile grounds for the metaphysical problems of existence, death, and eternity (Gordon Wright, *France in Modern Times*, fifth edition, New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995, 171-172).

⁴¹ Wright, *France in Modern Times*, 172.

⁴² Wright, *France and Modern Times*, 172.

⁴³ Albert Camus, *L'Homme révolté*, Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1951, 73.

⁴⁴ Camus, *L'Homme révolté*, 73.

In creating his work of art, the artist exhibits a morality – a morality that, like his art, is one of his own making.⁴⁵ The artist's freedom is his art and it has no other purpose than its freedom. Habermas, in reflecting upon this distinct historical consciousness of art for art's sake, states:

the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere could then become a deliberate project: the talented artist could lend authentic expression to those experiences he had in encountering his own decentered subjectivity, detached from the constraints of routinized cognition and everyday action.⁴⁶

In such a scenario, free from social conventions, the artist does not have to justify himself morally or politically, but instead justifies himself as an authentic individual. Let us discern how this project may pertain to Foucault and Sartre.

It has been noted that Simons explains that the Kantian sphere of aesthetics rests upon subjective – not objective – standards. It is a sphere that is a celebration of freedom, and a realm which is distinct from pure and practical reason. It is this realm which leads Baudelaire, deeply inspired by romanticism, to interpret the artist, via his practice of art, as being absolutely free. At times, one wonders why Foucault went all the way back to Ancient Greece to discover a universality without a law, save that of an aesthetics of existence (SS 215) – a mode of existence by which one makes one's life beautiful by basing it upon the work of art. Could not Foucault's ethical quest have stopped in the nineteenth century with Baudelaire?⁴⁷ The individual who equated beauty with freedom, and applied the principles of the work to his existence.⁴⁸ According to Foucault, freedom

⁴⁵ The problematic aspects of this relation between ethics and artistic creativity will be addressed in subsection (iv) of this section.

⁴⁶ Habermas, 'Modernity – An Incomplete Project', 9.

⁴⁷ The aura that Baudelaire holds over many French thinkers almost goes without saying. Thus, it should not be a surprise to note that Sartre wrote a biography of Baudelaire. Yet, as opposed to Foucault, Sartre was critical of Baudelaire – arguing that Baudelaire was constantly in bad faith, as he was always trying to make a spectacle of himself. Sartre's analysis of Baudelaire can be understood in the context of Sartre moving away from the view of pure freedom in *L'être et le néant*. This issue will be addressed in the next chapter (Sartre, *Baudelaire*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1947).

⁴⁸ In 'À propos de la généalogie de l'éthique', Foucault, in elaborating upon how one chooses to impose a life-style upon one's self along the lines of the Ancient Greeks, states that "nous avons à peine le souvenir de cette idée dans notre société, idée selon laquelle la principale oeuvre d'art dont il faut se soucier, la zone majeure où l'on doit appliquer des valeurs esthétiques, c'est soi-même, sa propre vie, son existence. On trouve cela à la Renaissance ... et encore dans le dandysme du XIXe siècle" (*DE II* 1221).

for Baudelaire does not relate to society itself or to the political body, but instead, it pertains to another place – the area which Baudelaire calls art (*DE II* 1390). As mentioned, though Sartre does not explicitly advocate an aesthetics of existence, it is difficult to see how things could be otherwise. The authentic being-for-itself is the being that is not tied down to anything, least of all the social and political bodies, and in light of this recognition, it approaches its freedom with the goal of perpetually making itself anew. It bases its freedom on nothing other than its freedom. When Foucault proposes that one base one's life upon the work of art, and when Sartre suggests that freedom be taken as the ultimate value, they both intend that one exercise a freedom akin to the creativity of the artist. In other words, one is to answer to nothing but one's freedom. Like the artist, the subject practices ethics in a way that it invents. This motive is carried out in nothing other than the name of innovation and novelty. The obvious question that this idea of creative or artistic freedom raises is: does such an exclusive sphere of existence really exist?

(iii) Aesthetics: A Distinct Realm of Freedom?

Allan Megill explains that Kant, with his postulation of art as the sphere of purposiveness without purpose, founded the philosophy of art. According to Megill, "in setting up (or appearing to set up) a separate sphere for the aesthetic, he opened up intellectual space for the vast Romantic and post-Romantic expansion of art and for the claims of that art to an autonomous status".⁴⁹ Though it is uncertain whether or not Kant actually intended the aesthetic sphere to be absolutely autonomous, it is nevertheless certain that due to a vast array of historical circumstances this idea evolved into a movement that conferred great freedom upon art and which culminated in Baudelaire's idea of artistic freedom. How may such a concept of art have originated?

Simons explains that in Western culture, art at times has been portrayed as a privileged realm of freedom. He writes, "when in the modern West art lost its previous religious function, it became

⁴⁹ Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, 264.

a purposive activity that had no visible purpose".⁵⁰ Max Weber throws light upon Simon's explanation, as Weber shows that since its beginnings religion has been an "inexhaustible fountain" for "artistic creation" and of "stylizing through traditionalization".⁵¹ However, Weber argues that the development of "intellectualism" and "rationalism" change this situation, in the sense that art becomes a medium of "independent values" which exist in their own right, and perform a function of "this-worldly salvation". Art in this mode, in the words of Weber, "provides a *salvation* from the routines of everyday life, and especially from the increasing pressures of theoretical and practical rationalism".⁵²

Undoubtedly, art is in an important aspect of any culture that certainly plays an important role in alleviating the pressures of contemporary life. But just how much salvation can it provide? Is it actually a sphere that provides complete autonomy? Is this idea of aesthetic modernity contestable?

Peter Bürger, in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, disputes the notion of art's autonomy.⁵³ In fact, Bürger argues that such a category is a product of bourgeois society. Bürger notes that only a society that could produce members who are free from the pressures of survival, could thereby permit a description of art's detachment from practical life and promote a sensuousness that was not part of any means-ends relationship. He argues that "what this category cannot lay hold of is that this detachment of art from practical contexts is a *historical process*, i.e., that it is socially conditioned".⁵⁴ Bürger's analysis disputes the idea, deriving from Kant and Schiller, that the work of art belongs to an autonomous and independent sphere. In fact, he argues that such a depiction of art is erroneous, since art is manifestly tied to socio-historical structures.

⁵⁰ Simons, *Foucault & the Political*, 78.

⁵¹ Max Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', in *From Max Weber*, edited by H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, 341.

⁵² Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', 342.

⁵³ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, translated by Michael Shaw, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, 42.

⁵⁴ Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 46.

Similar to Bürger, Janet Wolff, in *The Social Production of Art*, argues that "art is a social product", and in doing so, disputes the romantic and mystical notion of art as the creation of genius, transcending existence and society.⁵⁵ Instead, Wolff maintains that "all action, including creative or innovative action, arises in the complex conjunction of numerous structural determinants and conditions".⁵⁶ Wolff maintains that any concept of creativity that denies such a claim is metaphysical, and cannot be sustained. She adds that if human action is free and creative, it does not consist in escaping from social determinants, as there is always a multiplicity of causes for anything which happens.⁵⁷ Human agents, in the eyes of Wolff, are free only in the sense that they make situated choices and perform situated practices.

As it has been shown, the idea that the artist and art participate in an exclusive sphere is a concept that has a rich history. Moreover, there is a host of historical conditions that have engendered such a notion. As Bürger argues, the idea of art being autonomous does not address the historical circumstances that have engendered such a belief. The conception that art transcends society is, as Wolff notes, simply presented as a metaphysical given. More importantly, for the task at hand, when Colombel relates that the ethical orientations in Foucault and Sartre take refuge in the Kantian realm of aesthetics, this entails that they appeal to a specific historical conception of art which presumes that art does not appeal to a priori rules. That conception takes it for granted that art is transcendental and not immanent. Such presumptions raise the following questions: if art's autonomy is a socio-historical concept, how could it ever deliver the freedom it promises? How can it serve as a suitable model for ethics?

Let us now consider the problematic aspects of such a proposal.

⁵⁵ Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, Second Edition, Washington Square, New York: New York University Press, 1993, 1.

⁵⁶ Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, 9.

⁵⁷ Wolff, *The Social Production of Art*, 21.

(iv) The Problematic Nature of Creative Freedom

Andrew Thacker explains that "recent discussions of the project of Enlightenment have seemed to return to one of the founding concerns of Enlightenment rationality: the establishment of a corpus of knowledge around the question of aesthetics".⁵⁸ Thacker describes Foucault's late work on Greco-Roman sexuality as coinciding with his interest in the Enlightenment and the question of aesthetics, and argues that the appeal to the aesthetic realm is central in Foucault's attempt to avoid the charge that his work is ethically neutral.⁵⁹ To this point, Marli Huijter argues that "an ethic as an aesthetics of existence is not a total negation or relativism of all values or truths", since it contains a clear precept: "transform life into a work of art".⁶⁰ In what follows, it will be shown that this obvious principle is certainly revealing, in more ways than one.

If Foucault and Sartre propose an ethical motive that puts too much stock in the independence that modern art promises, then it would be expected that commentators levy criticisms against their ethical motives as being too concerned with the subject. On one hand, Terry Eagleton states that "as with Nietzsche, Foucault's vigorously self-mastering individual remains wholly monadic".⁶¹ On the other, Iris Murdoch notes that "what Sartre does understand, the reality which he has before him and which he so profoundly and brilliantly characterises in *L'être et le néant*, is the psychology of the lonely individual".⁶² The appeal to artistic freedom, it seems, results in a tendency to give too much priority to the subject, and too little consideration to the questions of social and historical conditioning. This should not be a surprise as the idea of modern art takes it for granted that it relates to a separate sphere.

⁵⁸ Andrew Thacker, 'Foucault's Aesthetics of Existence', *Radical Philosophy* 63, Spring 1993, 18.

⁵⁹ Thacker, 'Foucault's Aesthetics of Existence', 15.

⁶⁰ Marli Huijter, 'The Aesthetics of Existence in the Work of Michel Foucault', *Philosophy of Social Criticism*, vol. 25 no. 2, 1999, 77.

⁶¹ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997, 393.

⁶² Iris Murdoch, *Sartre: Romantic Realist*, New York: Barnes & Noble, 1980, 51.

On the topic of a lack of awareness of the realms of the social and historical, Hans-Herbert Kögler argues that Foucault's ethical vision is a highly individualistic mode of aesthetic self-fashioning, and according to Kögler, the aesthetic-ethical move in Foucault, "tends to ignore the actual social conditions that put agents in a position freely and autonomously to create themselves as artworks (or as anything else)".⁶³ Thomas McCarthy observes that Foucault's aesthetics of existence corrects the holistic bias found in his previous writings on power, but at the same time McCarthy wonders: "the question now is whether he hasn't gone too far in the opposite direction and replaced it with an individualistic bias".⁶⁴ Christopher Norris certainly thinks he does. In fact, he argues that Foucault goes too far in the direction of Sartrean existentialism. According to Norris, when Dreyfus and Rabinow confront Foucault with a similarity to Sartre, Foucault, instead of acknowledging the resemblance, only repeats a Sartrean problem in a sharper, more insistent manner. Norris argues that Sartre's "existential voluntarism",⁶⁵ his idea of the authentic self, entails a subject that rejects all claims of conscience, morality or political purposes with the exception of those that issue from the subject's peremptory will to pursue its own project of autonomous self-invention.⁶⁶ Norris maintains that Foucault completely misses this point in Sartre. In the eyes of Norris, if ethics is properly or essentially a matter of the relation one has to oneself, and if the most authentic way of conceiving this relation is in terms of how one might create oneself as a work of art, then:

one might as well radicalize Sartre's position to the point where individuals are conceived as absolute legislators in a self-sufficient world of their own inventing; a

⁶³ Hans-Herbert Kögler, 'The self-empowered subject', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol 22 no 4, 35.

⁶⁴ Thomas McCarthy, 'The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School', in *Critique and Power*, 268. As it will be argued in the following chapter, the implications of power undermine the project of an aesthetics of existence.

⁶⁵ For an account of decisionism in Foucault, see Richard Wolin, 'Foucault's Aesthetic Decisionism', *Telos* 66, Winter 1985-86, 71-86.

⁶⁶ Christopher Norris, *The Truth about Postmodernism*, Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, 83.

world, moreover, whose private (even solopistic) nature allows no appeal to the validating standards of public or intersubjective debate.⁶⁷

Thus, an aesthetics of existence raises the same problems as an authentic mode of existence. It is so focused on the freedom of the subject that it fails to consider how anything outside of the subject might relate to the subject's freedom.

With respect to the difficulty in Sartre that Norris identifies, Thomas W. Busch observes that throughout *L'être et le néant* the "best" and "worst" faces of Sartre "wrestle with one another", and all too often the worst prevails.⁶⁸ Busch explains that "one can say that it is the tension or play of subjectivity and situatedness that is at the heart of all of Sartre's philosophical thinking, which at various times privileges one over the other as he tries to think them together".⁶⁹ At his worse, Sartre presents the subject as an absolute legislator in a world of its own making. In fact, at one point, Sartre states the following about human reality:

La liberté, c'est précisément le néant qui *est été* au coeur de l'homme et qui contraint la réalité-humaine à *se faire*, au lieu d'*être*. Nous l'avons vu, pour la réalité-humaine, être c'est *se choisir*: rien ne lui vient du dehors, ni du dedans non plus, qu'elle puisse recevoir ou accepter" (EN 495).

As Gutting notes, at times in *L'être et le néant* the subject is explained as sharply separated from anything, and in these instances, "Sartre's account makes action not only free but radically and fundamentally free; there is no determination of it from any source".⁷⁰ Gutting notes that the problem, as Sartre himself would eventually recognize, was one of concreteness – what can existentialism say about how to behave in a specific historical situation?⁷¹ Make your self on the

⁶⁷ Christopher Norris, *The Truth about Postmodernism*, 83. It may be added that this problem of egoism originates with Nietzsche. For an account – and a defense – of this problem in Nietzsche, see James J. Winchester, *Nietzsche's Aesthetic Turn: Reading Nietzsche after Heidegger, Deleuze, and Derrida*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, 151-166.

⁶⁸ Busch, 'Jean-Paul Sartre and Judith Butler', 47.

⁶⁹ Busch, 'Jean-Paul Sartre and Judith Butler' 45-46.

⁷⁰ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 148.

⁷¹ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 124.

groundless foundation that is your existence? Base your ethical decision on the criteria employed in art? You are free therefore choose? Invent? How do such precepts contribute to bettering life?

As noted above, Busch explains that Sartre struggles to coherently hold together the notions of subjectivity and the situation. Levy picks up on this predicament, and explains that, abiding by Sartre's logic, the situation appears as an object for the subject and, accordingly, the elucidation of consciousness implies the real possibility that the subject can withdrawal from its situation.⁷² To understand how this is possible, the first of the two limits to freedom that Sartre recognizes in *L'être et le néant* can be considered.⁷³ In arguing that we are condemned to be free, Sartre argues that "cela signifie qu'on ne saurait trouver à ma liberté d'autres limites qu'elle même ou, si l'on préfère, que nous sommes pas libres de cesser d'être libres" (EN 494). This limit is essentially the unlimitedness of freedom, and, as Gutting admits, the question which this view of pure freedom raises is: does Sartre confer too much freedom on the subject?⁷⁴ In the eyes of Levy, yes. He observes that Sartre's fundamental vision of pure freedom actually eliminates freedom from the world of the being-for-itself by paradoxically granting it too much freedom. Levy argues that the choice of the being-for-itself is so absolute that nothing pre-exists that choice, nor does anything survive its dissolution, and remarks that "Sartre should have realized – writing, as he was, a book which engages in an almost continual dialogue with Hegel – absolute freedom is as abstract as total determination, and ultimately indistinguishable from it".⁷⁵

In the introduction of this thesis it was noted that Barry Allen sees Foucault within the tradition of the modern ethos of individuality.⁷⁶ According to Allen, Foucault's aesthetics of existence reaffirms this ethos, as it is an attempt to think differently about morality and politics in

⁷² Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 97.

⁷³ The second limit will be considered in the following chapter.

⁷⁴ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 148.

⁷⁵ Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 102.

⁷⁶ Allen, 'Foucault and Modern Political Philosophy', 167.

order to promote a new experience of individuality. Yet, in remarking on this ethical suggestion Allen asks: "How would the concern for the 'beautiful form' guide us in deciding what, in a real case, it would be best, or right, or even beautiful to do?".⁷⁷ To Allen, Foucault's project of ethical self-fashioning is a "monstrosity" that "cannot possibly offer a workable solution to the real problem it tries to address". Allen maintains that Foucault, by polemically opposing art to morality – a Kantian conception of aesthetics to a Kantian conception of ethics – fails to synthesize aesthetics and ethics and, accordingly, "an aesthetics of existence presupposes and cannot explicate the ethical ideal of the good life".⁷⁸ What Allen says of Foucault's project of ethical self-formation is the same for Sartre's dictum of creativity in that neither give an outline of what a better life would be. Freedom is without a purpose.

John Rajchman describes Foucault as the great skeptic of our times, and states that "to question the self-evidence of a form of experience, knowledge, or power, is to free it for our purposes, to open new possibilities for thought or action. Such freedom is the ethical principle of Foucault's skepticism".⁷⁹ Richard Bernstein acknowledges that this "line of interpretation" of Foucault has been developed in different ways by commentators on Foucault seeking to defend him against "enlightenment blackmail".⁸⁰ According to Bernstein, such interpretations see Foucault as at once utterly provocative and disconcerting, for the reason that his strength lies in his radical questioning and withholding of judgement. In the words of Bernstein: "nothing is to be taken for granted, not even our predisposition that a thinker must 'take a position'".⁸¹ Bernstein recognizes that commentators are correct to argue that we misunderstand the tradition of skepticism – and Foucault's

⁷⁷ Allen, 'Foucault and Modern Political philosophy', 194.

⁷⁸ Allen, 'Foucault and Modern Political Philosophy', 194.

⁷⁹ Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, 4.

⁸⁰ Bernstein, 'Foucault: Critique as a Philosophical Ethos', in *Critique and Power*, 230.

⁸¹ Bernstein, 'Foucault: Critique as a Philosophical Ethos', 230.

own sceptical stance – if we fail to realize that it is an ethical stance.⁸² However, bringing to light what Hegel, in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* has shown, Bernstein argues that such an interpretation sidesteps the issue of the radical instability of sceptical freedom, since sceptical freedom is always in danger of becoming abstract for the reason that -- in Hegel's words -- it "ends up with the bare abstraction of nothingness or emptiness and cannot go any further from there, but must wait to see whether something new comes along and what it is, in order to throw it too into the empty abyss".⁸³ According to Bernstein, an instability along these lines shows up in the thought of Foucault in the guise that while Foucault adopts a position of detachment and sceptical suspension of judgement, he constantly tempts us with the reference to new possibilities.⁸⁴ The problematic nature, in the eyes of Bernstein, is that these new possibilities are in danger of becoming vacuous unless we have some sense of which possibilities and changes are desirable and why. Similar to Allen, Bernstein argues that Foucault never clarifies why an aesthetic mode of ethical life is desirable.⁸⁵

At this point perhaps it would be beneficial to pause and consider the implications of the clear precept that Foucault puts forth in his later works. As has been argued, it is evident that the principle calling one to transform life into a work of art is not a suitable ethical proposal, as it is, in fact, an empty ethical suggestion. It has been observed that this precept relies too much on the subject's freedom and does not take into account social and historical factors. It can be interpreted as an extreme form of egoism. It has been readily seen that this principle does not advance the ethical question any further than Sartre's early existentialism. It has been shown that it is evident that the idea of art, as a distinct and autonomous sphere, is a concept that has a historical background. It may be added that too often commentators are prone to overlook this fact, and accept *prima facie* the

⁸² Bernstein accepts this line of reasoning, since it accords with the theme of a way out in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?' (Bernstein, 'Foucault: Critique as a Philosophical Ethos', 230).

⁸³ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, 51.

⁸⁴ Bernstein, 'Foucault: Critique as a Philosophical Ethos', 231.

⁸⁵ Bernstein, 'Foucault: Critique as a Philosophical Ethos', 233.

validity of such a proposal, never questioning the status of the idea of art from which this concept derives, let alone considering the fact that there is a history of art, and modernity is but one part of this history. Foucault and Sartre are also guilty of this charge. Also, in their own distinct ways, Sartre and Foucault run the risk of reducing the idea of freedom to being a concept so abstract that it becomes empty.

In the introduction of this thesis it was noted that Gutting laments the fact that few poststructuralists have taken up the gauntlet in elucidating a positive understanding of freedom.⁸⁶ In the eyes of Gutting, the task is to overcome all obstacles in freedom's unrestricted expansion: a commitment to the unquestionable status of transgression, novelty, and difference are the absolute ethical ideals.⁸⁷ It is never explained why such a radical liberation is so important and what it would consist in. Individuals who promote such ideals are described by Habermas as the "young conservatives".⁸⁸ In the eyes of Habermas, these young conservatives, amongst whom he places Foucault, recapitulate the basic experience of modernity and "remove into the sphere of the far-away and the archaic the spontaneous powers of imagination, self-experience and emotion".⁸⁹ If Foucault is a young conservative then, as odd as it may sound, so, too, is Sartre.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter the following tasks have been accomplished: it has been shown that Foucault and Sartre envision a similar subject of freedom. It has been observed that Sartre and Foucault appeal to the Kantian realm of aesthetics for an ethical direction. It has been argued that, for a host of reasons, this notion of an ethics, based upon art's autonomy, is a highly problematic venture. All the same, Sartre and Foucault are hyper-ethical thinkers in the sense that an ethical *modus operandi*

⁸⁶ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 389.

⁸⁷ Gutting, *Twentieth Century French Philosophy*, 389.

⁸⁸ Habermas, 'Modernity – An Incomplete Project', 13.

⁸⁹ Habermas, 'Modernity – An Incomplete Project', 13.

constantly underlies their work. When Sartre convincingly argues that racist attitudes have no immutable foundation, a more concrete ethical stance than one that is based upon creativity is expected. By the same token, when Foucault's historical studies bring to light the atrocities that humans commit against one another in the name of progress or science, one expects more of a moral outlook than that offered by an aesthetics of existence. As it will be seen, at other points in the oeuvres of Foucault and Sartre, their thought appears to undermine an idea of artistic freedom. For all the notorious differences between these two, there is a common moral impetus in their thought: it is the recognition that humans do awful things to each other when they gaze upon one another as objects. In closing this chapter, it is proposed that this study of Foucault and Sartre be deepened. Can the thought of these two meet at any other points? If so, could these other convergences possibly intensify an awareness of the question of freedom?

CHAPTER FOUR

Sartre, Foucault, and a Shared Ethical Insight

Before I go on with this short history, let me make a general observation – the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up*, February, 1936

4.1 Introduction

In an interview from March of 1968, when asked to respond on being rebuked for having an attitude opposite to one like existentialism which encourages people to action and engagement, Michel Foucault stated:

Eh bien ça, c'est un reproche. Il est normal qu'ils le fassent. Encore une fois, la différence n'est pas en ceci que nous aurions maintenant séparé le politique du théorique, c'est au contraire dans la mesure où nous rapprochons au plus près le théorique et le politique que nous refusons ces politiques de la docte ignorance qui étaient celles, je crois, de ce qu'on appelait l'engagement (*DE I* 696).

Two years earlier, commenting on the generation of engagement, he had remarked:

Nous avons éprouvé la génération de Sartre comme une génération certes courageuse et généreuse, qui avait la passion de la vie, de la politique, de l'existence... Mais nous,

nous nous sommes découvert autre chose, une autre passion: la passion du concept et de ce que je nommerai le «système»¹ ... (*DE I* 542).

Yet in 1972, when asked, in light of his previous comments, to explain his recent political activity alongside Sartre, Foucault states:

Depuis lors, beaucoup de choses ont fondamentalement changé. C'est probablement parce que ma génération s'est rapprochée de celle de Sartre. Il y a moins d'une semaine, Sartre et moi avons manifesté devant le ministère de la Justice pour lire en public un manifeste que les détenus nous avaient envoyé. Il est évident que j'ai changé, mais Sartre aussi, sans doute, parce que jusqu'alors il avait cru que ce que j'avais écrit était un refus, une négation de l'histoire. Aujourd'hui, il ne semble plus le croire. Parce que j'ai changé? Je ne sais pas (*DE I* 1169-1170).

Ultimately, what had changed to bring the generation of Foucault closer to that of Sartre? Foucault? Or for that matter Sartre? Possibly, as Foucault and Sartre found themselves embracing common political causes, their egos were set aside, and they may have realized that as different as their philosophies were, they shared similar assumptions and had similar goals.²

In the previous chapter it was shown that the encounters between Foucault and Sartre in the streets of Paris can be explained, as Philip Knee suggests, as the coming together of two thinkers who demanded that values of individual independence be given an immediate reality, and whose thought pointed to the aesthetic sphere of existence.³ With respect to the latter, it was argued that Foucault's proposal for an aesthetics of existence is not that dissimilar to Sartre's idea of authentic freedom. For various reasons, it was shown that such projects are questionable ethical endeavours. All the same, near the end of the last chapter, it was stated that the question of ethics is never far from the mind of either Foucault or Sartre. Before attempting to see if any further common ground beneath the feet of these two can be discovered, it might be pertinent to cast a glance at the causes they embraced.

¹ The political implications -- or lack of -- that coincide with a passion for the system will be discussed in the next chapter.

² B-H Lévy, remarking on the political activity of Sartre and Foucault, states: "on s'est parfois étonné de les voir, Sartre et Foucault, après Mai 68, se rapprocher, militer ensemble. Mais c'est qu'ils étaient déjà tout proches. C'est qu'ils l'avaient toujours été, en secret" (Lévy, *Le siècle de Sartre*, 258).

³ Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 150, 152.

In 1969 Foucault and Sartre addressed the issue of police provocation and repression concerning the arrest of students at the University of Vincennes; in 1971 both joined forces in a demonstration against the racist crime committed against the young Algerian Djellai Ben Aki – with the additional motive of bringing to the public's attention the deplorable living conditions of the immigrant workers in the eighteenth arrondissement; in 1972 both partook in a press conference organized by the GIP at the Ministry of Justice to protest the brutal intervention of the police at Nancy's Charles III prison; with respect to the Bruay affair, in 1972 again, on an invitation from the Maoists, both philosophers visited Bruay-en-Artois; in 1979 both protested the French government's reluctance to help the Vietnamese who were fleeing their country and seeking entrance to France.⁴

In this chapter, it will be elucidated that the political activity of Sartre and Foucault is revealing: they were two thinkers committed to bringing to light social injustices. In fact, it will be shown that it was inevitable that Sartre and Foucault would find themselves side by side in the streets protesting, as their thought is ethically motivated by a similar insight: the recognition that humans have a tendency to gaze upon their world and themselves through an objective lens which inevitably limits freedom. Puzzlingly enough, and in light of this similar perception, it will be observed that both state that morality is impossible. This chapter will conclude by arguing that the task, as exemplified by the thought and political activity of Sartre and Foucault, is to respond to the ethical or what André Glucksmann terms the “intolérable”.⁵

The objectives of this chapter will be accomplished by tracing the common theme of the gaze in the philosophies of Sartre and Foucault. Proceeding in this manner will allow a subsidiary goal

⁴ These facts are documented in Didier Eribon's biography of Foucault (Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, chapters 14-18). As an aside, to support Foucault's admission that his generation eventually became closer to Sartre's, it can be noted that Georges Canguilhem, while explaining that 1961 (the year *Histoire de la folie* was published) "remains and will remain the year a truly great philosopher was discovered", also adds, in reference to the meeting between Foucault, Sartre and Raymond Aron in 1979, that "I had already known two, who had been my classmates: Raymond Aron and Jean-Paul Sartre. They did not get along with one another. Nor did they get along with Michel Foucault. One day, however, all three were seen united. That was to sustain, against death, an undertaking without limits" (Canguilhem, 'Introduction to *Penser la folie*', in *Foucault and His Interlocutors*, 35).

⁵ André Glucksmann, 'Le nihilisme de Michel Foucault', in *Michel Foucault Philosophe*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989, 396.

to be carried out: specifically, it will be shown that the implications of the gaze in the thought of both cast doubt upon the respective projects of authentic freedom and an aesthetics of existence. This chapter will proceed as follows: first (4.2), it will be argued that the second limit -- the existence of the other -- which Sartre attributes to freedom in *L'être et le néant* is the one and only limit. Post-*L'être et le néant* it will be noted that Sartre rethought aspects of his project. In the *Cahiers pour une morale*, the objectifying power of the gaze is discussed as originating from the realm of the social. In Sartre's biography of Jean Genet, *Saint Genet*, it will be shown that Sartre continues with this line of reasoning. Having traced the gaze in Sartre, the next task will be to follow this concept in Foucault (4.3). In Foucault's first major work, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, it will be noted that the gaze objectifies one's freedom. In *Naissance de la clinique*, it will be shown that Foucault argues that it is the gaze which establishes the individual in his irreducible quality. In *Surveiller et punir* it will be observed that it is the unknown gaze which produces the subject. Having tracked the theme of the gaze in Sartre and Foucault the next task will be to examine the differences and affinities between these two on this topic (4.4). It will be seen the main difference is that Foucault provides a historical account for the ocular paradigm of modernity. Though Sartre does not provide such an account for the gaze, it will nevertheless be argued that, like Foucault, he is attentive to the hegemonic implications of vision. It will be shown that one of the important insights that Foucault shares with Sartre is that the gaze implies a lack of reciprocity. This point will lead to the next task which will be to show that the thought of Sartre and Foucault is ethically motivated by the fact that social relations entail the closing off of possibilities for certain individuals or groups. Although an echo of Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative may be heard, it will be observed that both reject the possibility of a universal morality. Yet, it will be shown that the perspectives of Foucault and Sartre are motivated by an ethical ideal.

Before proceeding to analyze the role of the gaze in Sartre and Foucault, perhaps a few remarks regarding the interpretation that this chapter seeks to provide would be beneficial. According to Neil Levy, the gaze is one of the few points upon which attention has been paid to the

affinities between Foucault's work and Sartre's.⁶ True to Levy's observation, in section 4.4 (i) it will be shown that various commentators have observed parallels between Foucault and Sartre on this theme. In this section, the secondary literature will be presented in a manner by which the various commentaries can complement one another and, at the same time, allow the analyses in the two subsequent sections of this chapter to fill out some of the arguments that commentators have presented. Of equal importance, the analysis provided in section 4.4 (i) will lead into another important affinity between Foucault and Sartre. Specifically, in section 4.4 (ii), it will be shown that the idea that the gaze entails a lack of reciprocity reveals an important insight in Foucault and Sartre. Though both argue that absolute reciprocity will never result from a universal morality, at the same time, in the thought of Sartre and Foucault there is an ethical impetus that relates to the existence of non-reciprocal relations.

4.2 The Sartrean Gaze

(i) The Second and Real Limit to Freedom

Towards the end of the preceding chapter it was noted that one of the limits which Sartre attributes to freedom in *L'être et le néant* is freedom itself.⁷ The problematic nature of this limit was discussed. In what follows, it will be argued that the second limit to freedom that Sartre recognizes is, for all intents and purposes, the real limit.

In part three of *L'être et le néant* Sartre acknowledges that up to this point in the investigation human reality has been described from the standpoints of negation and the cogito. In other words, it has been illustrated in light of the nothingness of the being-for-itself, and the being-for-itself's relation to the being-in-itself. According to Sartre, an ontological description would be impoverished if it did not address the existence of others. Though the likes of Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger have

⁶ Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 177n5.

⁷ As discussed in Chapter Three, Sartre explains one of the limits to freedom as follows: "cela signifie qu'on ne saurait trouver à ma liberté d'autres limites qu'elle même ou, si l'on préfère, que nous sommes pas libres de cesser d'être libres" (EN 494).

recognized that the self is related to the other, they have not, in the eyes of Sartre, explained this relation on the plane of being. Thus, Sartre seeks to remedy this deficiency by providing an explanation that illustrates the phenomenon of the existence of the other.

To fulfill this task, he provides the example of a peeping Tom. He asks one to imagine that moved by jealousy, curiosity, or vice one is looking through a keyhole (EN 305). As one observes the sight behind the door one is engrossed with the spectacle. Accordingly, consciousness is a direct awareness of the scene and an indirect awareness of itself as observing the spectacle. Yet, all of a sudden, one hears footsteps. What does this mean? With this example, Sartre introduces a new dimension of self-awareness, and a third region of being. Caught in the act, the peeping Tom becomes aware that his self is an object of consciousness for the other, he recognizes himself as a being-for-others.

Prior to the gaze, the peeping Tom was a pure freedom. However, upon being seen by the other, his freedom takes on a new dimension. The peeping Tom realizes that he is being gazed-upon and judged in terms of how the other sees the situation. According to Sartre, within the gaze of the other one loses control of one's situation in that "*je ne suis plus maître de la situation*" (EN 311). One is no longer master of one's situation for the reason that from the gaze of the other one learns that one has a foundation, an outside, or a nature (EN 306-307, 309). One's original fall occurs within the gaze, since one learns not what one is – for example, as an authentic being-for-itself (or a pure freedom) – but how the other sees one (EN 309). Sartre states that "on a dit depuis longtemps qu'autrui m'apprenait qui je suis", and explains:

par le surgissement de l'Autre apparaissent certaines déterminations que je *suis* sans les avoir choisies. Me voici, en effet, Juif ou Aryen, beau ou laid, manchot, etc. Tout cela, je le suis *pour l'autre*, sans espoir d'appréhender ce sens que j'ai *dehors* ni à plus forte raison de le modifier (EN 321, 581).

It is in the gaze of the other that one realizes that one is a perverted peeping Tom, a Jew or an Aryan, handsome or ugly. As aptly put by Neil Levy, "nature, essence, being – all those ontological

categories which for Sartre represent the opposite of freedom – come to inhabit the for-itself due to the simple presence of the Other”.⁸

The gaze brings a factual limit to freedom in that it objectifies the gazed upon’s freedom. The gaze fixes one’s possibilities, as how one is seen is not necessarily how one has chosen to be (*EN* 316). According to Sartre, in the gaze of the other, one has two options: either one can attempt to see himself as an object for the other, or one can assert his subjectivity and render the other as an object. Needless to say, only one individual will be able to declare his subjectivity and, as a consequence, this individual will be able to objectively fashion the other’s freedom. To this point Sartre explains:

Je suis possédé par autrui; le regard d’autrui façonne mon corps dans sa nudité, le fait naître, le sculpte, le produit comme il *est*, le voit comme je ne le verrai jamais. Autrui détient un secret: le secret de ce que je suis. Il me fait être et, par cela même, me possède (*EN* 413).

As described by Thomas R. Flynn, "in 'objectifying' its referent, the Sartrean gaze alienates and dominates".⁹ Indeed, Flynn’s description rings true: the other sees one in a way that one never totally sees oneself. Nevertheless, one will learn what one is through the other’s gaze. In light of this alienating and objectifying relation "le conflit", assumes Sartre, "est le sens originel de l’être-pour-autrui" (*EN* 413).

Because one does not live alone in the world, but with others Sartre, explains that "être-en-situation" is a real characteristic of the other (*EN* 339). Yet, this idea of being-in-situation seemingly calls into question the project of authentic freedom. Recall that authenticity implies the acknowledgment that because one has no essence or nature, one is obliged to perpetually make one’s existence anew (*EN* 70). All the same, if one learns, in the gaze of the other, of having an essence, then how is one supposed to constantly make or create oneself?

⁸ Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 78.

⁹ Thomas R. Flynn, 'Foucault and the Eclipse of Vision', in *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, edited by David Michael Levin, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 275. This point will be further discussed in section 4.4 of this chapter.

As observed in the previous chapter, Thomas W. Busch explains that in *L'être et le néant* Sartre never consistently holds together the concepts of the subject as pure freedom and the subject's debt to its situation. Busch gets to the heart of this matter by bringing to light that Sartre adopts a "dangerous tool" for his ontological description of the subject: Husserl's phenomenology.¹⁰ Because Husserlian phenomenology is deeply indebted to the tradition of the cogito, Busch explains that Sartre appeals to a vision of subjectivity that undermines his commitment to the concept of the situation.

To expand upon Busch's critique, it can be seen that, on the one hand, the freedom of the being-for-itself is so intimately related to consciousness that literally nothing ties it down: it is absolutely free, a pure freedom. Yet, on the other, because the being-for-itself exists in a situation, its existence is inevitably linked to the other. The problematic nature of the being-for-itself as a pure freedom originates from *La transcendance de l'ego* and *L'imaginaire*, as in these early works, Sartre is so focused on describing the inner workings of consciousness that he fails to seriously consider, until part three of *L'être et le néant*, the fact that one's engagement in the world takes place in a social world that is observable by others. Although Dominic LaCapra describes the equivocation between the concepts of pure freedom and situation as one of the paradoxes of *L'être et le néant*,¹¹ these notions are not paradoxical inasmuch as they are a blatant contradiction. Simply put, if one exists in a world of others, and if one learns of having an essence from the other, then how can one ever exist as a pure freedom, as an authentic being? In light of the idea of "le regard", it appears that the being-for-itself is not as free as Sartre, at times, argues.

It can be noted that Sartre's discussion of "le regard" is indebted to the master-slave dialectic of Hegel, and possibly Alexandre Kojève's reading of Hegel.¹² Sartre incorporates the Hegelian idea

¹⁰ Busch, 'Jean-Paul Sartre and Judith Butler', 45.

¹¹ LaCapra, *A Preface to Sartre*, 128.

¹² Bruce Baugh explains: "there is no good evidence that Sartre attended Kojève's lectures, and some evidence that he did not. Kojève states that Sartre did not attend his celebrated lecture course in the 1930s, and Simone de Beauvoir makes the same claim; nor does Sartre's name appear on the list of auditors. It is certainly possible that Sartre read the important chapter on master and slave when it appeared in *Mesures* (January 1939), but Sartre uses Lefebvre and

that the self desires to master another self.¹³ Yet, as opposed to Hegel, and his concept of *Geist*, Sartre does not provide an in-depth historical explanation for conflict -- it is simply taken for granted. Moreover, Sartre does not entertain the possibility that human relations can move beyond such a state of disharmony. Bruce Baugh points out that unlike Kojève, Sartre does not see the master-slave dialectic moving from antagonism to reconciliation.¹⁴ “By contrast”, Baugh states that “Sartre argues that reciprocal recognition is impossible, because of the irreducible plurality of consciousness”.¹⁵ As Baugh explains, there is no common ground that would enable the subject and the other to exist on the same level.¹⁶ All the same, the postulation that antagonism is a central tenet of human existence is an explanation that begs a further elaboration than an explanation regarding the irreducible plurality of subjects.

(ii) *La force des choses*

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Sartre's erstwhile colleague and friend – and perhaps Sartre's most astute critic – argues that freedom does not make sense without the concept of a field of meaningful possibilities. Sartre, in the eyes of Merleau-Ponty, fails to recognize the presence of an “intermonde” – “histoire, symbolisme, vérité à faire”.¹⁷ In other words, Sartre does not see individuals as social actors who share a common historical stage. Because man is the site where all meaning arises,

Guterman's terminology rather than Kojève's, and their *Morceaux choisis de Hegel* is the source of all of Sartre's citations of Hegel in *L'être et le néant*. ... Nor was the picture of the master-slave dialectic as a 'struggle to the death' unique to Kojève; Wahl had earlier used the phrase, as had Alain, and Sartre had read them both” (Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism*, New York and London: Routledge, 2003, 98-99).

¹³ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A.V. Miller, Oxford, New York, Toronto, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1977, 111-119.

¹⁴ Baugh, *French Hegel*, 99.

¹⁵ Baugh, *French Hegel*, 99.

¹⁶ Baugh, *French Hegel*, 99.

¹⁷ (Merleau-Ponty, *Les aventures de la dialectique*, 269). It should be added that Merleau-Ponty's critique is intended for Sartre's *Les communistes et la paix*. All the same, as Simone de Beauvoir convincingly argues, Merleau-Ponty focuses on aspects of Sartre's philosophy circa *L'être et le néant*, and fails to account for the refinements that Sartre's thought undergoes (see de Beauvoir, 'Merleau-Ponty and Pseudo-Sartreanism', in *The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*, edited by Jon Stewart, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1998, 448-491).

historical conditioning, or things in the social world, never structure or influence the projects of Sartrean individuals. Keeping with the analogy of the stage, it can be seen that each actor -- stripped of any social and historical roles -- desires to make the stage his own. What results is a free-for-all between competing actors without a ground that structures their experience in a common or a situational way.

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to flesh out the precise influence that Merleau-Ponty had on Sartre,¹⁸ it is pertinent to note that post-*L'être et le néant* Sartre's thought is more sensitive to social and historical conditioning. Later in life, admitting to the embarrassment of his early thought,¹⁹ Sartre acknowledges that he failed to account for the power of "«la force des choses»", and explains:

en fait, j'aurais dû commencer à découvrir cette force des choses dès *L'être et le néant* parce qu'on m'avait déjà, à l'époque, fait soldat alors que je ne voulais pas l'être. J'avais donc déjà fait l'expérience de quelque chose qui n'était pas ma liberté et qui me gouvernait du dehors.²⁰

Sartre recounts that after the war he recognized the full experience of society, and states: "ainsi, je commençais à découvrir la réalité de la situation de l'homme parmi les choses, que j'ai appelée «l'être-du-monde»".²¹ Although antagonism will still play a large role in Sartre's thought, it will evolve into an account that pays close attention to the circumstances of history and society.

As early as 1947, Sartre (while attempting to fulfill his promise at the end of *L'être et le néant* to formulate an ethics) was starting to rethink his thought along the lines of the idea of "l'être-du-

¹⁸ For a more detailed account of the relation between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty see *The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*. Specifically, Monika Langer, 'Sartre and Merleau-Ponty: A Reappraisal'; Thomas R. Flynn, 'Merleau-Ponty and the Critique of Dialectical Reason'; Mikel Dufrenne, 'Sartre and Merleau-Ponty'; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Sartre and Ultrabolshevism' (from *Adventures of the Dialectic*). It may be added that Sartre's ears would be stinging with Merleau-Ponty's criticisms right up until the writing of the *Critique de la Raison dialectique* which is undoubtedly his fullest response to objections levied by Merleau-Ponty.

¹⁹ Sartre states: "L'autre jour, j'ai relu la préface que j'avais écrite pour une édition de ces pièces -- *Les Mouches*, *Huis clos* et d'autres -- et j'ai été proprement scandalisé. J'avais écrit ceci: «*Quelles que soient les circonstances, en quelque lieu que ce soit, un homme est toujours libre de choisir s'il sera un traître ou non.*» Quand j'ai lu cela, je me suis dit: «*C'est incroyable: je le pensais vraiment!*»" (Sartre, 'Sartre par Sartre', in *Situations IX*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1972, 100).

²⁰ Sartre, 'Sartre par Sartre', 99.

²¹ Sartre, 'Sartre par Sartre', 99.

monde". For instance, in the unfinished *Cahiers pour une morale*, objectivity, as resulting from the gaze, is described as "le monde vu par un autre qui en tient la clé" (CM 16-17). Moreover, in the *Cahiers*, the gaze is explained as a haunting expression of society as a whole (CM 118). Its objectifying power is grounded in the collective totality of society:

Je suis *regardé* par autrui qui est en tant que membre de la société où je suis, l'émanation du Tout dont je fais partie et *que je suis*. Je me trouve en l'autre. Mais non pas à titre d'individu: à titre d'expression de la Totalité (CM 119).

The gaze does not rob one of one's situation, but depicts one as an expression of the social whole of which one is a part. By unlocking the secrets of a world that has been gazed-upon, the gaze reveals the way a society sees and depicts itself. Moreover, in portraying one in relation to this Totality, it is worthwhile to note that the gaze does not necessarily recognize individuality or difference. One of the initial works that exhibits Sartre's rethinking of the gaze along these lines is his biography of Jean Genet, *Saint Genet, comédien et martyr*.

(iii) The Social Gaze of *Saint Genet*

Susan Sontag describes *Saint Genet*²² as a "cancer" of a book for its sheer size and lack of traditional academic rigour.²³ She observes that this book simply plunges into the life of Jean Genet. Sartre certainly wastes no time in arriving at the defining moment of Genet's life. Twenty some odd pages into this work, Genet's original crisis is explained as occurring at the age of ten. Prior to this

²² *Saint Genet* is a pivotal work in the oeuvre of Sartre for several reasons: first, as Garry Gutting observes, the abstract ontological categories employed by Sartre in *L'être et le néant* are not always adequate or consistent with his phenomenological descriptions of man-in-the-world. According to Judith Butler, by historicizing his earlier ontological schematism, Sartre, in his biographical inquiries, remedies this deficiency. In *Saint Genet* one does not find an abstract formulation of the subject in terms of consciousness and nothingness. As Busch observes: "what is especially striking in *Saint Genet* is the change of vocabulary to emphasize passivity". Indeed, in *Saint Genet* the vocabulary associated with the concept of pure freedom in *L'être et le néant* is nowhere to be found. Instead, as R.D. Laing and D.G. Cooper explain, what is discovered in this work is an increasingly explicit and systematic concern with the relation between the individual person, and the groups, institutions, and class to which he belongs. Finally, it is not for nothing that Martin Jay describes *Saint Genet* as one of the central texts in the anti-visual discourse of twentieth century French thought (see respectively Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 150-151; Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, 167; Thomas W. Busch, *The Power of Consciousness and the Force of Circumstances in Sartre's Philosophy*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990, 48; R.D. Laing and D.G. Cooper, *Reason and Violence*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1971, 16-17).

²³ Susan Sontag, 'Sartre's Saint Genet', in *Against Interpretation*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966, 93.

decisive moment, Genet led a life of innocence. However, one fateful day, this naïve existence is abruptly brought to an end. In a passage describing little Genet playing in the kitchen, Sartre writes:

Pris la main dans le sac: quelqu'un est entré qui le regarde. Sous ce regard l'enfant revient à lui. Il n'était encore personne, il devient tout à coup Jean Genet. Il se sent aveuglant, assourdissant: il est un phare, une sonnette d'alarme qui n'en finit pas de carillonner. Qui est Jean Genet? Dans un moment tout le village le saura ... Seul, l'enfant l'ignore; il continue dans la peur et la honte son tintamarre de réveille-matin. Soudain

*... un mot vertigineux
Venu du fond du monde abolit le bel ordre ...*

Une voix déclare publiquement: «Tu es un voleur.» Il a dix ans (SG 23).

Previously, little Genet inhabited a world where he was led to believe that "son âme était blanche" (SG 13). He himself could not see this fact but took the grownups' word for it: "tout nous vient d'autrui même l'innocence" (SG 13). Just as Genet learned from the other that his soul was white, so too on this fateful day does he discover, courtesy of the gaze, that he is evil and a thief.

As mentioned, whereas the situation in *L'être et le néant* is described as something to be mastered, in *Saint Genet* this rhetoric is toned down. Instead, in stressing submission, one finds Sartre providing descriptions such as the following:

par le regard qui l'a surpris, par le doigt qui l'a montré, par la voix qui l'a nommé voleur, la collectivité l'a voué au Mal. On l'attendait (SG 36).

Sartre recounts the host of social structures that were lying in wait for Genet. Genet lives in a society that has an emphasis on property and ownership. He himself has nothing: he is an orphan who does not know his real parents, and has been loaned to foster parents by the public authorities. Because he lives in a society where "on *est* façonné par ce qu'on *a*", Genet desires to have in order to be (SG 16-17). He steals to be like "*les autres*" (SG 21). Yet, on the day that he is caught stealing, he discovers the flaw in his child-like logic.

On this fateful day, "Genet apprend ce qu'il *est objectivement*" (SG 24). Genet learns that he is a thief, and this transition determines his entire life: "voleur, Genet s'attendra comme les autres l'attendent, avec *leur* attente; prévisible pour autrui, il prétendra se prévoir" (SG 24, 42-43). Visible

to others as a thief, Genet internalizes this essence and becomes the thief that he is.²⁴ The realization that one is a thief, as argued by Sartre, must come from the other, as one is not born a thief, since there is no such thing as an innate nature of thiefhood.²⁵ One can only be a thief within the context of the social, since the idea of thief is:

d'origine sociale et suppose qu'on ait préalablement défini la Société, le régime de la propriété, un code, un appareil judiciaire et un système éthique des relations entre les personnes (SG 43).

These structures, enable the word thief to become crystalized, and as a consequence, enable the thief to be visible, and constructed by the social realm. In one example, Sartre writes:

Voici un homme que deux flics entraînent, je demande: «Qu'a-t-il fait?» On me répond: «C'est un voleur». ... Sur-le-champ j'oublie le mot: je vois, je touche, je respire un voleur; je jouis par tous les sens de cette substance secrète: le crime. Sans doute je n'ai pas assisté au vol, mais qu'importe! Les vêtements poussiéreux et déchirés du coupable (il est tombé en voulant fuir, on l'a battu) contrastent avec la mise décente des assistants, avec ma propre tenue: ils me donnent à voir que cet homme n'est pas dans l'ordre (SG 43).

It does not matter that the individual in the custody of the police is a man about whom one knows nothing, or that the look on his face expresses a state of daze "(on l'a plus qu'à demi assommé)", of fear "(que va-t-on me faire?)", of anger "(ils m'ont fait mal!)", of shame "(tous ces gens qui crient en me regardant!)", he is seen as a flesh-and-blood thief: an object that disturbs the order of things (SG 44). What is important is that the system of property, the legal code, the justice system, and the ethical system enable the thief to be visible: these apparatuses authorize the expression of the thief as an emanation of the totality of which he is a part.

The reason for how these social structures come into being is explained by Sartre through a Manichaeian account. Manichaeian or the right-thinking man perpetuates the myth of good and evil in the world. Because goodness for him is not equated with the absence of evil, but with its presence, he must see it in the world. In carrying out this task, Sartre argues that this individual seeks shelter

²⁴ The idea that the gaze can be internalized will be further discussed in section 4.4.

²⁵ Here Sartre is possibly borrowing from Simone de Beauvoir's idea that one is not born a woman but becomes a woman, see Simone de Beauvoir, *Le deuxième sexe: I. Les faits et les mythes, II. L'expérience vécue*, Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1949.

in the positive aspect of being -- he wants history to be static and repetitious, and to define his existence in this manner. At the same time, he attempts to suppress the negative expression of being -- the reality that history does not stop, and existence is fluid. Try as he may to sever the other half of his existence, the right-thinking man cannot escape its sway, and as a consequence:

il se définira étroitement par les traditions, par l'obéissance, par l'automatisme du Bien et nommera *tentation* tout ce grouillement vague et vivant qui est encore lui-même, mais un lui-même sauvage, libre, extérieur aux limites qu'il s'est tracées (SG 30).

By promoting and enforcing the good as destiny, he projects his otherness, the freedom that still swarms in himself, unto others. According to Joseph S. Catalano, "the just need Genet and other subhumans to embody evil, so that they become in their own eyes essential good precisely by their efforts in containing, punishing, and eliminating the evil that is subhumanity".²⁶ The just, or those individuals committed to the good will always see those who are different from them, as subhuman and other. Sartre argues that the ethics which results from this Manichaeian definition of life is one which -- for the sake of utility -- repetitiously brings into play different guises of the binary opposites of good and evil. As it will be observed, what results is the promotion of the average and the suppression of difference.

A prime consequence of this specious reasoning, argues Sartre, is that a society comes to see and to depict itself through "la connaissance scientifique" and, as a consequence, with respect to an idea of delinquency:

elle se voit, elle se décrit, elle voit dans le voleur un de ses innombrables produits; elle l'explique par des facteurs généraux. Quand elle a fini son travail, il ne reste plus rien de lui. La conscience collective se rassure et le délinquant, double mystifié, vaincu dans son corps et dans son âme, s'engloutit dans l'Océan des moyennes (SG 454).

Scientific knowledge should be understood as what Sartre terms variously as analytical or bourgeois reason. Deriving from the seventeenth-century, analytical reason is, as Flynn explains, in Sartre's

²⁶ Joseph S. Catalano, 'THE LOOK: The Making and Unmasking of the Human', unpublished paper presented to the meeting of the *North American Sartre Society* in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario at Wilfrid Laurier University, September 2000.

eyes, static, atemporal and formal.²⁷ According to Sartre, when an offence, such as a theft, is committed it is generalized and integrated into statistics by the likes of criminologists, psychiatrists, and sociologists whose function is to eliminate the delinquent, by drowning him away in an ocean of averages, and explaining his actions as normal -- "le voleur, loin de modifier par ses vols la moyenne *normale* de la criminalité, contribue à la maintenir; on ne vole pas contre la statistique" (SG 453-454). In the moral society of Manichaeism, the thief's thefts do not modify the normal rate of criminality; rather, the thief, as a normal by-product of social dissimulation, contributes to maintaining it: "voler, c'est «obéir à l'ordre habituel»" (SG 454). Because this society guarantees the existence of the good, the thief (or any other delinquent) is simply a normal expression of the evil which the collective mind has already decided exists.

Sartre argues that "«normal», «régulier»: ces mots recouvrent et dissimulent un passage du fait au droit" (SG 559). The fact is that a society describes itself along the lines of a specific morality and, in light of this unquestionable fact, sees itself as having the right to establish social apparatuses that will assure the visibility of its already determined outlook. What results, in the words of Sartre, is that the likes of:

avocats, juges, psychiatres voient tout le visible et rien d'autre que le visible: ils atteignent le crime dans son objectivité (SG 454).

The delinquent is objectively seen as something to be punished, as he is immoral. What is not seen however is that he is a product of an arbitrary system – a system that has no ultimate justification for its existence. With these techniques, the delinquent is a "double mystifié" in the sense that externally, he is visible to society as an other, and at the same time, he internally sees himself as this other. The social gaze, as perpetuated by a Manichaean outlook, reduces individuals to the status of pure objects that have their possibilities and their future severed. A method that abides by these lines, Sartre lambastes elsewhere:

²⁷ Flynn states: "Put somewhat crudely, the analytic sums but does not totalize; it is blind to social wholes" (Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason: VOLUME ONE: Toward an Existentialist Theory of History*, 99).

s'indentifie à la Terreur par son refus inflexible de *différencier*, son but est l'assimilation totale au prix du moindre effort. Il ne s'agit pas de réaliser l'intégration du divers en tant que tel, en lui gardant son autonomie relative, mais de le supprimer (QM 48).

As observed, in *Saint Genet*, Sartre elaborates upon the idea of how a society gazes upon itself. At this point, let us proceed and trace this theme in Foucault.

4.3 The Foucauldian Gaze

(i) Man Becomes an Object

Jay observes that in Foucault's first major work, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, "the emphasis of the sinister implications of ocularcentrism is strikingly apparent".²⁸ In what follows, it will be shown that closely related to this threatening insight is the idea that the subject's freedom is rendered into an object.

Near the beginning of *Histoire de la folie*,²⁹ Foucault declares that though leprosy disappeared from the Western world at the end of the Middle Ages, the formulas of exclusion associated with this disease would lie dormant until being awoken in the mid-seventeenth century, specifically 1656, the year that a royal edict in France led to the creation of the original Hôpital général in Paris. Far from being a medical establishment, the Hôpital général is, in the words of Foucault:

plutôt une structure semi-juridique, une sorte d'entité d'administrative qui, à côté des pouvoirs déjà constitués, et en dehors des tribunaux, décide, juge et exécute (HF 60).

Originally established to suppress beggary, this institution -- which would propagate throughout France -- is a workhouse of forced labour that is the result of the community targeting those whom

²⁸ Jay, 'In the Empire of the Gaze', in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, 180.

²⁹ It is pertinent to note that this section will engage with *L'histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, the second edition (1972) of the original edition of *Folie et déraison: l'histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1962). The second edition was printed with a new preface and two further articles appended. For an account of the differences between the two French editions, and an account of how the English translation – *Madness and Civilization* – translates less than half of *Folie et déraison* (it may be added that numerous footnotes are missing in the English translation), see Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason*, Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 70n.

it deems socially useless, those who cross the frontiers of "l'ordre bourgeois" (HF 85). In the eyes of Foucault, the one thing that is clear about the function of this institution is that:

l'Hôpital général ne s'apparente à aucune idée médicale. Il est une instance de l'ordre, de l'ordre monarchique et bourgeois qui s'organise en France à cette même époque (HF 61).

In lieu of actual medical procedures, these hôpitaux treat their patients, "pauvres, vagabonds, correctionnaires et «têtes aliénées»", for the ills of the community -- moral abeyance or idleness (HF 16).

It is important to bear in mind that, as Peter Dews points out, one of the defining concerns in the thought of Foucault is the emergence, expansion and consolidation of apparatuses of administrative intervention in, and control over, the social world that, as noted in Chapter One, relate to pastoral power.³⁰ To this point, Foucault argues that the movement towards confinement in the seventeenth century initiates a major role in the history of reason. The social horizon that attempts to cure the poor by the remedy of labour, at the same time, presents the possibility that the mad, by virtue of their inability to work in an orderly fashion, can eventually be differentiated from the rest of the confined population.

Foucault recounts that in 1780, in a curious play of history, as an epidemic spread throughout Paris a mistrust was underway that paralleled the suspicion of places that once housed lepers. In this historical instance, the houses of confinement were suspected of breeding contagious diseases. With the specific case of Bicêtre, although no cause that would confirm such a suspicion was ever discovered, the door was opened for the medical establishment to enter. The appearance of the medical expert, according to Foucault, was not signified by this individual being an "arbitre" – "pour faire le partage entre ce qui était le crime et ce qui était la folie", but as a "gardien" (HF 378). The doctor's original role was to observe those inside the houses of confinement, in order to protect those on the outside who perceived a danger to be lurking within these institutions (HF 378).

³⁰ Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory*, London and New York: Verso, 1987, 145. The idea of pastoral power, in conjunction with Foucault's concept of bio-power in the *Histoire de la sexualité*, will be discussed further in the following chapter.

That observation would eventually become a defining characteristic of the treatment of the mad is what Foucault recognizes as a common historical view that tells a humanist narrative of progress. All the same, Foucault states:

ce qu'on appelle traditionnellement «progrès» vers l'acquisition du statut médical de la folie n'a été possible en fait que par un étrange retour (HF 378).

This strange regression relates to a paranoia, previously associated with leprosy, being attributed to the mad. According to Foucault, an idea of liberation is typically associated with the work of Philippe Pinel and Samuel Tuke. Yet, in reassessing the work of Tuke, he argues:

l'asile ne sanctionne plus la culpabilité du fou, c'est vrai; mais il fait plus, il l'organise; il l'organise pour le fou comme conscience de soi, et rapport non réciproque au gardien (HF 505).

Admitting that it is true that the mad were no longer physically punished, he argues that the asylum, as created by Tuke, established a sense of self-awareness in the mad in which they became conscious of their guilt and, thus, were able to recognize the necessity that they had to be observed and manipulated by a keeper. As Gary Gutting explains, though Tuke's asylum did not advocate the “brutal physical constraints” of the houses of confinement, it was in other ways more “manipulative” and “dominating”: “never before has the madman been controlled by the manipulation of his own feelings of responsibility and guilt. Never before had he been recruited as his own keeper”.³¹

Foucault argues that the psychology of madness which would evolve from the developments in the asylum would concentrate on seeing the acts of the mad: “Elle n'est responsable que de cette partie d'elle-même qui est visible. ... La folie n'existe plus comme être vu” (HF 507). Acts of madness must be visible in order that they can be judged. The methods of observation and classification would evolve into a system of surveillance and judgement that rested upon the authority of the medical figure. The irony of these methods is that they would put the medical expert front and centre in the asylum. In the eyes of Foucault, this individual is present as a sage who

³¹ Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason*, 93.

imposes a positivism that is -- at best -- of a dubious scientific objectivity, and relates more to justice and morality (*HF* 524).

Georges Canguilhem, Foucault's doctoral supervisor, explains that while Foucault brings considerable documentation into play in *Histoire de la folie*, he also employs, from beginning to end, a dialectic vigour that comes in part from his sympathy with the Hegelian vision of history and from his familiarity with the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.³² Baugh elaborates that the Hegelian dimension in *Histoire de la folie* is most evident in Foucault's use of Hegel's dialectic of master, slave, and work.³³ As Baugh brings to light, in the eighteenth century reforms of Tuke the mad person's subjectivity is worked over (theoretically and practically) by doctors, lawyers, and institutions, and also the mad person works on himself, producing his madness in objective form and internalizing his objectification in the eyes of his keepers.³⁴ Baugh states that "the whole framework here derives from Hegel, with the mad person taking the role of the slave, the doctor that of the master, and work being performed, not on a material object, but on the mad person's subjectivity".³⁵ Yet, Baugh notes that more like Sartre (or Jean Hyppolite) than Hegel, Foucault makes self-objectification an alienation of subjectivity: "particularly when, as in the case of the mad, the slave must work according to an Other's reasons".³⁶

Baugh adds that Foucault evokes an idea of *Paradise Lost* which forms the horizon of *Histoire de la folie*, since Foucault sees a submission of freedom to laws that are those of both morality and reality, and a penance for the Fall that expelled man from Paradise and forced him to

³² (Georges Canguilhem, 'Report from Mr. Canguilhem on the Manuscript Filed by Mr. Michel Foucault, Director of the Institute Français of Hamburg, in Order to Obtain Permission to Print His Principal Thesis for the Doctor of Letters', in *Foucault and His Interlocutors*, 26). It should be noted that when Canguilhem refers to a dialectic vigour in Foucault, he means that Foucault makes use of the idea of opposition. Foucault certainly does not subscribe to the Hegelian view that this opposition will lead to an higher order.

³³ Baugh, *French Hegel*, 163.

³⁴ Baugh, *French Hegel*, 163.

³⁵ Baugh, *French Hegel*, 163.

³⁶ Baugh, *French Hegel*, 164.

earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.³⁷ Along this theme of *Paradise Lost*, Foucault states: "on sait bien depuis longtemps que l'homme ne commence pas avec la liberté mais avec la limite et la ligne de l'infranchissable".³⁸ This fact is certainly exhibited in *Histoire de la folie*, as Foucault states that "ce n'est pas d'une *libération* des fous qu'il s'agit en cette fin du XVIIIe siècle; mais d'une *objectivation du concept de leur liberté*" (HF 533). Madness, in the words of Foucault, "enferme l'homme dans l'objectivité", since he becomes visible to himself and to the expert as the object that he is (HF 542). Foucault explains that as the discipline of psychology would develop, it would reveal one of the obscure truths that have coloured all nineteenth century reflections on man:

c'est que le moment essentiel de l'objectivation, en l'homme, ne fait qu'une avec le passage à la folie. La folie est la forme la plus pure, la forme principale et première du mouvement par lequel la vérité de l'homme passe du côté de l'objet et devient accessible à une perception scientifique. ... Celle-ci, comme passage spontané à l'objectivité, est moment constitutif dans le devenir-objet de l'homme (HF 544).

Madness initiates a nineteenth century truth -- the idea that man, through scientific perception, can become an object of study. This theme reappears in Foucault's next major work.

(ii) The Gaze of the Human Sciences

The very title of Foucault's next major study, *Naissance de la clinique: une archéologie du regard médical*, suggests an highly specialized text. Yet, like all of Foucault's works, there is more to the title than meets the eye. According to Alan Sheridan, this work is an "extended postscript" to *Histoire de la folie*, since historically the first half of *Naissance de la clinique* overlaps with the last section of *Histoire de la folie*.³⁹ Jay explains that this description is especially apt if it acknowledges that the concentration on the complicity of visual domination in this work, and the fact that the

³⁷ Baugh, *French Hegel*, 164.

³⁸ Foucault, 'La folie, l'absence d'oeuvre', appendix to *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, 578.

³⁹ Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, 37.

disciplinary power of *le regard* is more explicitly underlined in *Naissance de la clinique* than in *Histoire de la folie*.⁴⁰

Naissance de la clinique begins with Foucault stating: "Il est question dans ce livre de l'espace, du langage et de la mort; il est question du regard" (NC V). In typical fashion, Foucault fixes a historical date that is pivotal for his study. In this case it is the period that modern medicine itself recognizes as its date of birth: "les dernières années du XVIIIe siècle" (NC VIII). This period is characterized by a return to the level of the perceived. In the eyes of Foucault, "au début du XIXe siècle, les médecins ont décrit ce qui, pendant des siècles, était resté au-dessous du seuil du visible et de l'énonçable" (NC VIII). As argued by Foucault, doctors did not begin to perceive once again, but rather the relation between the visible and invisible, a reference necessary to all concrete knowledge, changed its structure, and as a consequence: "entre les mots et les choses, une alliance nouvelle s'est nouée, faisant *voir et dire*" (NC VIII). A defining characteristic of this alliance is that "l'oeil devient le dépositaire et la source de la clarté" (NC IX). In fact, it is the gaze of the eye which provides the foundation of "l'individu dans sa qualité irréductible" (NC X).

Typically, it is taken for granted that the human body is the space of origin and of distribution of disease. Yet, this way of thinking of disease, is not, in Foucault's eyes, the only way disease has been thought of. Rather, this mode of reasoning: "coïncide avec la médecine du XIXe siècle et les privilèges accordés à l'anatomie pathologique": a period that is marked by "la suzeraineté du regard" (NC 2). Prior to this point, disease was explained along the lines of classificatory thought: a system of knowledge in which the human body is only the host of the disease, and disease was abstracted from the body and studied in light of the backdrop of the classificatory system. Flynn explains that "true to Aristotle's dismissal of any science of the singular, this medicine treated the disease, not the patient".⁴¹ At this point in history:

⁴⁰ Jay, 'In the Empire of the Gaze', 181.

⁴¹ Flynn, 'Foucault and the Eclipse of Vision', 276.

le regard du médecin ne s'adresse pas initialement à ce corps concret ... mais à des intervalles de nature, à des lacunes et à des distances, où apparaissent comme en négatif «les signes qui différencient une maladie d'une autre, la vraie de la fausse, la légitime de la bâtarde, la maligne de la bénigne»⁴² (NC 7).

The gaze of the doctor does not, as of yet, establish the individual, since the patient is abstracted from the equation. For a new medicine to come about, a clinical medicine dominated by the gaze, the codes of knowledge had to be transformed.

As explained by Foucault, following the French Revolution two great myths with opposing themes came together. On the one hand, the myth of a nationalized medical profession that is granted powers at the level of man's bodily health, similar to those exercised by the clergy over men's souls (NC 31). On the other, the myth that disease could be totally eradicated (NC 32). Though these myths were contradictory in the sense that the disappearance of disease would make the role of the doctor redundant, Foucault argues that these myths coalesced in a fashion whereby medicine became closely linked to the destiny of the state⁴³ which, in turn, engendered a knowledge of "*l'homme en santé*": "c'est-à-dire à la fois une expérience de *l'homme non malade*, et une définition de *l'homme modèle*" (NC 35). The field of medicine introduced a normative aspect that distributed advice on a healthy life and dictated standards for the physical and moral relations of the individual and the society in which he lived. Beginning in the nineteenth century, medicine was related to normality (NC 35).

Coinciding with this development -- "un phénomène de convergence entre les exigences de *l'idéologie politique* et celles de la *technologie médicale*" (NC 37) -- was the new requirements of a gaze that sought a permanent body of knowledge regarding the health of the population. Yet, this condition did not immediately come to fruition because of "l'absence d'un modèle nouveau, cohérent et unitaire pour la formation des objets, des perceptions et des concepts médicaux" (NC 51). Foucault explains that though the powers of "le regard médical" were starting to be recognized, at the same time, they had yet to be embedded within a clinical knowledge which could satisfy the new

⁴² In this passage Foucault is quoting Frier, see F. Frier, *Guide pour la conservation de l'homme*, Grenoble, 1789, 113.

⁴³ In the next chapter, in conjunction with Foucault's studies of bio-power and the arts of government, it will be shown that the state's destiny is of utmost importance for Foucault's thought.

conditions for this gaze (NC 51). This lack would not be fulfilled until the last years of the eighteenth century when "la clinique va être brusquement restructurée: détachée du contexte théorique où elle était née" (NC 62). The defining event that led to the formation of this new theoretical context was, according to Foucault, made possible with the opening up of a few corpses:

du jour où il fut admis que les lésions expliquaient les symptômes, et que l'anatomie pathologique fondait la clinique, il fallut bien convoquer une histoire transfigurée, où l'ouverture des cadavres, au moins à titre d'exigence scientifique, précédait l'observation, enfin positive, des malades; le besoin de connaître le mort devait exister déjà quand apparaissait le souci de comprendre le vif (NC 127).

Previously, in classificatory medicine, death signified not only the end of life, but the end of disease (NC 143). Yet for anatomo-clinical medicine, death provides the vantage point from which an understanding of life is made possible: "avec Bichat, le regard médical pivote sur lui-même et demande à la mort compte de la vie et de la maladie" (NC 149). Death enables the medical eye to see the illness spread before it, and this medical gaze – "le regard d'un oeil qui a vu la mort" – unties the knots of life (NC 138, 147). Foucault argues that only when death was integrated into the system of medical knowledge could the old Aristotelian law – "qui interdisait sur l'individu le discours scientifique" – be lifted⁴⁴ (NC 175).

The birth of the medical gaze in the nineteenth century is usually explained along the lines of doctors being free, for the first time in thousands of years, from theories and chimeras, and agreeing to approach the object of their experience with "la pureté d'un regard non prévenu" (NC 199). Yet, as Foucault painstakingly details, this new gaze, far from being pure, is the result of a reorganization of disease that is related to a new pattern of the visible and the invisible. As mentioned, the title *Naissance de la clinique: une archéologie du regard médical* lends the air of an highly specialized work. All the same, the conclusion of this work reveals that Foucault's sole interest is not in the field of medicine per se, as he states:

⁴⁴ Remarking on this point, Neil Levy explains: "Not that the individual is constituted as an object of medical knowledge by the mere fact of being looked at by the doctor; if this were so, 'man' would date back well beyond Aristotle. The eye that constitutes the object of knowledge is a particular eye ... This eye sees its object in terms of certain pre-theoretical presuppositions, or, more accurately, it is given in terms of an historical *a priori*" (Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 80).

Il restera sans doute décisif pour notre culture que le premier discours scientifique tenu par elle sur l'individu ait dû passer par ce moment de la mort. C'est que l'homme occidental n'a pu se constituer à ses propres yeux comme objet de science, il ne s'est pris à l'intérieur de son langage et ne s'est donné en lui et par lui une existence discursive qu'en référence à sa propre destruction: de l'expérience de la Dérison sont nées toutes les psychologies et la possibilité même de la psychologie; de la mise en place de la mort dans la pensée médicale est née une médecine qui se donne comme science de l'individu (NC 200-201).

Levy explains that this study is not a neutral chronicle of how, in a particular domain at a particular time, new objects came to replace old but, rather, it has a moral charge that relates to a new type of an object.⁴⁵ It has been noted that at the end of *Histoire de la folie*, Foucault argues that, towards the end the eighteenth century, the scientific perception that would evolve from the discipline of psychology is telling, since it reveals a truth that colours all nineteenth century contemplations on man: the idea that man can be an object of study. In *Naissance de la clinique*, Foucault reiterates this reasoning. He argues that medicine has such an importance in the constitution of the human sciences, since it concerns the being of man as an object of positive knowledge: the individual who, in the eyes of science, is both a subject and an object of his own knowledge (NC 201). The implications of the human sciences is an idea that receives a further elaboration in *Surveiller et punir*.

(iii) The Gaze and Power

The vivid description of the botched execution of Damians the regicide in the eighteenth century that Foucault documents at the beginning of *Surveiller et punir*, *Naissance de la prison* is certainly noteworthy. But perhaps not as memorable as the conclusion that this work will achieve. The simple idea that guides this study is: "la disparition des supplices" (SP 13). According to Foucault, in our present we do not dwell too much on the implications of this fact, and tend, perhaps too readily, to attribute it as signifying a process of "«humanisation»" (SP 13). Admitting that the division between the permitted and forbidden, as related to crime, has enjoyed a certain constancy from one century to another, Foucault, at the same time, recognizes:

⁴⁵ Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 81.

depuis que fonctionne le nouveau système pénal – celui défini par les grands codes du XVIIIe et du XIXe siècle –, un processus global a conduit les juges à juger autre chose que les crimes (*SP* 22, 27).

What does the disappearance of torture as a public spectacle have to do with judges judging something other than crimes?

Foucault recounts that in 1789 the chancellery of France responded to the petitions that were calling for the authorities to address the issues of torture and execution (*SP* 75). One of the main reasons cited for punishment without torture was the necessity to respect the "«humanité»" of man (*SP* 76). Although this reform movement may have had humanist aspirations, Foucault argues that its true objective was to set up a new economy of the power to punish (*SP* 83). Throughout the eighteenth century, this new strategy, under the banner of reform, operated with the following primary objectives:

faire de la punition et de la répression des illégalismes une fonction régulière, coextensive à la société; non pas moins punir, mais punir mieux; punir avec une sévérité atténuée peut-être, mais pour punir avec plus d'universalité et de nécessité; insérer le pouvoir de punir plus profondément dans le corps social (*SP* 84).

This method results in a new politics of the body (*SP* 105). Previously, in the system of the classical age, the body of the condemned man was the property of the king and thus the sovereign, through his power, left his mark on the guilty individual. However, with the new economy of power, the body of the condemned man is the property of society, "objet d'une appropriation collective et utile" (*SP* 111). According to Foucault, what is significant about this new economy is that the scaffold – "où le corps du supplicié était exposé à la force rituellement manifestée du souverain" – is replaced by "une grande architecture fermée, complexe et hiérarchisée qui s'intègre au corps même de l'appareil étatique" (*SP* 117).

Foucault argues that the movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century towards placing individuals in prisons was not exclusive to France, but was occurring throughout Europe and America. Closely related to this process was the formation of a policy of coercions that act upon and discipline the human body (*SP* 139). In the eyes of Foucault, though historians of ideas usually attribute the dream of "une société parfaite" to eighteenth century thinkers, there was a competing

project in the works: a military dream of society, related to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, to permanent coercions, to indefinitely progressive forms of training, and to "la docilité automatique", a dream of discipline par excellence (SP 171).

The function of modern discipline, according to Foucault, is to make individuals: "elle est la technique spécifique d'un pouvoir qui se donne les individus à la fois pour objets et pour instruments de son exercice" (SP 172). This objective is accomplished through three distinct but inter-related techniques: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and the examination. With hierarchical observation, "l'appareil disciplinaire parfait permettrait à un seul regard de tout voir en permanence" (SP 176). This technique implies a perfect eye that can see all and which, in turn, all gazes can be returned to. Normalizing judgement entails that individual behaviour becomes situated within a field of good and bad marks. The power of normalization imposes a homogeneity that, at the same time, individualizes in that it renders possible the fixing of differences by fitting them into one another. What results is the shading of all individual difference (SP 186). Finally, the examination combines the first two techniques, in the sense that through a normalizing gaze: "il établit sur les individus une visibilité à travers laquelle on les différencie et on les sanctionne" (SP 187). The idea that subjects are continually visible is what perpetuates disciplined individuals in their subjection.

A defining characteristic of the nineteenth century is the coming together of two different, but not incompatible projects which Foucault traces back to the leper: an historical figure from the *Histoire de la folie*⁴⁶ (SP 200). These projects relate to the space of exclusion and the technique of power that pertains to disciplinary partitioning. The idea that lepers should be treated as plague victims and therefore confined in a space of internment where they can be subjected to procedures of individualization is a concept that:

⁴⁶ This is an oddity, as Gutting notes that "it is striking that Foucault's books hardly ever refer to his previous works" (Gutting, 'Michel Foucault: A User's Manual', introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, 3).

a été opéré régulièrement par le pouvoir disciplinaire depuis le début du XIX^e siècle: l'asile psychiatrique, le pénitencier, la maison de correction, l'établissement d'éducation surveillée, et pour une part les hôpitaux (SP 201).

As argued by Foucault, authorities who exercise individual control in these areas abide by the double mode of binary division and branding -- "fou-non fou; dangereux-inoffensif; normal-anormal" -- and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution -- "qui il est; où il doit être; par quoi le caractériser, comment le reconnaître; comment exercer sur lui, de manière individuelle, une surveillance constante, etc." (SP 201). According to Foucault, in our present the mechanisms of power which are arranged around the abnormal individual are composed of these two forms. Moreover, Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon is the architectural figure of this composition.

Bentham's design for the Panopticon places a tower -- with wide windows all around -- at the centre of a circular enclosed lay out which is divided into cells that look out toward the tower. The principle of this design is to make visibility a trap, and to achieve this goal:

il suffit alors de placer un surveillant dans la tour centrale, et dans chaque cellule d'enfermer un fou, un malade, un condamné, un ouvrier ou un écolier (SP 201-202).

Yet, the supervisor does not even have to be physically present in the tower, as the presence of the tower itself will instill in the inmate "un état conscient et permanent de visibilité" (SP 202). The belief that someone is watching is enough to establish a real subjection from a fictitious relation. Force is not necessary to constrain inmates, as the automatic functioning of the gaze of the Panopticon instills in the inmates the observation of the regulations (SP 204). They become the bearers of the power situation which they themselves are caught up in. Foucault argues that this power of "un regard sans visage", as exemplified by Bentham's Panopticon, quickly spread throughout and transformed the social body.⁴⁷ Accordingly, he asks rhetorically: "Quoi d'étonnant

⁴⁷ Dews notes that "as Foucault's references, in *Discipline and Punish*, to 'this panoptic society of which incarceration is the omni-present armature' suggest, the description of the Panopticon is intended as far more than an account of one form of the exercise of power. It not only condenses the argument of *Discipline and Punish*, but may be seen as a summation of the analysis of modern forms of social administration which Foucault has been conducting ever since *Madness and Civilization*, combining the themes of a centralization, and an increasing efficiency of power with the theme of the replacement of overt violence by moralization. Power in modern societies is portrayed as essentially oriented towards the production of regimented, isolated, and self-policing subjects" (Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, 149-150).

si la prison ressemble aux usines, aux écoles, aux casernes, aux hôpitaux, qui tous ressemblent aux prisons?" (SP 229).

The techniques deriving from the penal institution that infiltrate the social body result in what Foucault terms variously as the "système carcéral" or "l'archipel carcéral" (SP 300, 305). The characteristics of this system are explained as follows: first, this "vaste dispositif" establishes a process that relates to the departure from the norm (SP 306-307). Second, it organizes "les «carrières disciplinaires»", as it assures, in the depths of the social body, the formation of delinquency on the basis of subtle illegalities (SP 307-308). Third, in what Foucault attributes as the most important effect of this system, he writes that "il parvient à rendre naturel et légitime le pouvoir de punir, à abaisser du moins le seuil de tolérance à la pénalité" (SP 308). Next, this system, "un mixte de légalité et de nature, de prescription et de constitution, la norme" (SP 310), has become so predominant that the judges of normality are everywhere: "Nous sommes dans la société du professeur-juge, du médecin-juge, de l'éducateur-juge, du «travailleur social»" (SP 311). It is upon these individuals that the universal reign of the normative is based, and this reign is so penetrating that it influences each individual's body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, and his achievements (SP 311). Fifth, the texture of the carceral society implies the capture of the body in its perpetual observation.

Foucault argues that we are in the age of "la justice «examinatoire»", and maintains that the carceral network is one of the armatures that made the human sciences, or knowable man, historically possible (SP 311-312). Admitting that the human sciences did not directly evolve from the prison, Foucault nevertheless argues that they did derive from the method of examination. "L'homme connaissable" is the object-effect of the domination-observation couplet. In other words, because man can be seen, he can be measured against the norm, and in turn, take his place in the grid that this measurement dictates. According to Foucault, although these mechanisms are intended to alleviate pain, to cure, and to comfort, they tend – like the prison – to exercise a power of normalization (SP 314).

In 1977, in reflecting upon his work, Foucault explains that though he scarcely ever used the word, he cannot help but think that in *Histoire de la folie* and *Naissance de la clinique* he was discussing nothing other than power (*DE II* 146). In light of the analysis in *Surveiller et punir*, it can be discerned that this explanation makes a lot of sense. As Dews explains, in *Surveiller et punir* the delineations of the connection between procedures of confinement and control and the emergence of the human sciences that are found in Foucault's earlier works achieve their definitive expression.⁴⁸ For instance, the examination which, in Foucault's eyes, "est au centre des procédures qui constituent l'individu comme effet et objet de pouvoir, comme effet et objet de savoir", coincides with the moment that the sciences of man became possible, as outlined in *Histoire de la folie* and *Naissance de la clinique* (*SP* 194, 195). As noted, typical of the examination is a normalizing gaze which establishes over individuals a visibility by which it is possible for these individuals to be judged and differentiated.

Foucault's idea of power is certainly a unique concept, and although he may be brief about what it is,⁴⁹ he is adamant about what power is not. He explains that power is not a group or institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subjection of the citizens to a given state (*HS* 121). Nor is it a mode of subjugation that has the form of a rule. Also, Foucault maintains that power should not be understood under the Marxist rubric of "un système général de domination exercée par un élément ou un groupe sur un autre" (*HS* 121). Foucault is keen to distance power from any theory that explains it as inert and something that can be possessed. Power, in the words of Foucault, "c'est le nom qu'on prête à une situation stratégique complexe dans une société donnée" (*HS* 123). Power is exercised, and the task, of what Foucault terms "une microphysique du pouvoir", is to acknowledge that power and knowledge directly imply one another, and analyze its movements and

⁴⁸ Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, 175.

⁴⁹ Flynn states that "given the major role that the concept plays in Foucault's genealogies, it is unfortunate that he offers no definition of 'power' as such" (Flynn, 'Foucault's Mapping of History', in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, 34).

struggles to determine the domains of knowledge that it implies (SP 31-33). To this point, with respect to the project in *Surveiller et punir*, Foucault explains:

on y traiterait du «corps politique» comme ensemble des éléments matériels et des techniques qui servent d'armes, de relais, de voies de communication et de points d'appui aux relations de pouvoir et de savoir qui investissent les corps humains et les assujettissent en en faisant des objets de savoir (SP 33).

One studies the relation between how knowledge (or discourse) is expressed through power and how these two result in control over bodies. In other words, one determines how power and knowledge render human subjects into objects of knowledge.

Although power furnishes Foucault's thought with a certain coherence, at the same time, it cannot help but be thought that this concept undermines the project of an aesthetics of existence. Power is so ubiquitous and penetrating that it is described as producing subjects – at one point the individual is explained as one of the prime effects of power (DE II 180). According to Dews, the nature of freedom which the late Foucault invokes seems to mark a particularly abrupt break with his earlier work, "where the subject ... is theorized as a construction of power and discourse".⁵⁰ Indeed, there is a rupture in Foucault's thought. Specifically, Foucault never addresses how one could make one's life a work of art within relations of power. One can intuit that Foucault is searching for an ethical orientation that does not relate to the dominating effects of the normalizing gaze, as the ethics of Antiquity is described as not relating to normalization (DE II 1203). But at the same time, in light of the faceless and normalizing gaze that observes and dominates, one cannot help but wonder about the validity of an aesthetics of existence if it does not address power: a defining characteristic, in the eyes of Foucault, of our present. The obvious question that a project of an aesthetics of existence raises is: if our present is defined by normalizing powers, what good is an ethics of Antiquity? Jon Simons explains that the basis of this confusion is that Foucault does not critically analyze his appeal to aesthetics or provide an analysis of the enmeshment of art in power relations.⁵¹ As it has been argued in the previous chapter, Foucault, instead, presents art as an

⁵⁰ Dews, 'The Return of the Subject in Late Foucault', *Radical Philosophy* 51, Spring 1989, 40.

⁵¹ Simons, *Foucault & the Political*, 79, 80.

exclusive sphere of freedom that is separate from the realms of the social and historical. A realm that his concept of power seemingly denies.

4.4 Wayward Eyes

(i) Affinities and Differences: The Gaze in Foucault and Sartre

Up to this point, the theme of the gaze has been traced in the thought of Sartre and Foucault. Prima facie, it can be detected that the gaze reflects the originality of each thinker's philosophy. Yet, as stated, the gaze is one of the few points upon which attention has been paid to the affinities between Foucault's work and Sartre's.⁵² In this section, the similarities, along with the differences, between Foucault and Sartre on this topic will be brought to light. In carrying out this task, the motive will be to discern why, as Levy notes, "for Foucault as much as for Sartre, objectification is our original fall, and this fall occurs by the agency of the Other's gaze".⁵³

Martin Jay explains that "vision has been accorded a special role in Western epistemology since the Greeks".⁵⁴ Vision, the noblest of the senses, has contributed more to knowledge than any other of the senses.⁵⁵ Jay observes that in French thought vision has been accorded a role of privilege:

whether in the theatrical spectacle of Louis XIV's court, the emphasis on clear and distinct ideas in Cartesian philosophy, the enlightenment project of the *philosophes*, or the visual phantasmagoria of the 'city of light', the ocularcentric character of French culture has been vividly apparent.⁵⁶

Yet, beginning with Henri Bergson, he argues that the French fascination with sight shifts towards emphasizing "its more problematic implications".⁵⁷ In a wide range of twentieth century French

⁵² Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 177n5.

⁵³ Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 80.

⁵⁴ Martin Jay, 'In the Empire of the Gaze: Foucault and the Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-century French Thought', in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, 175.

⁵⁵ Jay, 'In the Empire of the Gaze', 175.

⁵⁶ Jay, 'In the Empire of the Gaze', 177.

⁵⁷ Jay, 'In the Empire of the Gaze', 178.

thinkers, Jay observes that there can be found an expressed hostility towards sight. Sartre and Foucault are two of the thinkers who Jay identifies as expressing this attitude. He explains that Sartre was hostile to any redemptive notion of vision, and notes that through the long course of his remarkable career, Sartre relentlessly demonized *le regard*.⁵⁸ Although Foucault expressed a keen interest in the history of visual representation, Jay states that "his work provided ample indications of his wariness about its innocence".⁵⁹

One obvious affinity of Foucault to Sartre that commentators have recognized concerns the gaze as illustrated in *Naissance de la clinique*. David Macey observes that this work's subtitle – *une archéologie du regard médical* – introduces a further dimension to this textual labyrinth, since he argues that this study is clearly no straightforward essay in the history of medicine, as even though Foucault had little philosophical sympathy for Sartre, "it is impossible for any French writer to employ the expression 'the gaze' [*le regard*] without making tacit reference to a central chapter of *L'être et le néant*'s discussion of the question of being-for-others: '*Le Regard*'".⁶⁰ According to Jay, Sartre, to be sure, is never mentioned in *Naissance de la clinique*, "but it is difficult to avoid hearing echoes of his chilling description of the alienating and objectifying power of the Other's gaze in Foucault's historical account of the rise of a specific medical practice in the classical age".⁶¹

To expand upon Macey's and Jay's observations relating to a Sartrean echo in *Naissance de la clinique*, we may recall that in *L'être et le néant* Sartre argues that one learns what one is through the gaze of the other. This gaze is alienating and dominating for the reason that it objectifies and

⁵⁸ Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993, 275.

⁵⁹ Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 385-386.

⁶⁰ Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault*, 132. It may be added that Robert J. C. Young states that "Sartre's section in *Being and Nothingness* entitled 'The Look', one of the most acute analyses he ever wrote, was a particular inspiration for Fanon – and subsequently for Lacan in his account of the gaze, as well as many discussions of various looks and gazes that followed in European feminist and film theory" (see Robert C. Young, 'Sartre: the "African Philosopher"', preface to Jean-Paul Sartre, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, translated by Azzedine Haddour, Steve Brewer and Terry McWilliams, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, xii; originally published as, Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations V*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1964).

⁶¹ Jay, 'In the Empire of the Gaze', 181.

limits one's freedom: one does not have a choice in how one is portrayed by the other. Accordingly, when Foucault states that the gaze of the physician establishes the individual in his irreducible quality he demonstrates an affinity to Sartre in the sense that the physician's gaze bestows an objectivity upon the patient. As Levy argues, the body of positive knowledge which encompasses a discipline such as medicine reinforces and ossifies the subject/object polarity inherent in any relations between two individuals, one of whom possesses a knowledge which the other seeks.⁶² Thus, one will learn about oneself from an individual who is an expert in the human sciences. It may be added that this subject/object polarity is present in *Histoire de la folie*, as in this work, Foucault argues that with the discipline of psychology man becomes an object that is accessible through a scientific perception.

Although this resemblance is present, it is pertinent to note, as Levy does, that what distinguishes Sartre's discussion of the gaze from Foucault's is that Sartre works at a level of abstraction and generality alien to Foucault. Levy states that for Foucault "the gaze is not simply a gaze of an Other; it is the gaze of a doctor,⁶³ of a warder, of a teacher – in short, a gaze authorized to perform a function".⁶⁴ Moreover, he adds that the gaze which Foucault describes in *Naissance de la clinique* relates to "le regard déjà codé" that is mentioned in *Les mots et les choses* (MC 12). This "already coded gaze" pertains to how the eye sees its object in terms of certain pre-theoretical presuppositions: how it is given objects in terms of an historical a priori.⁶⁵ For instance, Foucault explains the historical and social circumstances that lead to the doctor being able to gaze upon the

⁶² Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 82.

⁶³ All the same, in *L'être et le néant*, Sartre does entertain the idea that a physician establishes the presence of a disease in an individual. For instance, he states: "Elle est alors objectivement décelable *pour les Autres*: les Autres me l'ont apprise, les Autres peuvent la diagnostiquer; elle est présente pour les Autres, alors même que je n'en ai aucune conscience. C'est donc en sa nature profonde un pur et simple *être pour autrui*. ... Je ne bois pas de vin, si j'ai des coliques hépatiques, pour ne pas réveiller mes douleurs de foie. Mais mon but précis: ne pas réveiller mes douleurs de foie ne se distingue aucunement de cet autre but: obéir aux défenses du médecin qui me les a révélées. Ainsi un autre est responsable de *ma maladie*" (EN 406). Also, in *Saint Genet*, Sartre does argue that lawyers, judges, and psychiatrists see all that is visible, that is, they understand crime in its objectivity (SG 454). As mentioned above, Sartre does not historically develop the idea of an expert gazing upon a subject in the manner of Foucault.

⁶⁴ Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 80, 82.

⁶⁵ Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 80.

patient as an object of knowledge. Sartre, to be sure, does not discuss the gaze in terms of an historical a priori. Therefore, perhaps this parallel between Foucault and Sartre can be best described as an echo or more pointedly, as Levy suggests, along the lines of Foucault providing a concrete analysis of Sartre's abstract depiction of a phenomenon.⁶⁶

Another important difference between Sartre and Foucault, as noted by Flynn, is that Foucault gives an historical account for the ocular paradigm which has organized modernity and displaced the classical period.⁶⁷ Flynn explains that when Foucault indulges in periodization, he tends to locate the advent of modernity in the decades immediately before and after the French Revolution, as he locates a clear epistemological break with the classical age at this juncture.⁶⁸

To elaborate upon Flynn's assessment, we can pause briefly, and consider the pivotal dates that surround the arguments in the three works by Foucault that have been extensively considered thus far. As observed, in *Histoire de la folie*, 1780 is the year that witnessed the entrance of the medical establishment into the houses of confinement and, in doing so, initiated the assumption that the mad were to be observed and madness was to be seen. *Naissance de la clinique* sees Foucault argue that following the French Revolution were the new requirements for a gaze that sought a body of knowledge regarding the health of a population. In *Surveiller et punir*, 1789 is the year that the humanitarian reforms that were introduced eventually lead to the carceral society. In Foucault's eyes, something went awry in the eighteenth century – the century that witnessed the initiation of man being gazed upon as an object of study. Elaborating upon the modus operandi of this era, Foucault states:

une peur a hanté la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle: c'est l'espace sombre, l'écran d'obscurité qui fait obstacle à l'entière visibilité des choses, des gens, des vérités. ... le nouvel ordre politique et moral ne peut pas s'instaurer sans leur effacement. ... Ce

⁶⁶ Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 80.

⁶⁷ (Flynn, 'Foucault and the Eclipse of Vision', 283). It is pertinent to note that Flynn states that "Foucault employs a *diacritical* vision to undermine the oculoctrism of modern society, and he does so in favor of a moral idea in his later thought, which is not unlike that of Sartrean existentialism". Flynn explains that he plans to show this resemblance in the second volume of *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason*. Presently, this second volume has not been published (Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason: Volume One*, xii).

⁶⁸ Flynn, 'Foucault and the Eclipse of Vision', 274.

règne de l' «opinion» qu'on invoque si souvent, à cette époque, c'est un mode de fonctionnement où le pouvoir pourra s'exercer du seul fait que les choses seront vues et que les gens seront vus par une sorte de regard immédiat, collectif et anonyme (*DE II* 196-197).

The new moral and political order, as exercised through power, refuses to tolerate darkness. Its anonymous and collective gaze desires to see and to know all. As noted, in *Surveiller et punir*, Foucault describes this eighteenth century vision, as the desire to, through permanent coercion that engenders automatic docility, render visibility as a trap (*SP* 171, 202).

Sartre, on the other hand, most definitely does not give a historical account for the ocular paradigm of modernity. This is a weakness of Sartre in general, as – for the most part – he fails to consider how his thought has been historically shaped. Though Sartre does not provide the gaze with an historical elaboration, he can nevertheless be located, alongside Foucault, in the tradition that recognizes its hegemonic powers. To bring this argument to light, let us continue with our analysis.

Dews argues that "although Foucault shares the Nietzschean critique of bad conscience ... he differs from Nietzsche in his understanding of the fact that a reflexive relation to the self cannot be produced simply through the limitation and introversion of instinct".⁶⁹ In the eyes of Dews, Foucault is closer to Sartre than Nietzsche in suggesting that "it is only concrete exposure to the gaze of the other which makes possible the corresponding self-surveillance".⁷⁰ To discern Dews' point regarding Sartre, we can return to *Saint Genet*, as in this work Sartre argues that it is through the gaze that "Genet apprend ce qu'il est objectivement", and it is this "passage" that determines his entire life (*SG* 24). Sartre explains that the gaze of the adults is "un pouvoir constituant" that transforms Genet into a "nature constituée" (*SG* 55). Because society gazes upon Genet as a thief, Genet later explains: "«J'ai décidé d'être ce que le crime a fait de moi»" (*SG* 55). In other words, he internalizes the essence which society provides him with. Demonstrating an affinity to Sartre, Dews argues that in Foucault's account of the asylum it is repeatedly stressed that a regime of incessant observation and

⁶⁹ Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, 157.

⁷⁰ Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, 157. In the previous section, it has been noted that Baugh also recognizes this similarity, as he argues that Foucault, in *Histoire de la folie*, is closer to Sartre than Hegel, since he makes self-objectification an alienation of subjectivity to the other's reasons.

judgement forms the condition for the internalization of morality.⁷¹ Dews cites Foucault's following description of the Retreat which Tuke established:

à la *Retraite* la suppression partielle des contraintes physiques faisait partie d'un ensemble dont l'élément essentiel était la constitution d'un «self restraint» où la liberté du malade, engagée dans le travail et dans le regard des autres, est menacée sans cesse par la reconnaissance de la cupabilité (*HF* 507).

By constantly being reminded of his guilt the mad subject, through observation and work, internalizes how he is seen and, therefore, does not need to be physically restrained, as the internalization of his madness will ensure that he exercises self-restraint.

Similar to Dews, Levy observes a resemblance between Foucault and Sartre on the idea that the gaze can be internalized. Levy cites the effects of Bentham's Panopticon to illustrate his point.⁷² Specifically, he refers to the following passage:

induire chez le détenu un état conscient et permanent de visibilité qui assure le fonctionnement automatique du pouvoir. Faire que la surveillance soit permanente dans ses effets, même si elle est discontinuée dans son action; que la perfection du pouvoir tende à rendre inutile l'actualité de son exercice; que cet appareil architectural soit une machine à créer et à soutenir un rapport de pouvoir indépendant de celui qui l'exerce; bref que les détenus soient pris dans une situation de pouvoir dont ils sont eux-mêmes les porteurs (*SP* 202-203).

Levy explains that for power to function, and to be automatic and continuous, the prisoners – through the unknown gaze – are made to be their own guards.⁷³ This feat is accomplished by instilling in them the knowledge that they are perpetually being observed:

Celui qui est soumis à un champ de visibilité, et qui le sait, reprend à son compte les contraintes du pouvoir; il les fait jouer spontanément sur lui-même; il inscrit en soi le rapport de pouvoir dans lequel il joue simultanément les deux rôles; il devient le principe de son propre assujettissement (*SP* 204).

Physical confrontation, according to Foucault, is not necessary (*SP* 204).⁷⁴ All that is necessary is “un regard”: “pas besoin d’armes, de violences physiques, de contraintes matérielles. ... Un regard

⁷¹ Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, 157.

⁷² Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 87.

⁷³ Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 87.

⁷⁴ Again, it is worth pointing out that Foucault can be viewed as providing a concrete analysis for Sartre's abstract depiction of a phenomenon.

qui surveille et que chacun, en le sentant peser sur lui, finira par interioriser au point de s'observer lui-même; chacun, ainsi, exercera cette surveillance sur et contre lui-même" (*DE II* 198).

By describing Sartre's account of the gaze as a "paranoid ontology" – an apt description considering that Sartre illustrates this concept in terms of a peeping Tom who is caught in the act – Jay elucidates that Sartre's delusional analysis does not even require an actual subject gazing upon an other and, therefore, demonstrates an affinity to the unknown and omnipresent eye described by Foucault.⁷⁵ To this point, Sartre explains:

Sans doute, ce qui manifeste *le plus souvent* un regard, c'est la convergence vers moi de deux globes oculaires. Mais il se donnera tout aussi bien à l'occasion d'un froissement de branches, d'un bruit de pas suivi du silence, de l'entrebâillement d'un volet, d'un léger mouvement d'un rideau. Pendant un coup de main, les hommes qui rampent dans les buissons saisissent comme *regard à éviter*, non deux yeux, mais toute une ferme blanche qui se découpe contre le ciel, en haut d'une colline. ... Or, le buisson, la ferme ne sont pas le regard: ils représentent seulement l'*oeil*, car l'*oeil* n'est pas saisi d'abord comme organe sensible de vision, mais comme support du regard. Ils ne renvoient donc jamais aux yeux de chair du guetteur embusqué derrière le rideau, derrière une fenêtre de la ferme: à eux seuls, ils sont déjà des yeux (*EN* 303-304).

An inanimate object such as a bush or a farmhouse can serve as set of eyes and, accordingly, the idea that human existence can be objectified without an actual set of ocular globes is a real possibility that Sartre entertains. The Panopticon is this very reality.⁷⁶

In bringing to light another affinity that Foucault has to Sartre, Jay argues that Foucault's analysis of the homosexual in the *Histoire de la sexualité* demonstrates an implicit debt to Sartre's *Saint Genet*.⁷⁷ Jay acknowledges that though in *Histoire de la sexualité*, Foucault stresses the power of discourse in creating sexuality, such as that of confession, he nevertheless insists on the importance of spatial and visual controls in policing sexuality.⁷⁸ As Jay notes, with respect to the nineteenth century homosexual, Foucault explains:

⁷⁵ Jay, 'In the Empire of the Gaze', 190.

⁷⁶ Moreover, Jay adds: "reversing the principle of the dungeon, the Panopticon, with its hidden supervisor watching from a central tower like an omniscient but invisible God, is an architectural embodiment of the most paranoid of Sartrean fantasies about the 'absolute look'" (Jay, 'In the Empire of the Gaze', 191).

⁷⁷ Jay, 'In the Empire of the Gaze', 193.

⁷⁸ Jay, 'In the Empire of the Gaze', 193. The argument of *Histoire de la sexualité* will be discussed in the next chapter.

Rien de ce qu'il est au total n'échappe à sa sexualité. Partout en lui, elle est présente: sous-jacente à toutes ses conduites parce qu'elle en est le principe insidieux et indéfiniment actif; inscrite sans pudeur sur son visage et sur son corps parce qu'elle est un secret qui se trahit toujours (*HS* 59).

The homosexual cannot hide his sexuality: it influences his composition, his actions, and it is a secret that is visible for all. According to Jay, this line of reasoning is implicitly indebted to Sartre's description of Genet's homosexuality:

déshabillé par les yeux des braves gens comme les femmes par ceux des mâles, il porte sa faute comme elles portent leurs seins et leur croupe. Beaucoup d'entre elles ont horreur de leur dos, cette masse aveugle et publique qui est à tous avant d'être à elles. ... Pareillement Genet: surpris à voler *par derrière*, c'est son dos qui s'épanouit quand il vole, c'est avec son dos qu'il attend les regards et la catastrophe (*SG* 81-82).

Just as the female body is visible for all to see and thus can be made into an object by others, so too, according to Sartre, is it the same with Genet's homosexuality. As a homosexual, Genet awaits from behind for the gaze that will reveal to him his shameful sexual orientation.

According to Flynn, Foucault's power-knowledge dyad exploits Sartre's variation of the Hegelian theme by which the gaze alienates and dominates.⁷⁹ In the eyes of Flynn, the inevitability of the visibility-domination dyad in Foucault looks suspiciously like the Sartrean looking/looked-at relationship in that neither allow for positive reciprocity and mutuality.⁸⁰ We can note that the gaze, as described by Sartre in *L'être et le néant*, certainly does not imply reciprocity. Sartre elaborates: "pendant que je cherche à asservir autrui, autrui cherche à m'asservir" (*EN* 413). Only one subject will be able to enslave the other and master the situation and, accordingly, the gazed upon will see himself and his situation through the lens of the gazer. In *Saint Genet* this point is refined to imply that the dominant group in a society will shape the gazed upon's being. Mutuality or reciprocity do not exist in Sartre's world. They also do not exist in Foucault's. In *Histoire de la folie*, it is explained that the mad are placed in a non-reciprocal relation with their guardian (*HF* 505). Moreover, Foucault declares that the science of mental disease which would evolve from the asylum would not

⁷⁹ Flynn, 'Foucault and the Eclipse of Vision', 275.

⁸⁰ Flynn, 'Foucault and the Eclipse of Vision', 285.

be a dialogue (HF 505, 506).⁸¹ In *Naissance de la clinique*, he remarks that what is typical of the clinical experience of the nineteenth century is that two individuals are trapped in a common, but “non réciproque” situation (NC XI). In *Surveiller et punir*, the faceless gaze, the major effect of the Panopticon, does not imply reciprocity. In fact, it is described as follows:

Le Panoptique est une machine à dissocier le couple voir-être vu: dans l’anneau périphérique, on est totalement vu, sans jamais voir; dans la tour centrale, on voit tout, sans être jamais vu (SP 203).

Flynn notes that Foucault’s account of social interaction is characterized by reciprocal endangerment, and adds that for Foucault, like Sartre, it appears that “hell is the other”.⁸²

The impossibility of reciprocity is an important point that will be addressed momentarily. Presently, it is pertinent to discern why for Foucault, as for Sartre, our original fall occurs in the gaze of the other. As it has been shown, on the topic of the gaze, Foucault shares with Sartre the following important points: the gaze implies objectification. As a consequence, the subject internalizes how it is gazed upon and, in doing so, becomes visible to others, as the object that it is. Finally, the gaze implies a lack of reciprocity which, this thesis will argue, relates to a closing off of the subject’s possibilities. In other words, the gaze limits freedom.

(ii) Seeing the Impossibility of Reciprocity

According to Levy, “of all of Sartre’s many books, none could have interested Foucault more than *Saint Genet*”, as in this work are themes dear to Foucault: “the outsider, the homosexual, and the convict”.⁸³ Although Levy admits that in this biography Sartre demonstrates that the gaze can

⁸¹ Foucault argues that the science of mental disease would not be a dialogue until the day when psychoanalysis excised the phenomenon of the gaze, which was essential for the asylum of the nineteenth century, and replaced it with the magic powers of language. Yet, Foucault adds: “Encore serait-il plus juste de dire qu’elle a doublé le regard absolu du surveillant de la parole indéfiniment monologuée du surveillé – conservant ainsi la vieille structure asilaire du regard non-réciproque, mais en l’équilibrant, dans une réciprocité non-symétrique, par la structure nouvelle du langage sans réponse” (HF 508).

⁸² Flynn, ‘Foucault and the Eclipse of Vision’, 285.

⁸³ (Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 84, 75). There is no evidence of Foucault having read *Saint Genet*. However, he was acquainted with and much admired Jean Genet. James Miller reports that in 1970 Foucault joined an elite circle of glamorous dissidents -- “a circle that included Sartre (of course), writers like Genet, and outspoken movie stars like Yves Montand and Simone Signoret” (Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 185). For a description Foucault’s admiration and complicity toward Genet, see Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, 238-241.

take up residency in the subject, at the same time, he argues that much of the analysis in *Saint Genet* is "patently inadequate" for the reason that "Sartre fails to explain how the designation thief constitutes in Genet a greater objectivity than the being-for-others gives to most other people".⁸⁴ In the eyes of Levy, Foucault's analyses are superiour, as his histories of concrete institutions demonstrate how the gaze fixes the essence of the subject, and represents a closing off of the subject's possibilities.⁸⁵ Levy's assertion is puzzling for the following reasons: first, this claim can only be made at the expense of failing to observe a key component of the argument in *Saint Genet*. Second, Levy's declaration regarding the closing off of possibilities makes Foucault sound more of an existentialist than Sartre. Moreover, it suggests that Foucault's thought is motivated by an obvious ethical concern: a quality that commentators have criticized his thought as lacking.

First, let us examine Levy's claim with respect to Sartre and then proceed to determine if an ethical impetus in the thought of Foucault can be discerned.

In *Saint Genet*, Sartre approvingly quotes Claude Levi-Strauss for showing that "dans toute société donc, il serait inévitable qu'un pourcentage, d'ailleurs variable, d'individus se trouvent placés, si l'on peut dire, hors système ou entre deux ou plusieurs systèmes irréductibles" (SG 59). This method of social organization, according to Sartre, fabricates individuals for otherness that include "les opprimés et exploités de toute catégorie, les travailleurs étrangers, les minorités nationales et ethniques" (SG 35). Social relations necessitate that certain individuals will not fit into the dominant structures which exist and, therefore, have their freedom limited. Why? Because, as Sartre argues, the decent members of the community oblige themselves to gaze upon a variable percentage of society as other: they need to create professional evildoers, what he terms "des abcès de fixation", so that they may see themselves as good (SG 35). To renounce this mode of reasoning, Sartre states that "il faudrait que les honnêtes gens eussent honte d'eux-mêmes; il faudrait enfin qu'ils admissent

⁸⁴ Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 84.

⁸⁵ Levy, *Being Up-To-Date*, 84.

la réciprocité" (SG 47). They would have to face their freedom, and recognize the part of themselves that identifies with the excluded.

Jean Genet, as a homosexual and a convict is certainly a candidate to find himself outside or between any social systems that exist, and Sartre clearly illustrates this point. On the topic of being a thief, contrary to Levy's argument, Sartre – indeed – shows how this label assigns to Genet a greater objectivity than being-for-others gives to most others. He argues that society, by labeling Genet a thief, for reasons of social utility took a child and made him into a monster (SG 29). Moreover, he elaborates:

lorsque l'on fait subir à des enfants, dès leur plus jeune âge, une pression sociale considérable, lorsque leur Etre-pour-Autruï fait l'objet d'une représentation collective accompagnée de jugements de valeur et d'interdits sociaux, il arrive que l'aliénation soit totale et définitive (SG 38).

According to Sartre, children, when exposed to a collective gaze, are especially apt to internalize the objective and external judgements that the social realm passes upon them and, as a consequence, view themselves as having a total and definitive objectivity. Sartre argues that in reality such an objectivity actually expresses the contempt in which others hold them (SG 38). He stresses that though the term criminal is ambiguous,⁸⁶ society nevertheless:

on leur persuade et ils se laissent persuader que cette définition objective s'applique en réalité à leur être subjectif et caché: le criminel qu'ils étaient pour les autres, le voilà tapi au fond d'eux comme un monstre; ainsi se laissent-ils gouverner *par un autre*, c'est-à-dire par un être qui n'a de réalité que dans les yeux des autres, leurs fautes et leurs erreurs se transforment en disposition permanente, c'est-à-dire en destin (SG 39).

Society ascribes to the individual that he is a criminal and, in doing so, convinces this individual that his future is defined. He is governed by others, as he internalizes the objectivity of being a thief: his freedom is limited and his possibilities are closed off. According to Sartre: "tel est le cas du petit Genet" (SG 39).

⁸⁶ This term is ambiguous for the reason that, as noted earlier in this chapter, Sartre argues that individuals within a society define themselves by what they have. Moreover, Sartre argues that "«cambrioler, c'est normal», parce que les «honnêtes gens» trouvent normal de calomnier, d'affamer, d'accaparer, d'exploiter. Il est normal aussi que la Société s'empare du voleur et l'imprisonne: c'est la pure et simple application de la loi du plus fort. ... Ce juge qui me condamne ne vaut ni plus ni moins; juger un cambrioleur, cambrioler un juge, c'est tout un: on défend son bifeck. Si l'homme est un loup pour l'homme je retrouve dans la guerre universelle la réciprocité de rapports qu'on voulait me refuser" (SG 559-560).

As opposed to Levy's assessment, it has been shown that Sartre, in *Saint Genet*, does show how Genet's designation as a thief constitutes in him a greater objectivity than being-for-others gives to most others.⁸⁷ In fact, Sartre portrays Genet as heroic, since he holds the mirror up to us, and "il faut nous y regarder" (SG 550). Genet forces us to realize that he is a product of the social realm – an emanation of this totality. With his initial act of theft, the social sphere depicted the child Genet as other, and continually forced him to wear this label throughout his life – it never forgave him. For this sphere to be, it must have an individual like Genet. As aptly explained by Christina Howells:

by showing the subjectivity of the social outcast, not in what it has common with 'us', but in what makes it inalienably 'other', Sartre threatens our smug humanism at its base. We are offered the experience of treachery and evil internalized and asked if we can still proclaim our common humanity. Genet's failure, and our failure to engage reciprocally with him, brings us face-to-face with our human alienation, solitude, and distress.⁸⁸

Society, as argued by Sartre, must see and create otherness which, at the same time, coincides with a lack of reciprocity. It is curious that Levy would overlook this insight, but in light of the fact that during his life Sartre was very consistent about raising this point, Levy's oversight is all the more odd.

As maintained by Sartre, the gaze is oppressive: it foists upon the other an identity which, while entailing a lack of reciprocity, also – because it can be internalized – presents the danger of becoming a destiny.⁸⁹ Busch notes that "while often seriously wrong-headed about political issues, Sartre was doggedly consistent in his defense of the oppressed as he spoke out effectively against colonialism,⁹⁰ racism and classism".⁹¹ Busch explains that in the philosophical analysis supporting

⁸⁷ It is also odd that Levy misses this point, since Sartre, later in life, actually describes *Saint Genet* as the best expression of what he means by freedom: "ce petit mouvement qui fait d'un être social totalement conditionné une personne qui ne restitue pas la totalité de ce qu'elle a reçu de son conditionnement". Sartre explains that though Genet was made a thief, he was able to become a poet and a being who no longer exists on the margin of society (Sartre, 'Sartre par Sartre', in *Situations IX*, 101-102).

⁸⁸ Christina Howells, 'Sartre: Desiring the Impossible', in *Continental Philosophy VII: Philosophy and Desire*, edited by Hugh J. Silverman, New York, London: Routledge, 2000, 94.

⁸⁹ In the *Cahiers*, Sartre writes that "l'objectivité est comme signe de l'oppression et comme oppression" (CPM 15).

⁹⁰ Azzedine Haddour states that "although overlooked by critics in postcolonial studies, Sartre's contribution to the debate on colonialism is of great importance. The seminal work of this cultural critic and political philosopher of the twentieth century informed the debate around decolonization, and played a vital role in the emergence of major critics

Sartre's politics, he continued to see the issue of identity at the heart of justification for oppression.⁹² For Sartre, when a standard, such as an identity or a human nature is introduced, it enables humans to gaze upon others who, inevitably, do not fit into this measurement. Although it will attempt to assimilate as much as possible, it will never include everything. The Sartrean idea that humans have no true identity, according to Frederic Jameson, starts from the conviction that "all concepts of human nature ... are ideological and normative; that is, they slowly turn around into standards whereby one can recognize deviation, and which can then be used in a process of exclusion or devaluation, subordination or marginalization".⁹³ The introduction of standards equals otherness. They are, in the eyes of Sartre, one and the same.

It has been shown that Sartre's thought demonstrates that human relations entail the existence of otherness and a lack of reciprocity. To see if a similar impetus in Foucault can be detected, let us first turn to an influential review of *Histoire de la folie*,⁹⁴ and then to William Connolly's important interpretation of Foucault.

At the time of publication of *Histoire de la folie* Michel Serres' critical review, 'Géométrie de l'incommunicable: la Folie', was considered to be one of the most important studies of this work.⁹⁵ In this review, Serres – by illustrating the language of geometry that Foucault employs throughout *Histoire de la folie* – brings to light the motive which guides this unusual kind of history.⁹⁶ The

such as Césaire, Fanon and Memmi. ... Arguably, his interventions in *Anti-Semite and Jew* and *Black Orpheus* established a critical terrain for the studies of these critics. What emerges from these two key texts is the inextricable link between ethics and politics in his critiques of anti-Semitism, racism and colonialism" (see Azzedine Haddour, 'Remembering Sartre', introduction to Jean-Paul Sartre, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, 7-8).

⁹¹ Busch, 'Jean-Paul Sartre and Judith Butler', 45.

⁹² Busch, 'Jean-Paul Sartre and Judith Butler', 45.

⁹³ Frederic Jameson, 'The Sartrean Origin', *Sartre Studies International*, Volume 1, No. ½, 1995, 11.

⁹⁴ In case the reader may be wondering if this chapter is drawing too much upon *Histoire de la folie*, it is worth noting that Gutting describes this work as the foundation of the "entire body of Foucault's work". Moreover, he adds that "although there are many significant revisions and innovations, it lays down the basic methods, problems, and values that inform everything else he wrote" (Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason*, 110).

⁹⁵ Arnold I. Davidson, 'Structures and Strategies of Discourse', in *Foucault and His Interlocutors*, 14.

⁹⁶ Michel Serres, 'Géométrie de l'incommunicable: la Folie', in *Hermès ou La Communication*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1968, 167.

insight that rests behind the rigorous architecture of *Histoire de la folie* is described by Serres as follows:

au sein de la minutieuse érudition de l'enquête historique, circule un amour profond
... pour ce peuple obscur en qui est reconnu l'infiniment proche, l'autre soi-même.⁹⁷

In the words of Serres, the transparent geometry that Foucault employs in this work "est la langue pathétique des hommes qui subissent le supplice majeur du retranchement, de la disgrâce, de l'exil, de la quarantaine, de l'ostracisme et de l'excommunication".⁹⁸ This work, "un cri", is the refusal of "l'oeil médical", and the hope for new connections.⁹⁹

Serres argues that Foucault illustrates how lines are drawn that open, close or connect two envisioned spaces. These spaces relate to, on the one hand, "le «normal» culturel, moral et religieux", which is the classical world of action and thought of the "honnête homme", and on the other, the world of unreason – "ce qu'est l'internement *in vivo*".¹⁰⁰ Observing that Foucault's writing sounds somewhat Hegelian in nature, at the same time, Serres notes that Foucault's thought rarely moves toward "la dialectique".¹⁰¹ Instead, it concentrates on "le système des négatifs et l'odyssée des altérités": what is rejected, what one is not, an absolute stranger with whom one has no relations.¹⁰² Elaborating that it goes without saying that the mad only exist in a culture,¹⁰³ Serres adds that this cultural fabrication requires the establishment of "la raison" and "la norme".¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ Serres, 'Géométrie de l'incommunicable: la Folie', 176.

⁹⁸ Serres, 'Géométrie de l'incommunicable: la Folie', 177.

⁹⁹ Serres, 'Géométrie de l'incommunicable: la Folie', 176-177.

¹⁰⁰ Serres, 'Géométrie de l'incommunicable: la Folie', 177.

¹⁰¹ Serres, 'Géométrie de l'incommunicable: la Folie', 182.

¹⁰² Serres, 'Géométrie de l'incommunicable: la Folie', 182.

¹⁰³ Admittedly, there are of course, forms of mental disorders that are disassociated from reality, but since these disorders are diagnosed, described, and even defined within a cultural setting, they only exist within this milieu. If madness, as a social disease, did not exist in a culture, then it would not exist and the idea of the norm would not be necessary.

¹⁰⁴ Serres, 'Géométrie de l'incommunicable: la Folie', 184.

As noted, Serres argues that Foucault illustrates the plight of those who are on the other side of the line: those who are excluded. In the words of Alexander Nehamas, "Serres' description is true of everything Foucault wrote on the disenfranchised -- the poor, the delinquent, the prison population, the sexually deviant, factory workers, even children attending the rigorous schools of the nineteenth century".¹⁰⁵ Nehamas explains that Foucault exposes the distress of these groups so that their otherwise silent voices can be heard, and invite his readers to react with horror at their plight. Yet, Nehamas claims that Foucault has nothing to say about eliminating or reducing the difficult situation of these individuals.¹⁰⁶ Nehamas is certainly not the only one who has accused Foucault's work as being neutral.¹⁰⁷ All the same, Foucault can be interpreted in a manner in which an ethical *modus operandi* is recognizable.

In a lecture delivered at the University of Vermont in 1982, Foucault states: "à travers l'étude de la folie et de la psychiatrie, du crime et du châtement, j'ai tenté de montrer comment nous sommes indirectement constitués par l'exclusion de certains autres: criminels, fous, etc." (*DE II* 1633). It is precisely this project, showing how we have indirectly constituted ourselves through the exclusion of others, that Connolly argues enable the documentary studies of Foucault to support an ontological thesis with political implications.¹⁰⁸ As it will be seen, just as Sartre's portrayal of Genet holds up a mirror to us, so too do Foucault's historical works.

As opposed to Charles Taylor, who holds that Foucault "adopts a Nietzschean-derived stance of neutrality between the different historical systems of power, and thus seems to neutralize the

¹⁰⁵ Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living*, 175.

¹⁰⁶ Nehamas, *The Art of Living*, 175.

¹⁰⁷ Jay, for instance, argues that although Foucault is particularly sensitive to the putative dangers of ocularcentrism, at the same time, he notes that Foucault's failure or unwillingness to probe the normative basis for his history of the present has frequently troubled commentators eager to uncover the roots of his outrage (Jay, 'In the Empire of the Gaze', 195). From the previous chapter, it may be recalled that Bernstein argues that though Foucault tempts us with new possibilities, he fails to show us which possibilities and changes are desirable (Bernstein, 'Foucault: Critique as a Philosophical Ethos', 231).

¹⁰⁸ (William E. Connolly, 'Taylor, Foucault, and Otherness', *Political Theory*, Vol. 13 No. 3, 1985, 365). From the Introduction of this thesis it may be recalled that both Sartre and Foucault equate the political with the ethical.

evaluations that arise out of his analyses", ¹⁰⁹ Connolly presents the idea that Foucault is not neutral about the will to truth and its effects, as even though he recognizes that this will cannot be eliminated, he does hold the idea that its hegemony can and should be contested. ¹¹⁰ Connolly states that Taylor's critique of Foucault on the subject fails to address a fundamental question: "what might Foucault's documentary studies of otherness carry for established theories of the subject?". ¹¹¹

By concentrating on how otherness appears when it is presented as the product of a subjectivity that is itself produced, Foucault, as explained by Connolly, strives to stretch the established limits of the subjectivity that has been inherited from modernity. ¹¹² Whereas Taylor insists that this identity of the subject cannot be escaped, Foucault, according to Connolly, believes that we can go further than Taylor imagines if the genealogical project is relentlessly pursued. ¹¹³ By giving up the residue of *telos* that is associated with modern conceptions of the subject, the goal of Foucault's project is to adopt a different stance to that which is other to subjectivity:

if we understand the subject in this way, if we acknowledge that the subject is formed from material and not pre-designed to fit perfectly into this form, we are in a position to reconsider the politics of containment that now governs institutional orientations to otherness. ¹¹⁴

Connolly adds that while this project will not engender an order in which otherness is eliminated, it may provide the ground upon which the debt subjectivity owes to otherness can be appraised.

¹⁰⁹ Charles Taylor, 'Foucault on Freedom and Truth', *Political Theory*, Vol. 12, 1984, 162.

¹¹⁰ In fact, among other things, Connolly argues that "Taylor's characterization of Foucault as a neutralist illicitly assimilates the Foucaultian assault on subject-centered normative judgement to a stance that depreciates evaluation altogether. It thereby misrepresents Foucault's interrogation of modern standards of normality prior to contesting it" (Connolly, 'Taylor, Foucault, and Otherness', 369).

¹¹¹ Connolly, 'Taylor, Foucault, and Otherness', 372-373.

¹¹² Connolly, 'Taylor, Foucault, and Otherness', 372.

¹¹³ (Connolly, 'Taylor, Foucault, and Otherness', 372). Moreover, Connolly adds that one of the themes that is particularly pertinent for Foucault is "the thesis that the modern agent or subject is an artificial production of modernity rather than a rational achievement which establishes standards through which to assess modernity" (Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Third edition, 233).

¹¹⁴ Connolly, 'Taylor, Foucault, and Otherness', 374.

Elsewhere, Connolly elaborates upon Foucault's strategy of enhancing a space for politics.¹¹⁵ To initiate such a project, Foucault seeks to disconnect us from the standards of reason and truth which presuppose subjectivity.¹¹⁶ In the words of Connolly, "he thus studies the formation of modern forms of reason, sanity, responsibility, and sexuality by linking these constructions to the forms of unreason, sanity, irrationality, and perversity they simultaneously engender and subjugate".¹¹⁷ In proceeding in this manner, Foucault shows how the mad are treated as victims of an illness to be cured, never as signs that the norms of subjectivity are too demanding of the self to which they are applied. The criminal, on the other hand, is either immoral (to be punished) or delinquent (and in need of treatment); he is seldom seen as evidence of the arbitrary character of the norms which produce him.¹¹⁸ According to Connolly, instead of viewing subjectivity and responsibility as universal norms or modern achievements, Foucault shows how they are artificially engendered and how the maintenance of the affirmative side constantly requires the production of the other.¹¹⁹

From this picture of the subject emerges what Connolly terms the bifurcated self of disciplinary society. One part of this self is a free, rational, and responsible agent – a side of the self that is susceptible to social control by appeal to its virtue or responsibility, and its desire to avoid official definition as other.¹²⁰ On the other hand, the second dimension of the self is the other – that which does not fit into the first construction. In the words of Connolly, "when this side achieves hegemony the self is officially defined to be insane or delinquent or mentally unstable".¹²¹ This second side of the self is the object of institutional mechanisms of confinement, treatment, rehabilitation, confessional therapy and drug therapy. The goal that Connolly draws from Foucault

¹¹⁵ Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Third edition, 232.

¹¹⁶ Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Third edition, 232, 234.

¹¹⁷ Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Third edition, 234.

¹¹⁸ Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Third edition, 235.

¹¹⁹ Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Third edition, 236.

¹²⁰ Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Third edition, 236.

¹²¹ Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Third edition, 237.

is to loosen the imperatives of social coordination, and to relax the pressures on both sides of the bifurcated self in order that a wider range of conduct can be untouched by normative assessment.¹²² In other words, to loosen the binary oppositions that the subject of modernity subjugates individuals to.

It can be recognized that Connolly's assessment of Foucault's documentary projects reflects Serres' explanation of the unusual kind of history that is recounted in *Histoire de la folie*. As noted, Serres argues that Foucault, in bringing to light the plight of the marginalized, presents the hope for new connections: associations that do not relate to the contingent lines upon which the difference between the sane and the insane are based. As argued by Connolly, Foucault's documentary projects are all motivated by such an impetus. Far from being neutral, Connolly maintains that Foucault's studies are designed to show how the norms that establish the bifurcated self are not transcendental but institutional means that perpetuate normalizing dualities. Nehamas is partially correct to state that Foucault has nothing to say about eliminating this predicament of otherness, as Foucault most definitely does not entertain the idea that history is unfolding towards an utopian end point. Yet, at the same time, he is partially mistaken to say that Foucault has nothing to say. As noted, Connolly presents the idea that Foucault, by contesting the modern model of subjectivity, desires to present the possibility of a wider range of conduct that is not influenced by normalizing behaviour. A wider range of conduct that is not influenced by the binary division of the bifurcated self.

To flesh out Connolly's interpretation, perhaps it is pertinent to see, as Baugh does with *Histoire de la folie*, Foucault's documentary studies as operating with a theme of Paradise Lost in mind. Recall that Foucault explains that humanity does not start out from freedom but from limitation: the line not to be crossed (*HF* 578). Although Foucault does not entertain the idea that there was a Golden Age when everyone was free, he is very consistent in illustrating the dangers and limits of the human sciences which derive from humanist aspirations. According to Foucault, the invention of the human or social disciplines are nothing other than an "infra-droit" – they have no

¹²² Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Third edition, 242.

ultimate justification (SP 224). Nevertheless, their existence trains and enables individuals to become integrated into their “exigences générales” (SP 224). Far from being free, individuals passively obey the demands that are passed upon them. Within such a system, the disciplines, in the eyes of Foucault, have the precise role of introducing “des dissymétries insurmontables” and “d’exclure des réciprocités” (SP 224). The establishment of the norm allows individual to be distributed, characterized, classified, disqualified and invalidated. It enables individuals to bring into play the asymmetries of power (SP 224).

Jameson argues that Foucault’s untiring surveillance of normativity and its injustices knew its full form in a Sartrean practice which generalized everything oppressive about bourgeois social values out into its philosophical and metaphysical presuppositions.¹²³ Indeed, just as Sartre holds that an idea of human nature is oppressive and normative, Foucault argues the same with respect to the modern idea of the subject. Akin to Sartre, Foucault demonstrates how this concept leads to the establishment of social structures that are dominating and asymmetrical. Of equal importance, in giving a voice to those who are silenced, the subject matter that Foucault chooses to write about is not randomly chosen. As Sartre would say, one makes a choice. But more importantly, Foucault’s project certainly has a resonance with Sartre. In fact, Foucault’s thought, like Sartre’s, is motivated by a Manichaean predisposition. In *Les mots et les choses*, commenting on the *episteme* of modernity, Foucault remarks:

l’homme n’a pas pu se dessiner comme une configuration ... sans que la pensée ne découvre en même temps, à la fois en soi et hors de soi, dans ses marges mais aussi bien entrecroisés avec sa propre trame, une part de nuit, une épaisseur apparemment inerte où elle est engagée, un impensé qu’elle contient de bout en bout, mais où aussi bien elle se trouve prise. L’impensé (quel que soit le nom qu’on lui donne) n’est pas logé en l’homme comme une nature recroquevillée ou une histoire qui s’y serait stratifiée, c’est, par rapport à l’homme, l’Autre: l’Autre fraternel et jumeau, né non pas dans lui, ni en lui, mais à côté et en même temps, dans une identique nouveauté, dans une dualité sans recours (MC 337).

The concept Man will, according to Foucault, always introduce its twin – the other. It enables humans to see this other in the world. One can appreciate Foucault’s reluctance to put forth a concept of the subject and his scepticism towards humanism, as these very ideals are, in his eyes, oppressive

¹²³ Jameson, 'The Sartrean Origin', 11-12.

and limiting. But moreover, Foucault explains that though an analysis of relations of power reveals a complex field, at the same time:

elle rencontre parfois ce qu'on peut appeler des faits, ou des états de domination, dans lesquels les relations de pouvoir, au lieu d'être mobiles et de permettre aux différents partenaires une stratégie qui les modifie, se trouvent bloquées et figées. Lorsqu'un individu ou un groupe social arrivent à bloquer un champ de relations de pouvoir, à les rendre immobiles et fixes et à empêcher toute réversibilité du mouvement ... on est devant ce qu'on peut appeler un état de domination. Il est certain que, dans un tel état, les pratiques de liberté n'existent pas ou n'existent qu'unilatéralement ou sont extrêmement bornées et limitées (*DE II* 1529-1530).

A state of domination does imply the closing off the subject's possibilities. Although Foucault is not as consistent as Sartre in raising this point, he does acknowledge that: "dans de très nombreux cas, les relations de pouvoir sont fixées de telle sorte qu'elles sont perpétuellement dissymétriques et que la marge de liberté est extrêmement limitée" (*DE II* 1539). To fill out Foucault's assessment, we can turn to Sartre, as he writes: "A la limite, le criminel, le fou sont objets purs et sujets solitaires; leur subjectivité forcenée s'exalte jusqu'au solipsisme au moment qu'ils se réduisent pour tous les autres à l'état de pure chose maniée, de pur *être-là* sans avenir" (*SG* 543). Without a doubt, Foucault would agree, as he brings to light the plight of those who have their freedom limited. He forces us to realize that for a standard such as the normal to be, it must have its other, the abnormal.

(iii) Seeing the Impossibility of Morality, but Responding to the Ethical

The lack of reciprocity or asymmetry between individuals that the thought of Sartre and Foucault illustrates may bring to mind Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative, and the possibility of a Kantian kingdom of ends.¹²⁴ Yet, both rule out such a possibility. In fact, both declare that morality is impossible. All the same, and as perplexing as it may sound, this shared recognition actually sheds light on a common ethical impetus in their thought.

In *Saint Genet*, Sartre observes that "nous voyons plus clairement que jamais l'injustice et nous n'avons ni les moyens ni la volonté de la réparer" (*SG* 549). The injustice is that we exist as

¹²⁴ "For, all rational beings stand under the *law* that each of them is to treat himself and others *never merely as means* but always *at the same time as ends in themselves*" (Immanuel Kant, 'Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals', in *Practical Philosophy*, translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 83).

subjects and objects and, therefore, separate ourselves from each other. If subjects could never be anything but subjects recognizing themselves as such separations would cease, and a Kantian kingdom of ends would be possible (SG 542). However, as a rejoinder, Sartre asserts that this possibility would require "l'impossible liquidation de toute objectivité" (SG 542). Absolute reciprocity in Sartre's eyes, "est masquée par les conditions historiques de classe et de race, par les nationalités, par la hiérarchie sociale" (SG 542). History demonstrates that objectivity is a real aspect of social existence and if this fact were to end, so too (presumably) would oppression and history.¹²⁵

In light of these observations, Sartre states:

toute Morale qui ne se donne pas explicitement comme *impossible aujourd'hui* contribue à la mystification et à l'aliénation des hommes. Le «problème» moral naît de ce que la Morale est *pour nous* tout en même temps inévitable et impossible. L'action doit se donner ses normes éthiques dans ce climat d'indépassable impossibilité (SG 178n1).

The moral problem is that morality will never be able to supply a norm that will include everyone. Accordingly, a universal morality is impossible. Yet, at the same time, Sartre argues that the moral dilemma relates to the fact that in a climate of "indépassable impossibilité", human action inevitably introduces norms.

We will return to this point of Sartre's momentarily, but presently let us examine Foucault's assessment regarding the impossibility of morality.

In *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault announces that "pour la pensée moderne, il n'y a pas de morale possible" (MC 339). According to Foucault, modern thought has never been able to propose a morality for the reason that it is "un certain mode d'action", "un acte périlleux" that:

dès qu'elle pense, elle blesse ou réconcilie, elle rapproche ou éloigne, elle rompt, elle dissocie, elle noue ou renoue; elle ne peut s'empêcher de libérer et d'asservir (MC 339).

Like Sartre, the morality that Foucault has in mind is a universal morality that can never include everything, and will always create an aspect of otherness. The human sciences, which Foucault equates with a project of morality, are inevitably tainted by ethics and politics (MC 339). They are

¹²⁵ In the next chapter it will be observed that in the *Critique* the concept of scarcity is the material explanation for objectivity.

motivated by predisposition that will suppress difference: “la pensée moderne s’avance dans cette direction où l’Autre de l’homme doit devenir le Même que lui” (MC 339). However, this feat is impossible since modern thought will always introduce a subjective standard that will engender man’s other. Accordingly, Foucault states:

l’humanité ne progresse pas lentement de combat en combat jusqu’à une réciprocité universelle, où les règles se substitueront, pour toujours, à la guerre; elle installe chacune de ces violences dans un système de règles, et va ainsi de domination en domination (DE I 1013).

Humanity, according to Foucault, is not a movement towards universal reciprocity inasmuch as it is an endless repetition of violence and domination that always denies the possibility of reciprocity.

Although Sartre and Foucault reject the possibility of a morality, this is not to say that their thought is not ethically motivated. Lending credence to B-H Lévy’s assertion that Sartrean existentialism is not a humanism insomuch as the first manifestation of anti-humanism,¹²⁶ Alain Renaut explains that the questioning of the universal in humanism, enables “la démarche sartrienne” to meet with the contemporary critiques of humanism.¹²⁷ Renaut explains that Sartre is very critical of humanism, since the universal that it puts forth perpetuates a norm that is a violence of uniformity,

¹²⁶ Lévy, *Le siècle de Sartre*, 239.

¹²⁷ Renaut, *Sartre, le dernier philosophe*, 237. The contemporary critiques that Renaut alludes to are what he, along with Luc Ferry, describes as the antihumanist position – a defining characteristic of French philosophy of the ‘68 period, see Renaut and Ferry, *La pensée 68: Essai sur l’anti-humanisme contemporain*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1985. It may be added that Renaut’s point regarding “la démarche sartrienne” meeting with the contemporary critiques of humanism is astute. For instance, John Rajchman notes that “there is an inclination to assimilate Foucault to the later Heidegger as against Sartre – to Heidegger’s ‘antihumanist’ understanding of freedom not as will or as a fundamental choice as to who or what we are, but as the freeing or ‘Clearing’ of the possibilities of an age. The problem is that, as an intellectual, Foucault obviously has more in common with Sartre than with Heidegger. He is much more worried about concrete demands in French prison riots or with the rather ‘existential’ opposition of East-European dissidents than with anything like the destiny of the German people” (Rajchman, ‘The Story of Foucault’s History’, in *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments, Volume II*, 390).

a violence against freedom as a singularity.¹²⁸ It is precisely this anti-humanist streak in Sartre that André Glucksmann argues reveals an ethical *modus operandi* akin to Foucault.

Glucksmann recognizes that the term nihilism can be understood in three ways.¹²⁹ For the purpose at hand, what is of interest is the first understanding of nihilism that he identifies, "relativisme des valeurs: il n'y a pas de bien suprême". Glucksmann elaborates that this definition:

ne caractérise pas Foucault. Il faut se souvenir du climat anti-humaniste que fut celui des années soixante. Cet antihumanisme remonte à Gide ou Sartre. Il ne désigne pas une opposition éternelle à un humanisme éternel, mais à un humanisme très précis, celui de la fin du XIXe siècle et du début du XXe. Il s'agissait d'un humanisme positif qui dotait l'homme européen d'un savoir concernant les valeurs suprêmes. Pour des gens comme Gide, Sartre ou Foucault, ce prétendu savoir a produit des effets d'aveuglement devant le colonialisme, le fascisme, les camps sibériens ou le stalinisme.¹³⁰

This anti-humanism, which Glucksmann establishes as originating with Sartre and André Gide and extending to Foucault, is directed against a humanism that puts forth supreme values which shield its terrible effects.

Before proceeding to examine Glucksmann's interpretation of anti-humanism, and how it can be related to Sartre and Foucault, it is important to recall that in Chapter Three it was argued that both Sartre and Foucault heed Nietzsche's evaluation that there are no transcendental values. In this third chapter, it was shown that in light of this fact, Sartre and Foucault put forth a creative morality that is related to the Kantian realm of aesthetics, and the freedom that this sphere, as interpreted by modern art, promises. In what follows, it will be shown that another ethical motive, also associated with Immanuel Kant, can be found in Sartre and Foucault.

¹²⁸ (Renaut, *Sartre, le dernier philosophie*, 237-238). As noted near the end of section 4.2 (iii) in this chapter, Sartre explains that terror relates to inflexible refusal to differentiate. Terror, in the eyes of Sartre, relates to total assimilation and the suppression of difference (*QM* 48). Such a mode of reason, according to Sartre, "exclut la perception des réalités collectives" (*S II* 19). As argued by Sartre, abiding by the "esprit d'analyse", an individual sees man as always the same in all times and places: "Toutes les collectivités, il les résoud en éléments individuels. Un corps physique est pur lui une somme de molécules, un corps social, une somme d'individus. Et par individu il entend une incarnation singulière des traits universels qui font la nature humaine" (*RQJ* 65-66). This individual introduces a standard, such as a human nature, which poses as a universal. Such a spurious concept will assimilate as much as possible, but at the same time it can never include everyone. There will always be those who do not fit into the measurement of its universal traits. Thus, as Renaut points out, humanism, as a universal, is deplorable in Sartre's view, since it does not promote freedom inasmuch as it suppresses freedom.

¹²⁹ Glucksmann, 'Le nihilisme de Michel Foucault', 395.

¹³⁰ Glucksmann, 'Le nihilisme de Michel Foucault', 395-396.

According to Glucksmann, the anti-humanist outlook leads to an idea which, though quite simple, is difficult enough to put into practice:

qu'il y a peut-être la possibilité d'élaborer des engagements, des morales, non pas à partir d'une idée positive du bien qui vaudrait comme universelle et éternelle mais à partir d'une perception, d'une évidence *index sui* de l'intolérable.¹³¹

This ethical ideal, while not advancing a concept of the Good, presents the possibility that a morality can be developed that is committed to bringing to light an evidence of the intolerable. The intolerable, as Glucksmann acknowledges, can be variously interpreted. For instance, he identifies that, as Gilles Deleuze explains, the intolerable can be grasped within the context of a social apparatus, and that if such an apparatus becomes universal, so too does the intolerable. Of equal interest, he notes that the intolerable might possibly relate to a “*ratio cognoscendi*”, an intuition of the good which may arrive in the future, but relates to the present intuition of the good, a “*ratio essendi*”.¹³²

This insight of Glucksmann's is very important, as in the view of this thesis, it is a reference to Kant, who also made the distinction between the *ratio cognoscendi* and the *ratio essendi*.¹³³ According to Kant, among all the ideas of “speculative reason” freedom is the only one that is known “a priori”, since it is the condition of the moral law.¹³⁴ Kant states that “whereas freedom is indeed the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom”.¹³⁵ In other words, freedom is the essence of morality, and morality is the understanding of freedom. Kant, of course, argues that the moral law is encountered in ourselves. From the previous chapter, it can be recalled that Sartre and Foucault reject such an idea. Yet, as Glucksmann insinuates, Sartre and Foucault are appropriating this Kantian ideal in another way which this thesis explains as follows:

¹³¹ Glucksmann, 'Le nihilisme de Michel Foucault', 396.

¹³² Glucksmann, 'Le nihilisme de Michel Foucault', 397.

¹³³ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, 140n.

¹³⁴ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, 139-140.

¹³⁵ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, 140n.

Sartre and Foucault presume that freedom exists a priori, not within the individual, but within the context of the social apparatus or the social field.¹³⁶ It is this sphere which gives rise to the moral law or, more precisely, the intolerable: the perception that something is obviously wrong. What, in the eyes of Sartre and Foucault, may be objectionable within this realm? The dilemma that they recognize is that in a world that has no transcendental justification, human activity inevitably introduces such a grounding. Once this feat is carried out, social structures fall into place that enable humans to gaze upon their world, and themselves, through a certain lens. This lens, objectively tinted, inevitably introduces standards that create otherness and implies a lack of reciprocity or symmetry in social relations. In short, it limits freedom. Yet, this social field, as a realm of freedom, provides a moral intuition or an essence of the good which, as exemplified by the political activity of Sartre and Foucault, can be explained as it being good to respond to those situations where freedom is extremely limited. Why respond? Because, in doing so, one has an understanding of an idea of the good that may materialize in the future. In other words, freedom gives rise to the possibility that social relations may be more free in the future.

The good that Sartre and Foucault await, relates to the possibility that some day humans may not see and describe themselves along the lines of subjects and objects. This intuition motivates their thought in the present in that until this day – if ever – arrives the task is to bring to light the dangers that concepts like a human nature or the modern ideal of the subject pose. Once such ideals, which pose as universals, seep into a social apparatus, they limit freedom and bring to light the intolerable. Until we can, as Foucault says, refuse being subjects and objects (*DE II* 1051), or as Sartre says, have the courage to go to the limits of the subjective and objective in both directions at once (*SG* 550), until we can exist in a fundamentally different way, is not the task to respond to the ethical, the intolerable? The visible violence that humans commit against one another when they gaze upon each other as objects? Perhaps, Sartre can have the last word, as in a world in which transcendental norms are impossible but, at the same time, inevitable, he states: “c'est dans cette perspective, par exemple,

¹³⁶ This point will be returned to, and will become clearer in the next chapter.

qu'il faudra envisager le problème de la violence ou celui du rapport de la fin et des moyens" (*SG* 177n). Foucault certainly concurs. In fact, that is why he found himself protesting, side-by-side, with Sartre.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, by tracing the theme of the gaze in Sartre and Foucault, it has been shown that while there are differences between these two on this topic, they share the following important assumptions: in objectifying the subject, the gaze presents the possibility that the subject will internalize how it is gazed upon and, in doing so, become visible as the object that it is. Also, as noted, the gaze implies a lack of reciprocity between individuals. It has been argued that this shared assumption discloses another important affinity between Foucault and Sartre in that both discern that universal morality is impossible. All the same, in light of this observation, it has been argued that the idea of reciprocity – which one would typically associate with a universal morality – actually elucidates an ethical impetus in the thought of Sartre and Foucault. As argued, though both recognize that absolute reciprocity will never result from a universal project, at the same time, Sartre and Foucault respond to the non-reciprocal relations that inevitably result from standards that pose as universals. Standards that perpetuate the intolerable and hinder freedom.

CHAPTER FIVE

Sartre, Foucault, the Question of History, and Freedom

Bref, ce sont des hommes qu'on juge et non des forces physiques.

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Questions de méthode*

Ce qui fait que le pouvoir tient, qu'on l'accepte, mais c'est tout simplement qu'il ne pèse pas seulement comme une puissance qui dit non, mais qu'en fait il traverse, il produit les choses, il induit du plaisir, il forme du savoir, il produit du discours; il faut le considérer comme un réseau productif qui passe à travers tout le corps social beaucoup plus comme une instance négative qui a pour fonction de réprimer.

Michel Foucault, *Entretien avec Michel Foucault*

5.1 Introduction

The question of history and its relation to the idea of freedom is by no means coherent in the oeuvres of Sartre and Foucault. In fact, at different points in their thought, each thinker expresses a different attitude toward history and its association with freedom. As noted, in Sartre's early philosophy the realms of the historical and social are, at times, presented as akin to the being-in-itself: objects that can be constantly surpassed by the freedom of the being-for-itself.¹ In what is known as Foucault's archaeological phrase, freedom, for the most part, is missing from the discourse. Instead, Foucault seems content to describe the epistemological order that influences how individuals see and talk about things during a specific historical epoch. As opposed to being

¹ In fairness to Sartre, it should be noted that in *L'être et le néant* he does entertain the powers of the social and historical realms, see Part Four, section II, *EN* 538-589. The problem is that Sartre's conception of authentic or pure freedom, for much the same reasons as attributed to the idea of the situation (which was discussed in the previous chapter), undermines the implications of these spheres.

sympathetic to freedom, one would not be off the mark in locating Foucault, the archaeologist, in the camp of determinism. It is evident that at specific intervals in the thought of Sartre and Foucault different attitudes towards the relation between history and the idea of freedom can be found. Yet, at other key junctures in Sartre and Foucault, history is of utmost importance for illustrating the question of freedom.

In this chapter, the specific convergence that will be brought to light is that from different angles both Sartre and Foucault claim that freedom occurs in a socio-historical field that directs or governs its possibilities. It will be shown that Sartre, circa his engagement with Marxism, and Foucault, circa his analysis of power, hold that this social field is the result of nothing other than human activity or, in other words, freedom. It will be observed that for both, this field is not the result of any over-arching historical plan. In fact, it will be noted that freedom is haphazard, as historically, the activity of humans leads to unforeseen effects. Although this idea of freedom does not point to the fact that history is unfolding towards an end-point, it does imply that the intelligibility of history can be derived from struggle. It will be shown that neither Sartre nor Foucault see a coherent way out of this vision of history. In light of this observation, it will be argued that the status of freedom in their thought risks becoming evanescent.

This chapter will proceed as follows: first (5.2), by considering Sartre's Marxism, as presented in the *Critique de la Raison dialectique*, it will be shown that in this work Sartre entertains two ideas of freedom: an idea of freedom as necessity and an idea of freedom as presented in the group-by-oath. Though it has been previously argued that freedom is of utmost importance to the thought of Foucault, it will be observed that this concern was not always clear (5.3). It will be shown that circa *Les mots et les choses* freedom is not a defining concern in the thought of Foucault. Having

established the fact that Foucault's project of archaeology is an oddity in his oeuvre, the next task will be to examine his notion of power. By tracing the refinements that power undergoes, the aim will be to see how Foucault equates power with freedom. It will be observed that freedom, as power, implies that it is an action. At this point (5.4), the status of the question of freedom in the thought of Sartre and Foucault will be addressed. It will be noted that for both freedom is intended to be positive. Yet, in light of the rejection of the ethical proposals of authentic freedom and an aesthetics of existence, and in light of a serious agenda that addresses freedom in their socio-historical analyses, it will be argued that both risk eliminating the positive status of freedom. This chapter will conclude by arguing that for freedom to maintain any positive bearing in their thought, both must – as they do in their political activity – introduce an idea of the good into their social theories.

5.2 Sartre and Marxism

(i) Necessity, Terror, and Freedom

The circumstances leading to Sartre throwing his lot in with Marxism are multifarious and well documented.² Sartre's frenzy towards Marxism would lead him to proclaim it as "l'indépassable philosophie de notre temps" (CRD 14), and it would cost him his friendships with Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Albert Camus.³ Although Sartre described Marxism as the dominant philosophy of our

² For an indispensable source which describes the background and the events, along with the individuals surrounding Sartre's move to Marxism, see Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975. For a more recent and critical assessment of Sartre and Marxism, see B-H Lévy, *Le siècle de Sartre*, 427-543. For a response to Lévy's assessment, see Elizabeth A. Bowman, 'Thanks to BHL, France Rediscovered Her Hated Sartre', in *Sartre Studies International*, Volume 8. No. 2, 2002, 68-93.

³ Jon Stewart, 'Introduction', in *The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*, xxiv-xxv. For a recent appraisal relating to the falling out of Sartre and Camus, see 'The Third Man in the Story: Ronald Aronson Discusses the Sartre-Camus Conflict with Francis Jeanson', in *Sartre Studies International*, Volume 8. No. 2, 2002, 20-47.

time, he also observed that communism as practiced in the Soviet Union and the Soviet intervention of Hungary in 1956⁴ pointed to the fact that something was wrong with Marxism in its present political formulation. At the time of writing the *Critique de la Raison dialectique*, the Soviet-style Marxism that was advocated by the French Communist Party in the 1950s only compounded the problem. In the eyes of Sartre, instead of rethinking Marxism in light of its contemporary problems, Marxist thinkers were simply promoting the status quo and, in doing so, have been too quick to formalize and reduce. In this form, the sole goal of Marxism “est de faire entrer les événements, les personnes ou les actes considérés dans des moules préfabriqués” (QM41). The concrete individual, according to Sartre, is lost in this schematic. Thus, Sartre seeks to discover the meditations which allow the concrete individual to emerge from the background of the general contradictions of productive forces and relations of production (QM 54).

⁴ For an account of Sartre’s condemnation of the Russian takeover in Hungary, see Sartre, ‘Le Fantôme de Staline’, in *Situations VII*.

In the *Critique*,⁵ Sartre sets the main goal as nothing less than establishing the intelligibility of History as one universalizing movement. Volume I, a regressive analysis, will put the individual back into history by deconstructing history into its elements of human praxis or action. It intends to discover the elementary formal structures of human activity while, at the same time, providing a dialectical foundation for this activity. Volume II, Sartre announces, will establish that “il y a une histoire humaine avec *une* vérité et *une* intelligibilité” (CRD 184).⁶

⁵ It almost goes with saying that the *Critique* is a work that could have been written more clearly, and have benefitted from a thorough editing. Sartre would admit that he did not write clearly in the *Critique*, and would attribute this shortcoming to the amphetamines he was taking (Sartre, ‘An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre’, in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, 11). On the issue of Sartre’s use of corydrane, a then legal amphetamine in France that came in a tube containing twenty tablets with the instructions “«un à deux comprimés le matin et à midi» ... «Ne pas dépasser la dose prescrite»”, and other substances Sartre was consuming, Annie Cohen-Solal reports the following on a day in the life of Sartre at the time of writing the *Critique*: “Dès le réveil, après un dîner lourd, après quelques heures d’un mauvais sommeil, d’un sommeil artificiel arraché par quatre ou cinq somnifères, il commençait par le café, puis c’était la corydrane: un cachet, puis deux, puis trois, croqués en travaillant ... A la fin de la journée, un tube – parfois davantage – avait ainsi disparu. Un tube avait disparu, mais étaient apparus trente, parfois quarante nouveaux feuillets d’écriture sartrienne. ... Ainsi s’écrivit la *Critique de la Raison dialectique*. Dans un flot urgent de mots affolés, d’idées juxtaposées, compactes, parfois mal intégrées. Dans les crises d’hyperexcitation, dans les cycles de drogues fonctionnant dans tous les sens, marche avant, marche arrière, stop, marche avant et ainsi de suite ... dans une lutte folle contre lui-même, contre un corps fatigué, contre le temps et contre le sommeil. Et des doses de géant. Songeons un peu au programme qu’il s’imposait pour une seule journée de vingt-quatre heures: deux paquets de cigarettes – des Boyard papier maïs – et de nombreuses pipes bourrées de tabac brun; plus d’un litre d’alcool – vin, bière, alcool blanc, whisky, etc.; deux cents milligrammes d’amphétamines; quinze grammes d’aspirine; plusieurs grammes de barbituriques, sans compter les cafés, thés et autres graisses de son alimentation quotidienne. Des doses de géant, donc, pour un homme coriace, résistant et dur à la douleur” (Solal, *Sartre, 1905-1980*, 627-628).

⁶ It can be gathered that Sartre was never able to accomplish such an ambitious – if not impossible – task. In fact, the projected second volume was never completed. It was however published posthumously, see Sartre, *Critique de la Raison dialectique, Volume II (inachevé), L’Intelligibilité de l’histoire*, edited by Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, Paris: Gallimard, 1985. For an excellent account of the circumstances surrounding Sartre’s abandonment of the second volume, and for a criticism of the general project of the *Critique*, see Ronald Aronson, ‘Sartre’s Turning Point: The Abandoned *Critique de la Raison dialectique*, Volume Two’, in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, 685-708. Remarking on the unfinished second volume in 1971, Sartre acknowledged that he did not know enough history and, in light of his age, admitted that he probably would never complete it: “Ce second tome suppose des lectures énormes et je ne sais pas si j’aurai le temps de les faire avant ma mort” (Sartre, ‘Sur «L’Idiot de la famille»’, in *Situations X*, 113).

As mentioned, in the first volume of the *Critique*,⁷ Sartre intends to provide an account that explains how individuals make history. History is recognized by Sartre as a totalisation. In his eyes, history does not involve a “grand totalisateur” but is, instead, a multiplicity of human actions; it is an ongoing process – “un acte *en cours*” – which is continually building upon the sum of its parts (CRD 179, 163). History does not unfold according to a determined scheme; rather, it is the result of human praxis. Although history does not abide by a fixed logic, its intelligibility derives from the totalities that humans, via their praxis, produce. Sartre maintains that his formalism, inspired by Marx, consists in recognizing that “l’homme fait l’Histoire dans l’exacte mesure où elle le fait” (CRD 210). Individuals, through their praxis or freedom, produce totalities – what Sartre also refers to as the practico-inert.⁸ Because the practico-inert is the embodiment of praxis, it has a sense of unity. The multiplicity of praxes which produce and interact with the practico-inert, lead to what Sartre terms variously as a cultural, a social or a practico-inert field.⁹ Since humans are dialectally

⁷ Gary Gutting identifies that Sartre’s *Critique de la Raison dialectique* can be approached in various ways. Two of the ways that Gutting explains that it can be studied are as follows: it can be approached as a reformulation of Sartre’s existentialism, with a view to taking better account of the limitations of freedom by providing an account of the social dimension of human reality. Also, it can be looked-upon as a rethinking of Marxism that is designed to avoid the dead end of reductionist and positivist formulations by incorporating an existential view of being-in-the-world. In this subsection, it is primarily the first way that Gutting suggests that the *Critique* can be approached which will furnish the analysis and provide an overview of Sartre’s later idea of freedom. The implications of Sartre’s rethinking of Marxism will be contemplated in the next subsection (Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 151).

⁸ The practico-inert is the term that Sartre, perhaps too generally, uses to describe every structure or thing in society. The practico-inert would include something familiar as a hammer or a telephone and extend to comprise elaborate things such as social class, justice systems, language and culture.

⁹ According to Sartre, as a cultured individual, an expression that applies to all humans even if they are illiterate: “je me totalise à partir d’une histoire millénaire et, dans la mesure de ma culture, je totalise cette expérience. Cela signifie que ma vie même est millénaire” (CRD 170). One’s life is thousands of years old for the reason that the cultural field (in which one finds oneself) is the result of a multiplicity of praxes historically interacting amongst themselves, their environment, and the practico-inert. It should be added, and this point will become clearer as this section proceeds, that though Sartrean history, as multiplicity, implies that the praxes of humans interacts with one another, at the same time, it does not mean that humans cooperate with one another towards any one fundamental goal.

conditioned by the social milieu in which they find themselves, it is the social structures or objects within the practico-inert field that illuminate their freedom.

Sartre's dialectical investigation commences along the same lines as Marx and Engels, with need. Everything, according to Sartre, is to be explained through "le *besoin*", as it is the first relation between the material being, man, and the material world of which he is a part (CRD 194). Need is what sets praxis and, for that matter, history in motion. The impetus to act on need is labour, "la praxis *originelle*" by which man produces and reproduces his life (CRD 202). In short, by exteriorizing his praxis in the material world through need and labour, the individual interacts with this environment.

Although Sartre's analysis starts with the individual, it does not focus on the isolated experience of the individual. Starting with the individual is an introductory point which is necessary to follow "les fils d'Ariane" or to unravel the larger questions of history and society¹⁰ (CRD 179). Sartre warns: "Il est parfaitement abstrait de considérer *un* homme au travail puisque, dans la réalité, le travail est aussi bien une relation entre les hommes qu'une relation de l'homme à l'univers matériel" (CRD 204). Accordingly, it is necessary to fill out the implications of the man of need – Sartre must consider how *men* of need co-exist in a material world.

To carry out this task, Sartre expands upon his explanation of praxis, born of need and resulting in labour, by hypothesizing how it occurs in scarcity. He argues that scarcity pervades human existence by seeping into all its aspects: "la rareté est une relation humaine fondamentale (avec la Nature et avec les hommes)" (CRD 235). Imagining that when an individual realizes himself

¹⁰ With respect to Sartre's starting point, André Gorz states: "mais pourquoi ce 'privilège' donné à l'individu ('au sujet sur l'objet', dirait Chiodi)? La réponse est bien simple et elle va nous ramener à Marx: c'est qu'il n'y a de certitude, de sens, de compréhension, etc., que pour quelqu'un" (Gorz, *Le socialisme difficile*, 220).

through need, as amongst men, the individual will recognize his fellow men “comme la simple possibilité de consommation d’un objet dont il a besoin” (CRD 240). This individual discovers in each of his fellow men the “possibilité matérielle” of a threat to his existence, since the material object that is necessary for his survival is also necessary for the existence of others (CRD 240). The individual who satisfies his original need does so with the knowledge that he is in a world of others who have needs that must be satisfied. In such a scenario, the individual indirectly fulfills his needs against those of everyone else, as he internalizes the other as a surplus and a threat in a common environment that does not have enough of what is necessary for the survival of every one. However, the individual does not recognize the other as the only threat, as Sartre states:

ce risque constant d’anéantissement de moi-même et de tous, je ne le découvre pas seulement chez *les Autres* mais *je suis moi-même* ce risque en tant qu’Autre, c’est-à-dire en tant que désigné *avec les Autres* comme excédentaire possible par la réalité matérielle de l’environnement (CRD 241-242).

The individual is other because he recognizes himself as an excess individual who is potentially expendable in a world of scarcity.

History, as seen by Sartre, is checkered by scarcity-produced tensions: “dire que notre Histoire est histoire des hommes ou dire qu’elle est née et qu’elle se développe dans le cadre permanent d’un champ de tension engendré par la rareté c’est tout un” (CRD 237). In fact, scarcity is described as “le moteur passif de l’Histoire” (CRD 234). Although the historical framework of scarcity may be permanent, Sartre maintains that scarcity itself is not something that is “fixe et inerte” (CRD 246). Rather, it is explained as a certain moment of human relations which is constantly being transcended and partially destroyed, but always being reborn. In dramatic fashion, Sartre writes:

Rien en effet – ni les grands fauves ni les microbes – ne peut être plus terrible pour l’homme qu’une espèce intelligente, carnassière, cruelle, qui saurait comprendre et déjouer l’intelligence humaine et dont la fin serait précisément la destruction de l’homme. Cette espèce, c’est évidemment la nôtre se saisissant par tout homme chez les Autres dans le milieu de la rareté (*CRD* 243).

Within conditions of scarcity individuals are terrifying because, in a social field full of “actes sans auteur”, and “constructions sans constructeur”, their actions lead to their anti-actions or unforeseen Nemesis (*QM* 122).

The idea that human action leads man to become his own enemy will be addressed momentarily, but presently it is pertinent to examine the ramifications of Sartre’s concept of scarcity with regards to Marx and Engels.

In a lengthy footnote, Sartre explains that his rediscovery of scarcity is not meant to oppose Marxist theory, nor to complete it¹¹ (*CRD* 263n1). What he finds perplexing in Marx and Engels is that their references to scarcity are almost incomprehensible and ambiguous (*CRD* 256). He assumes that Marx, possibly following the trend of classical economics, simply takes it for granted. Nevertheless, Sartre notes that although Marx and Engels have identified the idea of class struggle in capitalist societies, they have, at the same time, failed to provide an adequate account of struggle:

Si l’on donne à Marx et à Engels les luttes de classes – c’est-à-dire la négation des unes par les autres, en d’autres mots, la négation tout court –, ils ont assez pour comprendre l’Histoire. Mais encore faut-il trouver la négation *au départ* (*CRD* 262).

Warning that he is not attempting either to give an interpretation of pre-history or to fall back on the notion of classes and show how, as so many others have, they have originated (*CRD* 260), Sartre

¹¹ Rhiannon Goldthorpe suggests that Sartre heeds Wilhelm Dilthey’s criticism that Marx relapsed into an unhistorical way of thinking because he did not give due attention to the needs of individuals in relation to scarcity (Rhiannon Goldthorpe, ‘Understanding the Committed Writer’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, edited by Christina Howells, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 176n6).

argues that he is providing a fundamental explanation for why, historically, human relations entail antagonism:

Ce que nous montrons, nous, c'est ceci: la possibilité que ces relations sociales deviennent contradictoires vient elle-même d'une négation inerte et matérielle que l'homme réintériorise. C'est aussi que la *violence* comme rapport négatif d'une *praxis* à une autre caractérise le rapport immédiat de tous les hommes, non pas comme action réelle mais comme structure inorganique réintériorisée par les organismes, et que la possibilité de la réification est donnée dans tous les rapports humains, même en période précapitaliste, même dans les relations familiales ou d'amitié (CRD 263-264n1).

The origin of "la lutte" always lies in some concrete antagonism whose material condition is scarcity (CRD 225). In Sartre's eyes, scarcity complements the Marxist discovery of social relations being contradictory,¹² since it furnishes Marx's and Engel's idea of class struggle with a fundamental historical explanation that pre-dates capitalism, and extends to relations between family and

¹² In deepening the Marxist idea of struggle, one can detect that Sartre's concept of scarcity demonstrates a resonance to Thomas Hobbes, specifically Hobbes' following claim in the *Leviathan*: "if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to the End, (which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delection only,) endeavour to destroy or subdue one another" (Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited by Richard Tuck, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 87). Conditions of scarcity, as envisioned by Sartre, evoke the Hobbesian idea of a war of all against all. In conditions of scarcity, man looks upon his fellow man – not as a human – but as an enemy and inhuman. A further affinity to Hobbes is demonstrated when Hobbes states: "that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in a condition which is called Warre; and such a warre is of every man, against every man" (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 88). In the following subsection it will be noted that Sartre's idea of the group-by-oath puts forth a common power which enables humans to look upon themselves as brothers.

friends.¹³ Directly related to this idea of history as a struggle, scarcity relates to the impossibility of reciprocity.¹⁴

From the previous chapter, the importance of Sartre's Manichaean account of social relations in *Saint Genet* may be recalled. In this biography, it is illustrated that individuals gaze upon their world in terms of the binary division of good and evil. In the *Critique*, Sartre grounds this Manichaean predisposition in scarcity.¹⁵ He argues that scarcity provides "la matrice abstraite" of

¹³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari pick-up on the problem that Sartrean scarcity poses. Deleuze and Guattari note that: "Maurice Clavel remarks, apropos of Jean-Paul Sartre, that a Marxist philosophy cannot allow itself to introduce the notion of scarcity as its initial premise: 'Such a scarcity, antedating exploitation makes of the law of supply and demand a reality that will remain forever independent, since it is situated at a primordial level. Hence it is no longer a question of including or deducing this law within Marxism, since it is immediately evident at a prior stage, at a level of from which Marxism is itself derives. Being a rigorous thinker, Marx refuses to employ the notion of scarcity, and is quite correct to do so, for this category would be his undoing.' In *Qui est aliéné?* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970), p. 330" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lowe, Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1983, 28n).

¹⁴ Possibly, Sartrean scarcity can be read as a deflection of Rousseau's criticism of Hobbes. For instance, Rousseau states: "But even if it were true that this unbounded and uncontrollable greed were developed in all men as our Sophist assumes, it would still not bring about the universal state of war of each against all of which Hobbes dares to sketch the odious image". In the eyes of Rousseau, because "superfluity" arouses greed, the idea of a state of war does not make sense, since an individual needs others to display his wealth: "of what use would the possession of the entire universe be to him if he were its sole inhabitant? ... What will he do with his treasures, who will consume his provisions, before whose eyes will he display his power?" (Rousseau, 'The State of War', in *The Social Contract and other Later political writings*, edited and translated by Victor Gourevitch, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 164-165). According to Sartre, Hobbesian war-like conditions arise between humans because their environment is one that is *scarce* – not *superfluous*. Accordingly, the very act of accumulation is an act of survival, not a display of power.

¹⁵ Moreover, scarcity furnishes the antagonistic relations resulting from the gaze in *L'être et le néant* with a material explanation. It may be recalled that the gaze entails conflict, since in the gaze of the other the subject is no longer master of its situation. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Piotr Hoffman argue that "the *Critique* ... digs beneath this objectifying power to seek out its source". Dreyfus and Hoffman explain that Sartre reverses the position of *L'être et le néant*: "the *Critique* now takes the opposite course. Human relations are mediated through our relations with objects: if the Other is lived as a threat, it is because he threatens my access to a certain material environment". In responding to Merleau-Ponty's criticisms of *L'être et le néant*, Dreyfus and Hoffman argue that Sartre shows that underneath this mental fight for prestige or recognition, exists a deeper sphere of intersubjective life which provides the symbolic encounter with the other with a foundation in reality (Hubert L. Dreyfus and Piotr Hoffman, 'Sartre's Conception of Consciousness', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, 240-241).

human relations in any society and, at the same time, it is “le premier stade de l’éthique” (CRD 243, 244). This first stage of ethics¹⁶ engenders the original break in reciprocity:

la rupture apparaît au moment où cette réciprocité trompeuse démasque le danger de mort qu’elle recouvre ou, si l’on préfère, l’impossibilité pour ces hommes engagés dans des liens réciproques de demeurer *tous* sur le sol qui les porte et les nourrit (CRD 244).

With this break, man sees his fellow man not as a human, but as “le contre-homme”. Man, within scarcity, desires to destroy the non-humanity of his fellow man which is, at the same time, his humanity (CRD 244-245). Non-reciprocity within the sphere of scarcity will always exist,¹⁷ since human activity, as Sartre observes, entails that inequality is a fact of social existence.¹⁸

Having established the importance of scarcity for his study, Sartre proceeds to render clear what is meant by the expression that a society designates its undernourished producers and selects its dead (CRD 264). He remarks that though it may appear that an organized power consciously seeks to exploit a certain group, more often than not, the case is just the opposite. Acknowledging the

¹⁶ Ethics in this sense implies the Manichaeian predisposition to see the world in terms of a struggle between good and evil.

¹⁷ Admittedly, the idea that scarcity occurs within the context of *individuals* raises the issue of whether or not scarcity is a natural or a social phenomenon. In later remarks, Sartre seems to insinuate the latter. For instance he explains that need is natural – “a normal biological characteristic of the living creature” – but adds, “that does not mean that the object of our desire is there. Scarcity is social to the extent that the desired object is scarce for a given society”. Sartre seems to be saying that although need is natural – a biological characteristic, for the simple reason that the human organism must have nourishment to persist – it is nonetheless social, as the desire to satisfy it is relative to society. Because needs are social – they occur in a world of others – they are relative to how the environment is totalised as scarce at any given point in history. Thus, Sartre seems to be saying that society comes after scarcity. Seemingly, the very fact of scarcity gives rise to class and alienating structures and to, in Sartre’s eyes, our very history (Sartre, ‘An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre’, in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, 31-32).

¹⁸ Again, scarcity evokes a resonance with Hobbes, as Hobbes argues that mankind is miserable because of “diffidence” between one another – the idea that some have what others do not, but nevertheless desire and need. (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 87). An affinity of Sartre to Rousseau can also be discerned. For instance, Rousseau’s statement that “man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains” can be interpreted in Sartre along the lines that man is free but everywhere he is in the presence of the other. Of course this analogy raises an important issue in Sartre, specifically, if man exists in a situation with others, was he ever free? (Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*, in *The Social Contract and other Later political writings*, 41).

importance of Marx's and many later thinkers' analyses of the iron and coal complex in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Sartre observes that these studies gloss over the oddity that during this time of a great increase in wealth, a ruthless proleterianisation occurred that rendered many worse off than before the discovery of iron and coal (CRD 265-266). This result, "bien qu'assumé *en violence* par la classe dominante, n'était même pas prévu par les individus qui la composent" (CRD 263). The idea that an organized power does not necessarily set out to dominate another group or even foresee the consequences of its actions leads Sartre to argue that individuals, acting within scarcity, continually see their actions result in unintended effects – conditions that reflect nothing other than a "volonté d'exterminer" (CRD 821).

To illustrate this point, one example cited by Sartre is the project of deforestation that originated centuries ago with the Chinese peasants, and has resulted in dire consequences up to the present. He observes that a European flying over China is struck by "*l'absence d'arbres*" (CRD 272). This lack derives from the original strategy of deforestation which had the motive of conquering the soil in order to have plenty. Seemingly, the removal of trees would clear up more space for vegetation to be planted and eventually harvested. Though this may have been the initial intention, what was not foreseen was that this project would set in motion a whole history of terrible floods that "produit le perpétuel déplacement des fortunes, l'égalisation par la catastrophe suivie d'une nouvelle inégalité" (CRD 275). As opposed to resulting in an abundance of food in the future, the strategy of deforestation actually brought poorer conditions into existence that would continually effect future generations. In the eyes of Sartre, "si quelque ennemi de l'homme avait voulu persécuter les travailleurs de la Grande Plaine, il aurait chargé des troupes mercenaires de déboiser

systematiquement les montagnes” (CRD 273). The perplexing issue that this example raises is that the enemy was the Chinese peasant himself.

Sartre argues that history demonstrates that in many instances human activity produces the opposite of what is intended. Recall that need entails that one must interact and unite with the material environment. According to Sartre, in the context of scarcity, one does not cooperate with the other, but takes cues from the environment. For instance, although the undertaking on the part of the Chinese peasants was a joint effort, it was, as argued by Sartre, a project that was mediated by each individual’s separation from each other and each individual’s interaction with the environment. Because of scarcity, individuals are not united but separated: each is forced to seek what is needed for himself rather than for them.¹⁹ In Sartre’s view, human actions lack any political unity when they are “*matérialisées*” by “les forces de massification” (CRD 286). He explains that the process of an individual exteriorizing himself via praxis to satisfy his need leads to “*antipraxis*”: “c’est-à-dire en *praxis sans auteur*” (CRD 276). It is described as a praxis without an author, since without humans acting together its hidden meaning is “la contre-finalité”: the idea that humans become the passive recipients of the materialised practices of the practico-inert, practices that not only hinder humanity, but also impose a common destiny upon humans (CRD 276, 289).

This common destiny that individuals have foisted upon themselves implies a sense of necessity in that:

l’individu trouve en naissant son existence préessuissée, il «se voit assigner par la classe (sa) position sociale et par suite (son) développement personnel». Ce qui lui est «assigné» ... c’est un champ de possibilités rigoureusement limité (CRD 341).

¹⁹ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 153.

At birth one's existence is partially determined by "*la pratique cristallisée*" or the practico-inert of previous generations. Accordingly, one's position in the practico-inert field implies that one is assigned a certain standard of living and specific possibilities. Elsewhere, Sartre explains this phenomenon in terms of predestination, as he writes:

d'une certaine façon nous naissons tous prédestinés. Nous sommes voués à un certain type d'action dès l'origine par la situation où se trouvent la famille et la société à un moment donné.²⁰

A long way from the individual who had previously stated that "un homme s'engage dans sa vie, dessine sa figure, et en dehors de cette figure il n'y a rien" (*EH* 57), Sartre acknowledges that at birth, individuals already have their existence partially sketched out for them. They are predestined, since they are born into a cultural field that is the sum of a multiplicity of human actions, acting with and upon one another, but without any common goal, that leads to the establishment of the social objects of this field.

Social objects are explained by Sartre as things that have a collective structure that is a mixture of praxis and the practico-inert. They are practical realities that put forth exigencies through which individuals realize themselves (*CRD* 360). There are two ways that individuals can relate to the social objects of the practico-inert field: on the one hand, the group attempts to liquidate all forms of inertia that this field produces. On the other, members of the series passively receive the exigencies that the practico-inert field presents. It is this latter mode of being which Sartre recognizes as the most common way that individuals relate to the practico-inert field.

Seriality is indicative of individuals being passively united by the social structures that surround them. Members of the series do not have a common identity; rather, they have an

²⁰ Sartre, 'Sur «L'Idiot de la Famille»', in *Situations X*, 98.

amorphous identity that is characterized by their individual behaviour towards the already-there shared domain of objects.

To illustrate this concept, Sartre commences with what he describes as a superficial and everyday example of individuals waiting to board a bus (CRD 364). At a glance, the individuals in the queue seem to have an appearance of unity. Yet, this perception is an illusion, since the individuals are not united in any common project. Rather, they are described by Sartre as a plurality of isolations:

ces personnes ne se soucient pas les unes des autres, ne s'adressent pas la parole et, en général, ne s'observent pas; elles existent côte à côte autour d'un poteau de signalisation (CRD 364).

Each individual is an instant of social massification – he takes his commands from the practical unities of the city. For instance, an individual's getting to work for nine o'clock in the morning is dependent upon her catching the number nine bus at Place Saint Germain at half past eight in the morning. The bus will take her and others to their respective destinations in the city. The bus and its agenda provide individuals with a prefabricated schedule that they must abide by. Although individuals arrive at the bus stop as distinct individuals, the exigencies of the bus do not respect individuality, since they exist for anyone: "il les constitue dans leur *interchangeabilité*" (CRD 367). Yet, as Ingbert Knecht explains, individuals themselves effect the order of this system insofar as they are subjugated to its rigid controls and demands.²¹

To deepen the idea of the series, Sartre next provides the example of a radio broadcast. While the bus is an example of a direct serial gathering, the radio broadcast is an indirect gathering for the

²¹ Ingbert Knecht, 'Seriality: A Ground for Social Alienation', in *Jean-Paul Sartre: Contemporary Approaches to His Philosophy*, 196.

reason that the broadcaster is not within the proximity of the audience, and the members of the audience, unlike the queue waiting for the bus, are physically separated from each other. As a consequence, there exists a certain passivity between the broadcasters and listeners. Possibly demonstrating that he has given up on the idea of the universal intellectual, Sartre illustrates that if one has a disagreement with the agenda of the broadcast, then one is faced with the impossibility of making one's opinion known. For instance, if one is listening to a specific broadcast and one disagrees with its content, one can turn the radio off or switch to another station. Yet, one fails to silence the voice of the broadcaster, since it still reaches those who opt to continue listening: "elle continuera de résonner dans des milliers de chambres devant des millions d'auditeurs" (*CRD* 379).

In a direct gathering, such as the bus queue, if one has a disagreement which one wants to make known, then, because one is in the physical presence of others, the possibility exists that one can make known one's opinion. In the indirect gathering, because one is not in the presence of others, any practical action that one wants to take against the broadcast can only be serial. Literally, one is faced with the impossible option that to refute the broadcast, one would have to sit down one by one with each listener. Hypothetically the possibility exists that one could phone the radio station, or even get a show, in order to respond to the broadcast. However, one would never know that one's voice was being heard by those who listened to the original broadcast, as one does not know who they are or if their radios are actually on while one is providing a rebuttal. Accordingly, in addition to isolation, impotence is a defining characteristic of the series.

The examples of the bus queue and the radio broadcast, while explaining the impotence and isolation of human relations, at the same time are used by Sartre, according to Knecht, to generalize

Marx's description of the phenomenon of fetishism.²² According to Knecht, with Marx, the phenomenon of fetishism appears in the context of the theory of a historically concrete object, the capitalism of bourgeois society.²³ With Sartre, on the other hand, Knecht explains that the themes of isolation, powerlessness, recurrence, and alterity, while relating to the economic sphere, are more generally grounded in Sartre than in Marx. Alienation for Sartre, is linked more to the general activity of humans, especially within scarcity, than to the economic sphere.²⁴

Sartre explains that the intelligibility which the practico-inert field reveals is the necessity of free individual praxis occurring within a field of inert activity (*CRD* 424). In their relations of isolation and impotence individuals are free. Sartre states:

il faut dire à la fois que le champ practico-inerte *est*, qu'il est *réel*, et que les libres activités humaines ne sont pas supprimées pour autant, *pas même altérées* dans leur translucidité de projet en cours de réalisation. Le champ existe: pour tout dire, c'est lui qui nous entoure et nous conditionne (*CRD* 429).

Freedom occurs in the context of the practico-inert field, as the very possibility of freedom is conditioned by the field. Sartre explains that freedom in this context does not relate to choice, but to the necessity of living through the exigencies that one encounters within this milieu (*CRD* 432).²⁵

As described by Sartre, freedom within this context is "une damnation", since humans passively

²² Knecht, 'Seriality: A Ground for Social Alienation', 199.

²³ Knecht, 'Seriality: A Ground for Social Alienation', 192.

²⁴ Knecht, 'Seriality: A Ground for Social Alienation', 203.

²⁵ Sartre states: "Qu'on n'aille pas nous faire dire, surtout, que l'homme est libre dans toutes les situations, comme le prétendaient les stoïciens. Nous voulons dire exactement le contraire; à savoir que les hommes sont tous esclaves en tant que leur expérience vitale se déroule dans le champ practico-inerte et dans la mesure expresse où ce champ est originellement conditionné par la rareté" (*CRD* 437).

receive the imperatives of the practico-inert²⁶ (CRD 433). Individuals are free, they are just not as free, in Sartre's view, as they could be.

As noted, Sartre makes a distinction between the series and the group. The distinguishing mark between the two is that the former is relatively unorganized (it has no structured common purpose) while the latter is tightly organized (it has a structured common purpose).

To elucidate the evolution of a group, Sartre provides an analysis of the events which led to the storming of the Bastille during the French Revolution. He recounts:

le matin du dimanche 12, la ville est désignée à elle-même, à l'intérieur d'elle-même, par des affiches «De par le roi» qui insinuent que les rassemblements de troupes autour de Paris sont destinés à protéger la ville contre les brigands (CRD 457).

Rumours began to circulate that the presence of the troops was not to deter brigands, but actually quash the possibility of any rebellious activity within the city. Although the government did not specifically command the troops to engage militarily with the population, the very act of deploying troops around the parameters of the city, according to Sartre, suggested that such an order was a real possibility. This threat – the possibility that the population of Paris could be exterminated – provided the grounds upon which serial relations could be overcome. With an impending danger hanging over their heads,²⁷ Sartre argues that individuals started to look upon one another – not as others – but as individuals like themselves: individuals who were susceptible to “le coup de fusil qui l’exterminera” (CRD 457-458).

²⁶ It is pertinent to note that instead of putting forth an idea of pure freedom, such as that found in his early thought, Sartre, in the *Critique*, acknowledges that one's freedom is conditioned by the material environment.

²⁷ Perhaps, it can be suggested that Sartre is incorporating Heidegger's idea of Dasein's falling toward death as leading to an authentic life. For Heidegger the confrontation with the possibility of death enables Dasein to move beyond the “they” and towards an authentic existence, see Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 307. This notion can be translated in Sartre as follows: the possibility of death enables individuals to move beyond the series towards a more free and humane form of existence. Admittedly, Sartre transfers Heidegger's idea of being-towards-death from an individual to a group level.

Sartre explains that though the resulting attempt of the population to arm itself in self-defense was motivated by scarcity, one had to get arms before the other did, at the same time, it was perpetuated by “des rapports d’imitation et de contagion” in that one followed the other, as one knew that the other, like he, was in danger. As argued by Sartre, in arming themselves, a group had performed a concerted action (CRD 459). No longer were they isolated from each other, as they had commenced to come together: they had become a group-in-fusion.

The group-in-fusion signifies for Sartre individuals shedding their serial identities and uniting in a common cause. Under the guise of what André Malraux, in *L’Espoir*,²⁸ describes as the Apocalypse – what Sartre recognizes as “un concours de circonstances historiques, un changement daté dans la situation, un risque de mort, la violence” (CRD 502) – something exists that is neither group nor series (CRD 461). What exists is a social formation that liquidates seriality and gives rise to the resurrection of freedom (CRD 461). Individuals no longer fulfill their individual projects which are dictated by the practico-inert, but cooperate towards a common project. But what happens to these individuals after the immediate threat that initiated their new grouping subsides?

To ensure its survival, one of the first things that the group must accomplish is the establishment of some degree of permanence that will preserve its freedom and prevent the reoccurrence of seriality (CRD 514). So that this feat may be accomplished, the members of the surviving group must take a pledge. By taking the pledge, the members realize that they have attained freedom and that they will strive to preserve it:

Lorsque la liberté se fait *praxis* commune pour fonder la permanence du groupe en produisant par elle-même et dans la réciprocité médiée sa propre inertie, ce nouveau statut s’appelle *le serment* (CRD 518).

²⁸ Footnoted by Sartre as follows: “Dans *L’Ami du Roi*, 3e livraison, p. 70” (CRD 461n).

The pledge ensures that the members of the surviving group will sustain the reciprocal bonds that came into being with the Apocalypse. It is an exigency that imposes a necessity upon the group in that the members of the group will look upon each other as brothers.

The pledged group is described by Sartre as “le commencement de l’humanité” (CRD 535). It is the beginning of humanity, since “*l’être-de-groupe est vécu par chacun comme nature ... comme nature de la liberté*” (CRD 535). The members of the pledged group are referred to by Sartre as “*frères*” as they are the result of a common creation. All the same, this origin of humanity comes with a high price. The fraternal relations that the group establishes are motivated by fear. The pledge instills terror in its members, as to swear to the pledge as a common individual is to say, according to Sartre, that “*je réclame qu’on me tue si je fais sécession*” (CRD 530). Since the group was born out of conditions of violence, the intensity that these circumstances engendered must be preserved. Thus, the pledge is an artificial substitute for the initial experience of terror of violence (CRD 537). In the words of Sartre, “*la violence est la force même de cette réciprocité latérale d’amour*” (CRD 537).

From the above analysis of Sartre’s engagement with Marxism it can be noted that Sartre entertains two ideas of freedom. On the one hand, humans are free in their practico-inert and serial setting. Humans have to be free to passively receive and enact the structures that they encounter in such a milieu, as this field provides freedom with its content or its possibilities. On the other hand, Sartre puts forth a vision of freedom that is the result of extreme historical circumstances. An insight that implies that humans relate to each other in a more free and humane way but, at the same time, is literally perpetuated by a terrifying ideal.

At this point let us proceed and examine the implications of Sartre’s Marxism.

(ii) Sartre's Marxism

Philip Knee explains that in the *Critique* the position assumed by Sartre is that of the universal intellectual who has an alternative global project pertaining to the end of history.²⁹ This project, Knee recounts, is based upon the experience of a freedom that is surrounded by all that is necessary for its overtaking. In other words, praxis is free, but it continually becomes a slave to the practico-inert. All the same, in spite of its intention, Knee observes that Sartre's criticism of mechanistic Marxism puts into place everything that can bring the ruin of such a strategy.

As noted, Sartre's engagement with Marxism is a reaction to the formalism or scientism of Marxism. Yet, as Ronald Aronson explains, the enormous power of Marxism resided in its ability, in the name of science and history "to point to real events and processes that were making its project come true".³⁰ All the same, Aronson observes that this great strength became Marxism's great weakness: "it lent the authority of its founding father, and his science, to a faith in objective developments that turned out to be no more than a pseudocertainty".³¹ In light of Aronson's remarks, we can pause and elaborate upon Knee's assertion regarding Sartre undermining the project of Marxism. By attempting to free Marxism from scientism, Sartre cannot make the bold scientific predictions about the future that Marxism promises. Moreover, Aronson elaborates that Sartre's project – "to bring the subject back into Marxism theoretically" – was not the same as creating a concrete and specific revolutionary subject:

²⁹ Knee, *Qui perd gagne, Essai sur Sartre*, Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de L'Université Laval, 1993, 129.

³⁰ Ronald Aronson, *After Marxism*, New York, London: Guilford Press, 1995, 235.

³¹ Aronson, *After Marxism*, 166.

to conceptually free Marxism from determinism ... did not revive the subject's capacity and will to transform society. To open Marxism is not to guarantee its results – indeed, it is to stress that there are no guarantees.³²

This is an important point: Sartre does not postulate an impending revolution that is driven by the working class.³³ In fact, the group-in-fusion is not representative of a class rebelling against the existing system inasmuch as it is a collection of serial individuals who come together under extreme circumstances.³⁴ One of the prime reasons that Sartre's Marxism has no guarantees about the future is due to the influence of scarcity.

Thomas R. Flynn explains that in a sense "Sartre does seem committed to an end-goal if not to an end-terminus of history".³⁵ The end-goal of history relates to the overcoming of conditions of scarcity which would coincide with the end of history as we know it. For this feat to be accomplished, Flynn recognizes that "scarcity must be overcome for a permanent brotherhood (*fraternité*) to be achieved".³⁶ At times, Sartre appears to be saying that human history is the attempt

³² Aronson, 'Sartre and Marxism', 31.

³³ Sartre's idea of the group-in-fusion catches the eyes of Deleuze and Guattari, as they state: "Sartre's analysis in *Critique de la Raison dialectique* appears to us profoundly correct where he concludes that there does not exist any class spontaneity, but only a 'group' spontaneity" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 256-257).

³⁴ If the second volume of the *Critique* is turned to, one can clearly see Sartre's inability to foresee an end-goal of history. The editor of the posthumously published second volume states: "Y a-t-il un sens de l'Histoire? telle était la question à laquelle Sartre aurait voulu répondre au terme de ce deuxième tome de la *Critique*, rédigé en 1958 et resté inachevé". In the second volume, Sartre seeks to show that struggle between opposing groups is the truth of history – he seeks to render class struggle intelligible. Starting with an analysis of two boxers, Sartre attempts to exemplify how the fight between the two is reflective of a single totalizing history of opposed individuals and collectivities struggling against one another. However, as Aronson observes, the manuscript of the unfinished *Critique* demonstrates that Sartre never even begins to approach the question of class struggle. Moreover, in this volume there are no glimpses of an utopian age of reciprocity. Instead, what is found is a penetrating analysis of how communism went so wrong in Stalinist Russia (see Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre, 'Présentation', in *Critique de la Raison dialectique, Volume II (inachevé)*, *L'Intelligibilité de l'histoire*, 7; Aronson, 'Sartre's Turning Point', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, 702).

³⁵ Flynn, *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986, 185.

³⁶ Flynn, *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism*, 185.

to overcome scarcity, and that its elimination will bring about the end-terminus of history which is, presumably, the dawning of an age of mediated or positive reciprocity. For instance, in *Questions de méthode*, Sartre states that Marxism will have lived out its span when man is freed from “joug de la rareté” (QM 39). However, as a disclaimer, he adds:

mais nous n'avons aucun moyen, aucun instrument intellectuel, aucune expérience concrète qui nous permette de concevoir cette liberté ni cette philosophie (QM 39).³⁷

Also, in the *Critique*, the possibility of scarcity disappearing is explained as a logical possibility³⁸ – not a logical inevitability.³⁹

Undoubtedly, if Sartre is a Marxist, then he should have something to say about the end-terminus of history. He should entertain the possibility of a future, non-alienated society of

³⁷ It is important to note that unlike Marx, for instance, in *The Communist Manifesto*, Sartre does not entertain a programmatic agenda. Whereas Marx presents the idea that the great wealth, produced by the bourgeois society lays the foundation for a proletarian revolution, and the abolition of bourgeois property, which presumably will lead to the possibility of abundance, Sartre, on the other hand, does not postulate such a scenario. (See Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, in *Man and the State: The Political Philosophers*, New York: Random House, 1947, 488-502).

³⁸ Peter Dews explains that Sartrean history “thus recounts the consequences of a fall from a state of original innocence – free individual *praxis* – which can only be recovered on a collective level at the ‘end of time’. However, since for Sartre ‘scarcity’ is present at the beginning of history and constitutes one of its preconditions (although it is not a sufficient condition), and since human history is ‘born and developed within the permanent framework of a field of tension produced by scarcity’, the original freedom of *praxis* can only be mythical” (Dews, ‘Althusser, Structuralism, and the French Epistemological Tradition’, in *Althusser: A Critical Reader*, 106).

³⁹ For instance, Sartre states: “pour un historien situé en 1957, la possibilité de toute Histoire car nous n'avons aucun moyen de savoir si, pour d'autres organismes en d'autres planètes ou pour nos descendants, au cas où les transformations techniques et sociales briseraient le cadre de la rareté, une autre Histoire, constituée sur une autre base, avec d'autres forces motrices et d'autres projets intérieurs, est ou non logiquement concevable (par là, je ne veux pas seulement dire que nous ne savons pas si, ailleurs, la relation d'êtres organiques aux êtres inorganisés peut être autre que la rareté, mais surtout que, si ces êtres devaient exister, il est impossible de décider *a priori* si leur temporalisation prendrait ou non la forme d'une histoire)” (CRD 237). And elsewhere: “il est possible de concevoir comme pure hypothèse logique et formelle un univers où les multiplicités pratiques ne se constitueraient pas en classes (par exemple, celui dont la rareté ne serait pas le rapport fondamental de l'agent pratique et de son environnement)” (CRD 871).

abundance and provide an explanation that points history towards this end.⁴⁰ Yet, scarcity seemingly prevents Sartre from saying much about the future.

In the *Critique*, Sartre struggles in seeking a freedom that is the removal of all limits of the practico-inert that are perpetuated by scarcity. This attempt is for the most part unsuccessful. The concepts of the group-in-fusion and the group-by-oath momentarily allow for what Sartre sees as more free and humane relations in that these groups are temporarily able to overcome the alienating structuring of the practico-inert field. However, no more does the streak of radicalism and tragic anarchism that mars the thought of Sartre come to the fore than with these notions.⁴¹ As William L. McBride notes, if one surmises what a future Sartrean society might look like, it seems just a bit too radical.⁴² Indeed, since the fear of death will preserve this group-by-oath's freedom, members of this group are literally free with a gun to their head. Moreover, remarks made by Sartre later in his life prove disturbing. For instance, commenting on what, in his eyes, were the shortcomings of the French Revolution, he explains:

un régime révolutionnaire doit se débarrasser d'un certain nombre d'individus qui le menacent, et je ne vois pas là d'autre moyen que la mort. On peut toujours sortir d'une prison. Les révolutionnaires de 1793 n'ont probablement pas assez tué et ainsi inconsciemment servi un retour à l'ordre, puis la Restauration.⁴³

⁴⁰ According to William McBride, scarcity has a causal-like agency; rendering it impossible to downplay its role in the *Critique*. As large a role as it plays, McBride notes that "the term is inherently quite vague and, in order to begin to make some sense of it, we must be able to form some conception of what a state of non-scarcity (that is, of 'abundance') would be like". McBride explains that scarcity's vague and all-encompassing nature hinders Sartre from contemplating a future world without it, and he adds that Marx, in *Capital* and later works, never attached as much importance to one concept as Sartre does to scarcity (William L. McBride, 'Sartre and Marxism', in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, 621-622).

⁴¹ It can be added that the group-in-fusion eventually falls back into a serial mode of being.

⁴² McBride, 'Sartre and Marxism', 624.

⁴³ Sartre, 'Sartre parle des Maos', *Actuel*, 28, February, 1973, 76.

The pinnacle of freedom for Sartre, what he describes as the origin of humanity, is reduced to nothing other than fascism.

At this point, let us turn to Foucault. But before moving on to Foucault's analysis of power, and determining if it can shed any further light upon the question of freedom, let us make a brief detour and examine the thought of Foucault in the mid-sixties, around the time of the publication of Sartre's *Critique*.

5.3 Foucault and Freedom

(i) Structuralism and Freedom?

At the time of the publication of Sartre's *Critique de la Raison dialectique*, the intellectual climate in France was undergoing change. According to Alan Sheridan, when the *Critique* was published in 1960, "it was regarded by most of its potential audience as an indigestible anachronism".⁴⁴ Attacks were made on Sartre, by the likes of Claude Levi-Strauss⁴⁵ and Foucault, that painted him as a naïve humanist who espoused an archaic philosophy of the subject. At this point in history, "the French intelligentsia was not interested in a marriage between existentialism and Marxism: it had moved on to quite different concerns".⁴⁶ Whereas existentialism had been the previous force in France, the dominant mode of thought now was structuralism – a school of thought

⁴⁴ Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, 204.

⁴⁵ For Lévi-Strauss' critique of Sartre, see the final chapter of his *La pensée sauvage*, Paris: Plon, 1962. For a good discussion of Sartre and Lévi-Strauss, see Klaus Hartmann, 'Lévi-Strauss and Sartre', in *Studies in Foundational Philosophy*, Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 1988, 153-167.

⁴⁶ Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, 204.

which emerged out of the rejection of existentialism and Marxism.⁴⁷ In the words of Sheridan, “within the broad Structuralist umbrella, Lévi-Strauss represented its purest expression”.⁴⁸

Mark Poster explains that as opposed to drawing upon lived experience, structuralism, as advocated by Lévi-Strauss, turned to a system of signs to explain the realm of the social.⁴⁹ According to Poster, “the sole interest of Lévi-Strauss was in uncovering the binary patterns of signs in the social customs, attributing them to an underlying mental logic and ultimately to the brain”.⁵⁰ To carry out this objective, the conscious subject was displaced from the centre of social activity and was replaced with structure.⁵¹ Related to this point was a rejection of humanism, implying that structures had no agents and therefore did not become intelligible through the study of human agents.⁵²

Published in 1966, *Les mots et les choses* catapulted Foucault into the spotlight of the French intellectual scene,⁵³ and it also led to his association with structuralism.⁵⁴ In an interview from this

⁴⁷ Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, 204.

⁴⁸ Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, 204.

⁴⁹ Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France*, 314, 317.

⁵⁰ Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France*, 317.

⁵¹ Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France*, 318-319.

⁵² Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France*, 325.

⁵³ James Miller reports that “the reception of *The Order of Things* left Foucault both pleased and dissatisfied. He was glad to have met Sartre on his own level, and thrilled to be at the center of intellectual and scholarly discussion – throughout his life, even long after he had become famous, he craved the respect and serious consideration of fellow historians and philosophers. According to those who knew him in these years, he had never been happier” (Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 157).

⁵⁴ Dreyfus and Rabinow recount that Foucault agreed that though he was never a structuralist, “he was not perhaps as resistant to the seductive advances of structuralist vocabulary as he might have been”. As Dreyfus and Rabinow note, it was more than just a question of vocabulary, as during the mid-sixties Foucault was deflected from an interest in social practices that formed both institutions and discourse to an almost exclusive emphasis on linguistic practices. According to Dreyfus and Rabinow, though Foucault was tempted by structuralism, he was never a structuralist (Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Second Edition, xii, xii). As it will be brought to light in this section, Dreyfus’ and Rabinow’s assessment is too charitable, and relies too much upon taking Foucault

year, Foucault explains that his generation had discovered a separate passion than that of the generation of Sartre – an enthusiasm for “le «système»” (*DE I* 542). Foucault recounts that whereas Sartre attempted to show that “le *sens*” was everywhere, he gave up on such an idea:

le jour où Lévi-Strauss pour les sociétés et Lacan pour l’inconscient nous ont montré que le *sens* n’était probablement qu’une sorte d’effet de surface, un miroitement, une écume, et que ce qui nous traversait profondément, ce qui était avant nous, ce qui nous soutenait dans le temps et l’espace, c’était le *système* (*DE I* 542).

It is precisely the idea of bringing to light the surface effect of the unconscious that is the *modus operandi* of *Les mots et les choses*.

In the foreword to the English translation of *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault vehemently states:

in France certain half-witted ‘commentators’ persist in labelling me a ‘structuralist’. I have been unable to get it into their tiny minds that I have used none of the methods, concepts, or key terms that characterize structural analysis.⁵⁵

As forceful as Foucault’s declaration is, it lacks a sense of honesty. In this same foreword, he entertains the idea that at any given moment a culture can be defined by the laws of “un certain code de savoir” and, therefore, he outlines his objective as an attempt to reveal “un *inconscient positif* du savoir” (*DE I* 876-877). With respect to the problems of “du changement” and “de la causalité”,

at his word. Martin Jay provides a more adequate assessment of Foucault’s association with structuralism, as he elaborates: “in the writings of Foucault’s middle period ... the main source of his critique of holism was linguistic. Although he never deliberately extrapolated from the model of structuralist linguistics that been bequeathed to French thought by Saussure and Jakobson, he nonetheless absorbed the major lesson of their work: that language was a system anterior and therefore resistant to the intentionality of men as subjects” (Jay, *Marxism and Totality*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984, 523). With respect to Jay’s assessment, Foucault acknowledges that although his generation’s horizon of reflection was defined by Husserl, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, he explains that once this horizon toppled: “il est évident que la linguistique à la manière de Jakobson, une histoire des religions ou des mythologies à la manière du Dumézil nous ont été des appuis très précieux” (*DE I* 695).

⁵⁵ (Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, a translation of *Les mots et les choses*, New York: Vintage Books, 1994, xiv). It is interesting to note that throughout his career Foucault would distance himself from structuralism. For instance, as late as 1983, Foucault is on record as stating: “Je n’ai jamais été freudien, je n’ai jamais été marxiste et je n’ai jamais été structuraliste” (*DE II* 1254).

Foucault admits that as opposed to addressing these issues, he confines himself to describing the transformations themselves⁵⁶ (*DE I* 878-879). On the topic of the subject, he explains that he seeks to determine:

si les sujets responsables du discours scientifique ne sont pas déterminés dans leur situation, leur fonction, leur capacité de perception et leurs possibilités pratiques par des conditions qui les dominant, et même temps les écrasent⁵⁷ (*DE I* 880).

Foucault admits that he is not interested in exploring scientific discourse from the point of view of individuals who speak inasmuch as his concern resides in “des règles qui entrent en jeu dans l’existence même d’un tel discours” (*DE I* 880). He makes it clear that if there is one approach he rejects at the outset it is that of phenomenology where the subject is given absolute priority as a transcendental consciousness (*DE I* 881).

If structuralism can be broadly described as a school of thought that focuses on the internal structures of scientific discourse, does not contemplate the activity of the human subject, and refrains from addressing any form of politically oriented analysis,⁵⁸ such as the question of freedom,⁵⁹ then

⁵⁶ Peter Dews explains that “like Althusser, during the 1960s, Foucault attempts to produce a theory in which the subject and object are seen as merely effects of the field of discourse, rather than as its origins or causes. ... In order to explain the appearance of discourses, therefore, we need no recourse to existential or psychoanalytical considerations: this appearance is governed purely by ‘codes of knowledge’ or *epistemes*, or ‘rules of formation’. Yet, in making this recommendation, Foucault ... entirely overlooks the importance of the moment of enunciation in discourse. His position rests on the characteristic structuralist confusion between the ‘conditions of possibility’ and the causes of an event. In isolating what – in reference to *The Order of Things* – he terms the ‘formal laws’ which govern a domain of statements, Foucault is not thereby enabled to explain why any particular statement should be produced on a particular occasion ... Any structural analysis of this kind must be supplemented by a causal explanation of the event” (Dews, ‘Althusser, Structuralism, and the French Epistemological Tradition’, in *Althusser: A Critical Reader*, 128-129).

⁵⁷ In the next subsection, it will be observed that Foucault certainly rethinks the idea of the situation that is outlined above.

⁵⁸ Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, 147.

⁵⁹ To this point, in March of 1968, Foucault, explaining what he means by the death of man, states: “l’homme disparaît en philosophie ... comme sujet de liberté et d’existence” (*DE I* 692).

even though he adamantly denies as much,⁶⁰ circa *Les mots et les choses* and the subsequent *L'archéologie du savoir*,⁶¹ Foucault can be characterized as a structuralist.

In *Les mots et les choses*, subtitled *une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Foucault, in showing how the human sciences became possible in the nineteenth century, analyzes the general epistemological structures of the Renaissance, the Classical Age, and the Modern Age. He brings to light the “*épistémè*” that shapes these periods. As described by Foucault, whereas resemblance shaped the world of the Renaissance, in the Classical Age, this mode of relating to things, gave way to representation (MC 44). Along the lines established in his previous study, *Naissance de la clinique*, an essential consequence of the Classical Age is that the “*discours commun*” excludes the possibility of a “*«science de l’homme»*”: man himself cannot be an object of representation (MC 322). Accordingly, Foucault observes that “avant la fin du XVIIIe siècle, l’*homme* n’existait pas” (MC 319).

It is not until the nineteenth century that man finds himself in the position, albeit ambiguous, as an “*objet pour un savoir*” and a “*sujet qui connaît*” (MC 323). Foucault describes the “*épistémè*” that justifies this new presence as relating to the discovery of finitude. As a living being, man attempts to understand himself against the backdrop of his finitude: he is the being who attains the

⁶⁰ Dews observes that while Foucault refuses to admit that there has been any genuine break in his outlook, it is a characteristic of Foucault to fail to observe how closely his developments have followed the contours of philosophical fashion in France (Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, 219).

⁶¹ Commenting on the 1969 publication of *L'archéologie du savoir*, Alan Sheridan explains that this work is not strictly speaking a book in its own right inasmuch as it is an extended theoretical postscript to *Les mots et les choses*. In the words of Sheridan: “its very existence is dependent upon its predecessor” (Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, 89). Since the subject of this thesis is freedom, and because freedom is not at the forefront of Foucault’s thought in these two works, this thesis will only consider *Les mots et les choses*.

knowledge of his life which, in turn, renders possible a knowledge of humanity (MC 329).

Accordingly, it is a short step for man to render possible a science of his life:

c'est ce vivant qui de l'intérieur de la vie à laquelle il appartient de fond en comble et par laquelle il est traversé en tout son être, constitue des représentations grâce auxquelles il vit, et à partir desquelles il détient cette étrange capacité de pouvoir se représenter justement la vie (MC 363).

According to Foucault, the object of the human sciences is not language; rather it is the being who is surrounded by language, the being who represents to himself, utters propositions to himself, and finally provides himself with a representation of language itself (MC 364).

In the conclusion of this work appears Foucault's famous declaration that "l'homme" is a recent invention, and one perhaps nearing its end (MC 398). Foucault argues that if the arrangements that surround Man were to crumble and disappear, as they did in Classical thought, then so too would man: "alors on peut bien parier que l'homme s'effacerait, comme à limite de la mer un visage de sable" (MC 398).

As explained by Gutting, "although *Les mots et les choses* was directed against the entire modern episteme from Kant on, its immediate target was the orthodoxy of existential phenomenology,⁶² already under strong attack from Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology".⁶³ Recall

⁶² Dews observes that, in *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault appears to equate the psychological or the transcendental subject of phenomenology with the subject *tout court* (Dews, 'Althusser, Structuralism, and the French Epistemological Tradition', in *Althusser: A Critical Reader*, edited by Gregory Elliot, Oxford, U.K. & Cambridge, U.S.A.: Blackwell, 1994, 128-129).

⁶³ Gutting adds that though the critique in *Les mots et les choses* is developed against a particular philosophical conception of human beings, there is no basis for Foucault's claim that the embodied consciousness of Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological descriptions is such an instance (Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 276). In fact, according to Philip Knee, one possible avenue of dialogue between Sartre and Foucault that could be developed pertains to a reading of the Sartrean ambivalences on the subject and morality in light of Foucault's characterization of the modern épistémè in *Les mots et les choses* (Knee, 'Le cercle et le doublet: note sur Sartre et Foucault', *Philosophiques*, Vol. XVII, Numéro 1, Printemps 1990, 113, 114).

that at the outset of *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault declares that it is the subject of phenomenology which he rejects. In 1966, Sartre would respond.⁶⁴

Sartre argues that in *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault does not provide an archaeology insomuch as a geology: “la série des couches successives qui forment notre «sol». Chacune de ces couches définit les conditions de possibilité d’un certain type de pensée qui a triomphé pendant une certaine période”.⁶⁵ Foucault, in the eyes of Sartre, fails to address the ultimate question that relates to how each thought is constructed out of these conditions, how men pass from one thought to another. Instead, by distinguishing epochs as before and after, Foucault, according to Sartre, freezes history: “il remplace le cinéma par la lanterne magique, le mouvement par une succession d’immobilités”.⁶⁶

Seemingly, Sartre has a point: Foucault does present the respective *épistémès* of the Renaissance, the Classical Age, and the Modern Age as they are: he reveals the respective structures that elucidate these periods, but does not show how change from one period to another occurs. As noted, Foucault acknowledges that he does not address the problems of change and causality, and admits that he only defines the epistemological transformations themselves (*DE I* 879). Moreover, Foucault certainly does not show how change is the result of human activity.

With respect to Foucault’s announcement regarding the status of man, Sartre argues that “l’«homme» n’existe pas, et Marx l’avait rejeté bien avant Foucault ou Lacan, quand il disait: «Je ne

⁶⁴ Sartre, ‘Jean-Paul Sartre répond’, in *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments, Volume I*, 67-75.

⁶⁵ Sartre, ‘Jean-Paul Sartre répond’, 67.

⁶⁶ Sartre, ‘Jean-Paul Sartre répond’, 67.

vois pas d'homme, je ne vois que des ouvriers, des bourgeois, des intellectuels»".⁶⁷ According to Sartre, the subject as "une sorte de *je* substantiel" or "une catégorie centrale" has been dead for a long time. Sartre admits that though "l'homme reçoit les structures", and though these structures make man, they make man as he is engaged in history. Sartre presents the idea that there is a "sujet" or "subjectivité", and the real problem, in his eyes, is that of "dépassement": how this subjectivity constitutes itself by a perpetual process of integration and reintegration on a base prior to it.⁶⁸ Since Foucault does not interpose praxis and history, Sartre maintains that he cannot address this issue.⁶⁹ In other words, Foucault leaves no place for human activity or freedom.

According to Gutting, "it is hard to see how Foucault could consistently disagree with Sartre's claim here".⁷⁰ Gutting claims that Foucault's entire project is directed towards human liberation and therefore surely requires the sort of praxis in the face of structures that Sartre emphasizes.⁷¹ To this point, from Chapter One, it may be recalled that Foucault, in conversation with Duccio Trombadori in 1978, clarifies what he intended when he discussed the "mort de l'homme" (*DE II* 894). He acknowledges that in the course of history humans never cease constructing themselves and, perhaps heeding Sartre's criticism from 1966, he elaborates: "c'est-à-dire de déplacer continuellement leur subjectivité, de se constituer dans une série infinie et multiple de subjectivités différentes" (*DE II* 894).

⁶⁷ Sartre, 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond', 72.

⁶⁸ Sartre, 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond', 72.

⁶⁹ Sartre, 'Jean-Paul Sartre répond', 67.

⁷⁰ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 277.

⁷¹ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 277.

Gutting also observes that “it is striking that Foucault never connects his critique of the human sciences in *Les mots et les choses* to the issue of human liberation”.⁷² “Thinking in terms of ‘man’ may well be a cognitive limitation, but how is it a significant impingement on moral freedom?”, asks Gutting.⁷³ Moreover, Gutting discerns that “there is even less basis for thinking that the ethical and political subject, the concern of both Sartre’s and Foucault’s liberationist activism, is reducible to ‘man’”.⁷⁴ Gutting notes that in his genealogical studies, Foucault discusses the evils that arise from making humans the objects of the human sciences and further shows how our own self-awareness as subjects can be a tool of control. But he remarks that “there is no indication of how such developments could be related to the specifically philosophical view of man that is the focus of *Les mots et les choses*”.⁷⁵

As described by Gutting, “*Les mots et les choses*, for all its intrinsic interest as intellectual history, remains oddly marginal to Foucault’s fundamental project”.⁷⁶ Interestingly enough, Foucault himself subscribes to such an assessment. He describes *Les mots et les choses* as “un livre marginal” that lacks the passion of his other studies. Foucault explains that it was “une sorte d’exercice formel” that was intended to address specialists in the philosophy of science (*DE II* 886). Seemingly, Foucault’s 1966 passion for “le «système»” was short-lived. In fact, reflecting on the content of *Les*

⁷² Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 277.

⁷³ More generally, Gutting explains that “one reason structuralist social science so quickly collapsed as a philosophical framework was its incompatibility with freedom” (Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 277, 388).

⁷⁴ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 277.

⁷⁵ (Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 278). To be fair, as argued in the previous chapter, in *Les mots et les choses*, Foucault does show how an idea such as universal morality implies otherness, and he also discusses the human sciences as finding average norms that enable man to function (*MC* 368).

⁷⁶ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 278.

mots et les choses, Foucault states: “ce n’était pas là les problèmes qui me passionnaient le plus. ... Folie, mort, sexualité, crime sont pour moi des choses plus intenses” (*DE II* 886).⁷⁷

Let us return to Foucault’s passionate interest, what Gutting describes as his fundamental project which is directed toward human liberation.⁷⁸

(ii) Power is Freedom

In Chapter One it was argued that freedom is a defining point in the thought of Foucault. Admittedly, and as noted, this concern is not necessarily explicit until later in his oeuvre. In this subsection, the ultimate goal is to discern how Foucault equates power with freedom. However, before this task can be carried out, it is necessary to further scrutinize Foucault’s unique notion of power, specifically to view the modifications that it undergoes. This motive will be accomplished by tracing this idea through *Histoire de la sexualité* to ‘«Il faut défendre la société»’ and then to Foucault’s writings related to the art of government.

Gutting observes that Foucault’s *Histoire de la sexualité* “begins as a fairly straightforward extension of his genealogical approach in *Surveiller et punir*”.⁷⁹ The genealogical methodology employed in *Histoire de la sexualité* can be described as old hat. In this study, by examining the repressive hypothesis that originated from the Victorian Age, Foucault, in his typical fashion, turns

⁷⁷ In fact, Miller reports that “Foucault grew unhappy enough with *The Order of Things* that he seriously considered withdrawing the book. At one point, he asked Gallimard to stop printing it, only to realize the futility of such a request. Daniel Defert recalls that Foucault privately expressed his dislike of the book on more than one occasion” (Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 158). Related to Foucault’s admission, Dews explains that Foucault’s defining concern with the emergence of modern forms of social administration is barely present at all in *Les mots et les choses* and *L’archéologie du savoir*. He observes that in the 1960s, in accordance with the objectivism of the structuralist movement as whole, Foucault moves away from any form of politically oriented analysis (Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, 147).

⁷⁸ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 277.

⁷⁹ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 282.

the tables on a familiar question and instead of asking “pourquoi sommes-nous réprimés”, he addresses the following query: “pourquoi disons-nous, avec tant de passion, tant de rancœur contre notre passé le plus proche, contre notre présent et contre nous-mêmes, que nous sommes réprimés?” (HS 16).

In addressing this question, Foucault notes that in looking back upon the last three centuries one finds “une véritable explosion discursive” on the topic of sex (HS 25). The Counter-Reformation, by attributing more importance to penance, led to the task of passing everything having to do with sex through the endless mill of speech (HS 30). By transforming sex into discourse, the Christian pastoral produced specific effects upon desire. The essential thing about this task is that Western man, in telling everything concerning his sex, has participated in installing an apparatus for producing a greater economy of “le sexe des discours” (HS 33). This economy not only enables sex to be judged, but rendered into a thing to be administered (HS 35). In the eyes of Foucault, the eighteenth century witnessed a whole grill “d’observations sur le sexe” that pertained to the likes of the birthrate, the age of marriage, legitimate and illegitimate births, unmarried life, and contraceptive practices (HS 36-37).

On the topic of the repressive hypothesis, sixty odd pages into *Histoire de la sexualité*, Foucault arrives at the conclusion which one would expect: “il faut donc sans doute abandonner l’hypothèse que les sociétés industrielles modernes ont inauguré sur le sexe un âge de répression accrue” (HS 67). He illustrates that as the discourse on sexuality would multiply, it would lead to a science of sexuality. Along the lines of his assessment of the human sciences in *Surveiller et punir*, Foucault argues that the mechanisms of a science of sexuality produce a knowledge of the subject – a knowledge that is in essence an instrument of disciplinary control (HS 94).

As mentioned, there is always more to a title of a work by Foucault than meets the eye. Just as the content of *Surveiller et punir* is not confined to the prison, but has far reaching implications for modern society, so too is it the same with *Histoire de la sexualité*. Beatrice Hanssen explains that although this study is best known for the critique of the repressive hypothesis, it is lesser known that in the final chapters of this work Foucault provides his most sustained treatment of power relations,⁸⁰ and adds a new analysis of bio-power.⁸¹ As it will be observed, sexuality is an important issue for Foucault, since it allows him to address the pressing topic bio-power that relates to the administration of life.

In this final chapter of *Histoire de la sexualité*, ‘Droit de la mort et pouvoir sur la vie’, Foucault explains that for a long time a characteristic of sovereign power was the right to decide life and death (HS 177). This right, formulated as “«de vie et de mort»”, was the right to “*faire mourir*” or “*laisser vivre*” (HS 178). In this instance power culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it: “après tout, il se symbolisait par le glaive” (HS 178). According to Foucault, since the Classical Age, this mechanism of power has undergone a profound transformation. The idea of death that was based upon the right of the sovereign, Foucault recounts, has been reversed to the right of the social body to ensure, maintain, and develop its life. Yet, puzzlingly enough, Foucault observes:

jamais les guerres n’ont été plus sanglantes pourtant que depuis le XIXe siècle et, même toutes proportions gardées, jamais les régimes n’avaient jusque-là pratiqué sur leurs propres populations de pareils holocaustes (HS 179).

⁸⁰ Foucault’s treatment of power relations was considered in the previous chapter.

⁸¹ Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 116.

This power of death appears as the counterpart to a power that exerts a positive influence on life, a power that administers, regulates, and optimizes life. Foucault argues that wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended, rather they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone: “on dresse des populations entières à s’entre-tuer réciproquement au nom de la nécessité pour elles de vivre. Les massacres sont devenus vitaux” (*HS* 180). What is at stake, is the biological existence of the population. In dramatic fashion, Foucault writes:

si le génocide est bien le rêve des pouvoirs modernes, ce n’est pas par un retour aujourd’hui du vieux droit de tuer; c’est parce que le pouvoir se situe et s’exerce au niveau de la vie, de l’espèce, de la race et des phénomènes massifs de population (*HS* 180).

In order that this startling claim can be understood it is beneficial to engage with Foucault’s important lectures delivered at the Collège de France between 7 January and 17 March 1976 under the banner of ‘«Il faut défendre la société»’.⁸²

‘«Il faut défendre la société»’ commences with Foucault stating: “cette année je voudrais commencer, mais commencer seulement, une série de recherches sur la guerre comme principe éventuel d’analyse des rapports du pouvoir” (*IFDS* 21). In contemplating the principle, “selon lequel la politique, c’est la guerre continuée par d’autres moyens”, Foucault argues that this basic rule existed long before Clausewitz (*IFDS* 41). He insists that it can be traced to the end of the civil and religious wars of the sixteenth century. Although these wars ended, the discourse of war infiltrated the political struggles of the seventeenth century, and war presided over the birth of states: “le droit, la paix, les lois sont nés dans le sang et la boue des batailles” (*IFDS* 43). This war, which perpetuates

⁸² In the ‘Situation du cours’, Alessandro Fontana and Mauro Bertani explain: “prononcé du 7 janvier au 17 mars 1976, entre la sortie de *Surveiller et punir* (février 1975) et celle de *La Volonté de savoir* (octobre 1976), ce cours occupe, dans la pensée et dans les recherches de Foucault, une position spécifique, stratégique pourrait-on dire: c’est une sorte de pause, de moment arrêté, de tournant, sans doute, où il évalue le chemin parcouru et trace les lignes des enquêtes à venir” (*IFDS* 247).

a binary structure that runs through and divides society, is described by Foucault as “la guerre des races” (*IFDS* 44, 51).

In outlining what he describes as a counter-history – an alternative history that has to be rediscovered and deciphered (*IFDS* 64) – Foucault argues that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, historical discourse was not about the sovereign as much as about races, “de l’affrontement des races, de la lutte des races à travers les nations et les lois” (*IFDS* 60). He cautions that this struggle, which predates the idea of social or class struggle,⁸³ should not be understood as pertaining exclusively to the oppressed, nor should it be perceived as pinned to a biological meaning; rather, it implies that the social body is composed of two groups that are not only distinct, but “opposés” (*IFDS* 76).

Foucault argues that in the nineteenth century the theme of race evolved into a “racisme d’État” (*IFDS* 213). Reiterating the reasoning found in *Histoire de la sexualité*, Foucault recounts that in the nineteenth century, the sovereign’s old right – to take life or let live – transformed into “le droit de faire vivre et de laisser mourir” (*IFDS* 214). By tracing mechanisms, techniques and technologies, Foucault acknowledges that at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries this new right was initiated by disciplinary techniques of power that centered on the body (*IFDS* 215). However, he adds that in the second half of the eighteenth century a new technology which is not disciplinary power, but does not exclude it, emerges and infiltrates itself within the existing disciplinary techniques (*IFDS* 215-216). Unlike disciplinary power, this power does not address “l’homme-corps”, but focuses on man-as-living-being, “l’homme-espèce” (*IFDS*

⁸³ Foucault cites Marx, toward the end of his life, as telling Engels in a letter the following: “«Mais, notre lutte des classes, tu sais très bien où nous l’avons trouvée: nous l’avons trouvée chez les historiens français quand ils racontaient la lutte des races»” (*IFDS* 69).

216). Whereas discipline approaches the multiplicity in search of individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance and trained, this new technique addresses the multiplicity as a global mass: it is concerned with birth, death, production, and illness. In the nineteenth century, power moves from the seizure of the body to a second seizure that does not individualize, but massifies. It is described as “une «biopolitique» de l’espèce humaine” (*IFDS* 216).

Biopolitics functions by controlling human beings as a species and, therefore, approaches the population as a political problem (*IFDS* 219). What emerges from this strategy is what Foucault terms the power of regularization by which biopolitics seeks to control, by observation, objects of knowledge that relate to life. Its objective: “de prendre en compte la vie” (*IFDS* 220). A crucial element that enables this task to be accomplished is “la «norme»” (*IFDS* 225). The norm, which circulates between the disciplinary and the regulatory, is explained by Foucault as intersecting along “une articulation orthogonale”⁸⁴ (*IFDS* 225). With this intersection, the technologies of discipline meet with the technologies of regulation and succeed in covering the whole surface between body and population.⁸⁵ This power has succeeded in taking control of life in general, and its actual power, Foucault notes, is best expressed by the potential power to deploy the atomic bomb and extinguish life itself.

⁸⁴ Perhaps the best way to understand this metaphor, related to the idea of a right angle, is to think of the disciplinary norm, as exemplified by the unknown gaze of the Panopticon, as pertaining to the vertical line of a right angle – something that is above and sees and disciplines all. When this norm intersects with the regulatory norm it implies that this latter norm spreads horizontally among the population.

⁸⁵ It is important to note that in these lectures Foucault refines his idea of the normalizing society that is presented in *Surveiller et punir*. For instance, he states: “la société de normalisation n’est donc pas, dans ces conditions, une sorte de société disciplinaire généralisée dont les institutions disciplinaires auraient essaimé et finalement recouvert tout l’espace – ce n’est, je crois, qu’une première interprétation, et insuffisante, de l’idée de société de normalisation” (*IFDS* 225). Here, Foucault alludes to the idea that the carceral society, as outlined in *Surveiller et punir*, is simply an initial – and by no means complete – manifestation of the normalizing society.

Foucault admits that the puzzling question that this analysis raises is: “comment un pouvoir comme celui-là peut-il tuer, s’il est vrai qu’il s’agit essentiellement de majorer la vie, d’en prolonger la durée, d’en multiplier les chances, d’en détourner les accidents, ou bien d’en compenser les déficits?” (*IFDS* 226). In Foucault’s view, the idea of racism sheds light upon this predicament. Racism has two functions: on the one hand, by fragmenting the population along the lines of good and inferior, it introduces a break into the domain of life that is under power’s control. On the other, it allows the function of war to continue in a new way. In war, the destruction of the enemy is viewed as something necessary to guarantee one’s safety, but within conditions of biopower this idea implies: “la mort de l’autre, la mort de la mauvaise race, de la race inférieure (ou de dégénéré, ou de l’anormal), c’est ce qui va rendre la vie en général plus saine; plus saine et plus pure” (*IFDS* 228). Killing becomes an imperative that is acceptable in that it eliminates the biological threat and thus improves the species. Filling out the implications of his earlier studies, Foucault explains that this mechanism which enables the destruction of the adversary in order that the population may be protected is applicable to the idea that the criminal or the mad – or various other anomalies – have to be executed or banished (*IFDS* 229). This racist agenda is tied to the workings of the state (*IFDS* 230).

To understand Foucault’s above claim regarding the state, it is pertinent to turn to an important lecture by Foucault from another series of lectures given at the Collège de France in 1977-78.

In his opening lecture, ‘La «gouvernementalité»’, from the lectures given under the title, ‘«Sécurité, territoire et population»’, Foucault, undoubtedly referring to his lectures from 1976, explains that though he had previously tried to explain the emergence of a set of problems related

to the issue of population, it turned out that he needed to take into account the “problème du gouvernement” (DE II 635). As recounted by Foucault, from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth, there is found an explosion of works on the “«arts de gouverner»” (DE II 1635). In the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth, the art of government is focused around “du thème d’une raison d’État” (DE II 648). The state is not governed by natural or divine laws, but according to rational principles that are intrinsic to it. Foucault recounts that in the eighteenth century, as the problem of population emerged, the art of government could turn its attention to bettering the fortune of the population, “d’augmenter leurs richesses, leur durée de vie, leur santé” (DE II 650, 652). What results is the origin of new tactics and techniques that relate to the state’s care for the population, what Foucault describes as relating to pastoral power.

As noted in Chapter One, in his Tanner lecture from 1979, ‘«*Omnes et singulatim*»: vers une critique de la raison politique’, Foucault illustrates that pastoral power evolved into the reason of the state. In this lecture, Foucault illustrates that modern states were influenced by “la raison d’État” and “théorie de la police” (DE II 969). Explaining that reason of the state is regarded as an art, Foucault argues that this concept derives not from customs or traditions, but from rational knowledge which is based upon the reflection or the observation of what it governs: “l’État” (DE II 970). The aim of such an art of governing is not only to reinforce power over the domain, but to reinforce the state itself, as government is only possible “si la force de l’État est connue; ainsi peut-elle être entretenue” (DE II 972). Accordingly, Foucault explains that the reason of the state pertains to its government in accordance with the strength of the state. He elaborates that the sixteenth and seventeenth century understanding of police relate to this idea, since the police, within this historical context, is an administration that heads the state and enforces a moral outlook which, by wielding power over men,

provides the state with “un peu plus de force” (*DE II* 974-975). By citing Gottlobs von Justici’s *Éléments de la police*,⁸⁶ in the eighteenth century, Foucault observes that “l’objet spécifique de la police reste défini comme la vie en société d’individus vivants” (*DE II* 977). With reference to von Justici’s description of the police, Foucault makes four important points: first, the police enables the state to increase its power and exert its strength. To this point of von Justici’s, Foucault states:

il définit parfaitement ce qu’il tient pour le but de l’art moderne de gouverner, ou de la rationalité étatique: développer ces éléments constitutifs de la vie des individus de telle sorte que leur développement renforce aussi la puissance de l’État (*DE II* 978).

Next, von Justici makes a distinction between “*Polizei*” and “*Politik*” (*DE II* 978). The former, explained by Foucault as a negative task, pertains to the police fighting the internal and external enemies of the state. The latter, a positive task, relates to the police promoting the lives of individuals and the state. This motive is pertinent for the reason that what the police define as an object is the population itself. Reflecting upon the art of government, Foucault explains that von Justici’s elaboration of “*Polizeiwissenschaft*” is a grid through which the population, as an object of knowledge, can be observed and analyzed (*DE II* 979). At the conclusion of ‘«*Omnes et singulatim*»’, Foucault declares that liberation can only come by attacking not only political rationality’s inevitable effects of individualization and total power over life, but by attacking political rationality’s very “racines” (*DE II* 980).

Up to this point Foucault’s idea of power has been considered in its various formulations. Foucault certainly rethinks this notion. Yet, there is a certain coherence to the refinements which it undergoes that is worth elucidating. As noted, biopower is intimately linked to disciplinary power.

⁸⁶ J.H. Gottlobs von Justici, *Grundsätze der Policey-Wissenschaft*, Göttingen: A. Van den Hoecks, 1756.

It is biopower that perpetuates what Foucault describes as a racist agenda. Such an agenda is linked to the rationality of the state, an agenda that it may be added relates to the idea of struggle.

On a couple of occasions in this thesis, the influence of the dialectic in Foucault's thought has been noted.⁸⁷ Admittedly, the idea of a dialectical orientation in Foucault may sound dubious, as he is on record as stating:

la dialectique (comme logique de contradiction) ... ne sauraient rendre compte de ce qui est l'intelligibilité intrinsèque des affrontements. Cette intelligibilité, la dialectique est une manière d'en esquiver la réalité toujours hasardeuse et ouverte, en la rabattant sur le squelette hégélien⁸⁸ (*DE II* 145).

All the same, Daniel Touey makes the important point that when Foucault states that he desires to surmount dialectics, he is referring to the rigid Marxist theory of society which affirmed that the working out of class struggle was the true and only motor of history.⁸⁹ It is crucial to note that Foucault's precise relation with Marxism is ambiguous, and beyond the scope of this thesis to consider.⁹⁰ All the same, in the view of this thesis, it should be brought to attention that Foucault,

⁸⁷ As mentioned, though Foucault may proceed, at times, in a dialectical way it is crucial to state that he does not see history unfolding in a teleological manner. This point should become clear at the conclusion of this subsection. Also, as it has already been noted, the dialectic in Foucault relates to Hegel's idea of opposition, and it does relate to a movement toward an higher order.

⁸⁸ At the end of the next subsection it will be noted that Foucault fails to shake free from the Hegelian skeleton.

⁸⁹ (Touey, 'Foucault's Apology', 94). Related to Touey's point, Mark Poster explains that "Foucault and the poststructuralists ... do not think critical theory can find its center in the working class or that it should busy itself with searching for a center in any case. The history of socialist and capitalist societies in the twentieth century provides all the evidence one could want to dispute the claim that the working class is the unique vanguard of 'total emancipation'" (Poster, *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism*, 105).

⁹⁰ In *Les mots et les choses*, Marxism is presented, perhaps too hastily and too elementarily, as an expression of the modern *episteme* (*MC* 332). Yet, in later remarks, Foucault acknowledges that Marxism has influenced his work. For instance, he explains that "il y a aussi de ma part une sorte de jeu. Il m'arrive souvent de citer des concepts, des phrases, des textes de Marx, mais sans me sentir obligé d'y joindre la petite pièce authenticatrice, qui consiste à faire une citation de Marx, à mettre soigneusement la référence en bas de page et à accompagner la citation d'une réflexion élogieuse. Moyennant quoi, on est considéré comme quelqu'un qui connaît Marx, qui révere Marx et qui se verra honoré par les revues dites marxistes. Je cite Marx sans le dire, sans mettre de guillemets, et comme ils ne sont pas capables de reconnaître les textes de Marx, je passe pour être celui qui ne cite pas Marx" (*DE I* 1620). Also, echoing Sartre's claim

like Sartre, is intrigued – not by the Marxist concept of class struggle – but by the Marxist idea of struggle. For instance, in an interview from 1977, Foucault raises the following question:

Ce qui me frappe, dans la plupart des textes, sinon de Marx, du moins des marxistes, c'est qu'on passe toujours sous silence (sauf peut-être chez Trotski) ce qu'on entend par lutte quand on parle de lutte des classes. Que veut dire lutte, ici? (*DE II* 310-311).

In response, he presents the hypothesis: “tout le monde à tout le monde. ... Nous luttons tous contre tous. Et il y a toujours quelque chose en nous qui lutte contre autre chose en nous” (*DE II* 311).

Again, similar to Sartre, in 1978, Foucault explains that starting with Marx:

ce dont j'aimerais discuter ... ce n'est pas du problème de la sociologie des classes, mais de la méthode stratégique concernant la lutte. C'est là que s'ancre mon intérêt pour Marx et c'est à partir de là que j'aimerais poser les problèmes (*DE II* 606).

As observed, like Sartre before him, Foucault deepens the idea of struggle. Although class struggle is not the motor of history, in the eyes of Foucault, history is nevertheless driven by struggle. In fact, struggle is what provides history with its intelligibility.⁹¹

With respect to his analysis of power, antagonism certainly provides history, as depicted by Foucault, with a distinct shade. Biopower implies that social relations are based upon nothing other than war-like conditions that pertain to a racist agenda – a program that reflects human relations as being nothing other than cruel. All the same, this horrific picture of humanity is related to nothing

that we cannot, as of yet, go beyond Marxism, Foucault states: “il est impossible de faire de l'histoire actuellement sans utiliser une kyrielle de concepts liés directement ou indirectement à la pensée de Marx et sans se placer dans un horizon qui a été décrit et défini par Marx. À la limite, on pourrait se demander quelle différence il pourrait y avoir entre être historien et être marxiste” (*DE I* 1621). For an account of Foucault's relation to Marxism, see Étienne Balibar, ‘Foucault et Marx. L'enjeu du nominalisme’, in *Michel Foucault philosophe*, 54-75.

⁹¹ Foucault states: “L'histoire n'a pas de sens, ce qui ne veut pas dire qu'elle est absurde ou incohérente. Elle est au contraire intelligible et elle doit pouvoir être analysée jusque dans son moindre détail: mais selon l'intelligibilité des luttes, des stratégies et des tactiques” (*DE II* 145).

other than the modern art of government. Struggle, as a defining characteristic of human relations, is related to the *modus operandi* of the state's rationality.

At this point, let us examine how Foucault equates power with freedom.

In Chapter One the implications of Foucault's claim, in 'Le sujet et le pouvoir', that the subject – not power – has been his primary focus were considered. As noted, in his dialogue with Kant, Foucault proposes an idea of a refusal for the present (*DE II* 1051). This refusal, a response to the techniques of individualization or political rationality in Western history, seeks to promote new forms of identities. It also relates to the the indefinite work of freedom that is outlined in 'Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?'. As observed, in this essay, Foucault, again by engaging with Kant, suggests a way out of the present that relates to the idea that criticism will expose those limits thought to be universal and necessary, as contingent and arbitrary (*DE II* 1393).

It may be recalled that Hanssen maintains that in his later phase Foucault is involved with two different but not incongruous projects of study: an art of government and an ethics of self-government.⁹² In light of his studies relating to the art of government and his dialogues with Kant, Hanssen explains that Foucault proposes that we should not be governed in a certain manner. To this point, Foucault's studies on the art of government furnish his thought with an ethical charge. For instance, in 'Le sujet et le pouvoir', repeating the warning issued in '«*Omnes et singulatim*»', Foucault advises:

la relation entre la rationalisation et les excès du pouvoir politique est évidente. Et nous ne devrions pas avoir à attendre la bureaucratie ou les camps de concentration pour reconnaître l'existence de relations de ce type (*DE II* 1043-1044).

⁹² Hanssen explains that as Foucault moved away from framing critique by the politics of governmentality, he steadily became more interested in the ethics of self-government which he was pursuing in the second and third volumes of *Histoire de la sexualité* (Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 57).

With respect to this relation between rationalization and political power, Foucault acknowledges that the problem which remains is: what to do with such an evident fact? (*DE II* 1044).

As noted in Chapter One, Hanssen explains that in ‘Le sujet et le pouvoir’, Foucault proposes to address this issue through his idea of agonism: a project that seeks to unveil oppressive patterns of social alienation.⁹³ However, Hanssen argues that instead of elaborating how such a project could be carried out in an historical and political sense, Foucault resorts to a Nietzschean idea of self-fashioning that is related to Baudelaire’s aestheticism.⁹⁴ The shortcomings of this move, culminating in an aesthetics of existence, have been extensively considered. Thus, let us examine Foucault’s concept of agonism, and contemplate its relation to freedom.

In response to the alarming relation between rationality and the excess of political power, Foucault declares that what is needed is “une nouvelle économie des relations de pouvoir” (*DE II* 1043). The word economy is employed in a theoretical and practical sense, and in this capacity it relates to philosophy’s task of keeping watch over the excessive powers of political rationality. Foucault elaborates that to move towards a new economy of power relations in our present, as a starting point, one must analyse these relations through “l’affrontement des stratégies” (*DE II* 1044). For instance, one studies the relations between the binary oppositions that are present in society and, moreover, one sees these relations in terms of struggles. The main objective of proceeding in this manner is to attack “une technique” or “une forme” of power – a power that makes individuals subjects (*DE II* 1046). Recognizing that the word “«sujet»” has two meanings – “sujet soumis à l’autre par le contrôle et la dépendance, et sujet attaché à sa propre identité par la conscience ou la

⁹³ Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 75.

⁹⁴ Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 75.

connaissance de soi” – Foucault elaborates that both definitions imply a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to (*DE II* 1046). According to Foucault, it is precisely the struggle against this dual idea of the subject that is crucial for our present, a struggle that is directed against the individualizing and totalizing powers of the state.

In outlining how power is exercised, Foucault explains that it brings into play relations between individuals and groups, and adds that it is “un mode d’action de certains sur certains autres” (*DE II* 1052, 1054-1055). As a mode of action upon other actions, power affects actions in the present and those that may occur in the future. Elaborating upon this idea, Foucault states:

il est un ensemble d’actions sur des actions possibles: il opère sur le champ de possibilité où vient s’inscrire le comportement de sujets agissants: il incite, il induit, il détourne, il facilite ou rend plus difficile; il élargit ou il limite, il rend plus ou moins probable; à la limite, il contraint ou empêche absolument; mais il est bien toujours une manière d’agir sur un ou sur des sujets agissants, et ce tant qu’ils agissent ou qu’ils sont susceptibles d’agir. Une action sur des actions (*DE II* 1056).

Power is what conducts or shapes individuals’ actions in a field of possibilities. Moreover, by acting within relations of power, individuals perpetuate power. As an activity of individuals, power is a productive force that is constantly structuring and restructuring the actions and relations of individuals.

Foucault proposes that the equivocal nature of the French word “«conduite»” can elucidate the idea of relations of power (*DE II* 1056). “La «conduite»” means to “«mener»” others and , at the same time, it means a way of behaving in a more or less open field of possibilities. Elaborating upon this idea, Foucault draws upon the term “«gouvernement»” (*DE II* 1056). However, his appropriation of this term does not relate to its contemporary denotation whereby the term exclusively pertains to political structures and institutions. Rather, Foucault appeals to its sixteenth century connotation in

which it signifies: “la manière de diriger la conduite d’individus ou de groupes” (*DE II* 1056). As recognized by Foucault, “gouverner”, in this sense, “c’est structurer le champ d’action éventuel des autres” (*DE II* 1056).

In an interesting move, Foucault elucidates that when power is defined in this manner, the important element of freedom is included, since power is only exercised over free subjects. Foucault thus explains: “entendons par là des sujets individuels ou collectifs qui ont devant eux un champ de possibilité où plusieurs conduites, plusieurs réactions et divers mode de comportement peuvent prendre place” (*DE II* 1056). Power, as freedom, implies that within a field of possibilities there are always several ways that individuals may comport themselves.⁹⁵ Foucault admits that if the determining factors saturate the whole, then there is no power. For instance, he states that “l’esclavage n’est pas un rapport de pouvoir lorsque l’homme est aux fers (il s’agit alors d’un rapport physique de contrainte), mais justement lorsqu’il peut se déplacer et à la limite s’échapper” (*DE II* 1056-1057). If a slave is in chains then there is no power – there is simply constraint and total domination. In other words, total determination and no freedom. However, when an individual is presented with the possibility of escape then there is a relation of power. In short, there is freedom. Accordingly, power is not equivalent to determinism; rather, freedom and power are mutually inclusive. Freedom, in fact, is described as a “préalable” of power: for power to be, freedom must exist (*DE II* 1057).

Foucault elaborates that the relationship between power and freedom are inseparable, and this implies that freedom, as coexisting with power, presents the possibility of escape (*DE II* 1057). He

⁹⁵ Elsewhere, Foucault explains that if there are relations of power throughout the social field it is because there is freedom everywhere (*DE II* 1539).

states that “au coeur de la relation de pouvoir, la «provoquant» sans cesse, il y a la rétivité du vouloir et l'intransitivité de la liberté” (*DE II* 1057). Foucault adds that rather than discussing freedom in terms of “un «antagonisme» essentiel” it is more pertinent to think of freedom as “un «agonisme»”: a relationship that is not so much a face-to face struggle but more of “une provocation permanente” (*DE II* 1057). According to Foucault, if it is true that at the heart of power relations are the principles of freedom, then a permanent provocation is always possible. Therefore, no relation of power exists without the possibility of an “échappatoire ou fuite”⁹⁶ (*DE II* 1061). Every power relation implies a strategy of struggle in which two forces come together that are not superimposed insomuch as they constitute a permanent limit for each other and a point of possible reversal (*DE II* 1061). Foucault explains:

Un rapport d'affrontement rencontre son terme, son moment final (et la victoire d'un des deux adversaires) lorsqu'au jeu des réactions antagonistes viennent se substituer les mécanismes stables par lesquels l'un peut conduire de manière assez constante et avec suffisamment de certitude la conduite des autres; pour un rapport d'affrontement, dès lors qu'il n'est pas lutte à mort, la fixation d'un rapport de pouvoir constitue un point de mire – à la fois son accomplissement et sa propre mise en suspens (*DE II* 1061).

In the eyes of Foucault, it would not be possible for power to exist without points of insubordination which are means of escape: freedom implies the possibility of an exit.

Hansen astutely points out that Foucault's above explanation of power and the possibility of escape is rife with Hegelian overtones.⁹⁷ According to Hanssen, “almost step by step”, Foucault's explication of power struggles follows the consecutive dialectical moments that punctuate Hegel's

⁹⁶ One may be tempted to accuse Foucault with simple word-play with this explanation of freedom. Yet, perhaps it can be suggested that Foucault, by invoking freedom in light with power, is making a Kantian move, along the lines that whereas Kant invokes freedom to present the possibility of moral law, Foucault calls upon freedom to present the possibility of new relations of power.

⁹⁷ Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 156.

master-bondman dialectic, from the potential struggle to death to its termination in favor of an institutionalized (momentarily) balance of power between dominator and dominated.⁹⁸ She describes ‘Le sujet et le pouvoir’ as an extraordinary essay for the reason that Foucault locates the subject’s dissenting freedom at the level of concrete strategies. Yet, at the same time, she expresses dismay at the fact that this essay ends on such an anticlimactic note: Foucault appeals to the most conventional philosophical parable of adversarial confrontation to have been codified in the West.⁹⁹

Recall that near the beginning of ‘Le sujet et le pouvoir’, Foucault states that what is needed is a new economy of power relations. Presumably, in light of his analyses of biopower and the art of government, what is needed is an economy of power relations that will not perpetuate the presence of concentration camps, and will address the roots of the rationality of the state. An economy that will ameliorate the binary struggle that is typical of power. Moreover, Foucault decries that we must refuse who we are. Why should we refuse who we are? Because we are beings that are constantly warring with one another. Because our very humanity is at stake. How can we refuse to be who we are? Through our freedom. Yet, as noted, Foucault’s final words on this project of refusal are disappointing. In fact, one is reminded of Sartre’s explanation of conflict in *L’être et le néant*: “pendant que je tente de me libérer de l’emprise d’autrui, autrui tente de se libérer de la mienne; pendant que je cherche à asservir autrui, autrui cherche à m’asservir” (EN 413). This Sartrean idea of antagonism is only deepened by scarcity in the *Critique*. While Sartre recognizes conflict to be the original meaning of human relations, so too does Foucault. Seemingly, for Foucault there is no

⁹⁸ Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 156.

⁹⁹ Hanssen, *Critique of Violence*, 155-156.

exit from our present. Justifiably, one might ask, why does Foucault invoke freedom in conjunction with power?

5.4 Sartre, Foucault, and the Status of Freedom

In this section what this thesis purports to be the most important convergence between Sartre and Foucault on the topic of freedom will be addressed, but at the same time, it will be shown that although the status of freedom in the thought of Sartre and Foucault is intended to be positive, the failure to extensively address the issue of freedom as occurring within a social horizon leaves freedom with a negative status.

It can be gathered that freedom for Sartre and Foucault is intended to be positive. Freedom presents the possibility of a way out of what can be described as our social and historical being. Although there is a world of difference between the idea of authentic freedom that Sartre presents in *L'être et le néant* and his conception of freedom that arises with the group-in-fusion and the group-by-oath in the *Critique*, these two ideas of freedom share a similar assumption: simply put, through freedom individuals can possibly exist in different modes of being. The authentic being-for-itself exists as a being that is free from and not tied down to the realm of the being-in-itself. The group-by-oath, on the other hand, consists of individuals whose existence is structured – not upon the practico-inert field– but upon freedom. It is pertinent to note that in the *Critique*, Sartre explains that individuals are free within their serial social relations – they just are not as free as they could be. Accordingly, by evoking freedom Sartre presents the possibility that humans can exist in an alternative grouping than the series.

Akin to Sartre, a similar sentiment toward freedom is present in Foucault. Foucault calls upon freedom to explain the practices by which subjects constitute themselves as subjects. In Foucault's eyes, within relations of power, as dire as the result of the action of subjects is, subjects are nonetheless free. As noted, power and freedom are mutually inclusive: freedom is described as the very precondition of power. Accordingly, by evoking freedom, a refusal of what we are, a way out of the present, and a new economy of power relations are all possibilities. On this point, it is important to contextualize the thought of Foucault.

In search of a way out of the present, in his later thought, Foucault presents two alternatives: on the one hand, he calls for the necessity of a new economy of power relations while, on the other, he puts forth an explicit ethical orientation that calls upon the subject to create itself along the lines of a work of art. As discussed, this project of an aesthetics of existence, like Sartre's idea of authentic freedom, does not appeal to an inner structure or human nature of the subject, but instead, relates to the idea that there is nothing essential about the subject. Because the subject is never completely defined it can, via its freedom, become something else. As argued, this ethical orientation in Foucault relates to a specific historical conception of artistic freedom which itself is a contentious issue. Moreover, Foucault's aesthetics of existence does not advance the question of freedom any further than Sartre's early existentialism. All the same, in Foucault, and Sartre, there is another route that relates to freedom which is worth pursuing. However, as it will be argued, this route presents that danger of reducing freedom to a concept so abstract that any ethical impetus it may have risks becoming evanescent.

Perhaps the most enlightening convergence between Sartre and Foucault on the question of freedom is that both envision freedom occurring in a social field. As noted, Sartre explains that one

is born into a practico-inert field: a sphere which conditions or predestines the subject's possibilities. Similarly, Foucault explains that an individual or a collective is faced with a field in which several ways of comportment are possible. Both recognize that freedom occurs in a concrete realm that implies – not that anything is possible – but that freedom is subjected to various outcomes. In other words, freedom is partially determined. Yet, in Sartre and Foucault, paradoxically, and for lack of a better expression, this determination of freedom is the result of freedom itself.

History, according to Sartre, is a multiplicity: a process that is the result of human freedom or praxis that does not abide by any coherent plan; it is a totalisation without a totalizer.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, history results in the practico-inert structures that foster the cultural field and provide freedom with an horizon. Foucault also recognizes that history follows no grand plan: his historical studies may demonstrate that history operates on strategy of struggle but, at the same time, they do not demonstrate that this struggle abides by any ultimate strategy. As explained through power, history is the result of freedom: actions upon actions that relate to actions in the present or those in the future. All the same, abiding by these explanations, freedom is almost obscene for the reason that its effects do nothing to better the human predicament. In fact, human activity appears determined in the vein that it make things worse.

Though neither Sartre or Foucault entertain the idea that history is moving towards any ultimate goal, both maintain that struggle lends history its intelligibility. In Sartre this idea relates to scarcity, while in Foucault it pertains to power. Both hold that there is an ubiquitous¹⁰¹ and fluid

¹⁰⁰ As discussed earlier in this chapter, in section 5.2 (i), history, as a totalisation, is an ongoing process that, without any grand scheme or totalizer, is nevertheless continually building upon the sum of its parts.

¹⁰¹ For instance, in an interview, Sartre explains: “Even here, among ourselves, there is scarcity in our conversation: scarcity of ideas, scarcity of understanding. ... There is scarcity on every level and from every point of view” (Sartre, ‘An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre’, in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, 30). Similarly, with respect to power, Foucault

force¹⁰² that operates within history and shapes individuals.¹⁰³ For freedom these respective notions have dramatic implications. As noted, Sartre argues that freedom is damning for the reason that man's praxis haunts him in the future. Within scarcity, the practico-inert becomes a counter-finality that dominates man and separates him from his fellow men. Struggle is the motor of Sartrean history – a struggle that is nevertheless driven by the praxis or freedom of humans. Foucault never explicitly says that freedom is a curse along the lines of Sartre, but in light of his historical analyses, it is difficult to see how things could be otherwise. He consistently brings to light that the humanist aspirations of the eighteenth century did not ameliorate things as much as they set in place mechanisms that could advance an ever increasing state of domination.¹⁰⁴ In light of his studies of biopower and the arts of government, humans, via their freedom, appear doomed to a cycle of violence and domination which, it may be added, implies that their very humanity is at stake. Akin

states: “Je veux dire que, dans les relations humaines, quelles qu’elles soient – qu’il s’agisse de communiquer verbalement, comme nous le faisons maintenant, ou qu’il s’agisse de relations amoureuses, institutionnelles ou économiques –, le pouvoir est toujours présent” (*DE II* 1539).

¹⁰² As noted earlier in this chapter, Sartre describes scarcity as follows: “Il ne s’agit donc pas d’une structure permanente, au sens où elle demeurerait fixe et inerte à un certain niveau de l’épaisseur humaine, mais plutôt d’un certain moment des relations humaines, toujours dépassé et partiellement liquidé, toujours renaissant” (*CRD* 246). On the topic of power, Foucault explains: “L’exercice du pouvoir n’est pas un fait brut, une donnée institutionnelle, ni une structure qui se maintient ou se brise: il s’élabore, se transforme, s’organise, se dote de procédures plus ou moins ajustées” (*DE II* 1059).

¹⁰³ Moreover, the respective forces that both see as operating within history are not overcome by socialism. Sartre, when asked about socialism and the possible end of scarcity, responded: “It would not lead to the disappearance of scarcity” (Sartre, ‘An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre’, in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, 32). Along similar lines, when asked if the deployment of the Panopticon system pertained to the whole of industrial society, Foucault stated: “Société industrielle ou société capitaliste? Je ne saurais répondre, si ce n’est pour dire que ces formes de pouvoir se sont retrouvées dans les sociétés socialistes; le transfert a été immédiat” (*DE II* 202).

¹⁰⁴ Akin to Sartre, Foucault argues that one group or class does not set out to purposefully dominate another, as he states: “on peut donc dire que la stratégie de moralisation de la classe ouvrière est celle de la bourgeoisie. On peut même dire que c’est la stratégie qui permet à la classe bourgeoise d’être la classe bourgeoise, et d’exercer sa domination. Mais que ce soit la classe bourgeoise qui, au niveau de son idéologie ou de son projet économique, ait, comme une sorte de sujet à la fois réel et fictif, inventé et imposé de force cette stratégie à la classe ouvrière, je crois que ça, on ne peut pas le dire” (*DE II* 307). As discussed earlier in this chapter, with respect to the iron and coal complex of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Sartre argues that one group did not set out to bring poorer conditions into existence for another (*CRD* 265-266).

to Sartre, struggle is the engine of Foucauldian history, a struggle that is nonetheless propelled by human action or freedom.

Although Sartre and Foucault see a force operating within history that coexists with freedom, it should be noted that Foucault's idea of power is more coherent than Sartrean scarcity. By postulating scarcity as a limit to be overcome, Sartre reduces freedom to an ideal so radical that it is terrifying. In the eyes of Sartre, through no intentional project, individuals, in their freedom, have limited their freedom. Though this was not a result of any historical plan, Sartre nevertheless wants to judge: he wants humans to be more free by hanging the fear of death over their heads. Sartre's thought is limited by the fact that he cannot entertain a concept of freedom that is not governed by anything save freedom itself: he searches for a pure state of freedom that relates to a removal of all limits. Granted, in the *Critique*, the idea that freedom is lateral and intimately related to the other is an improvement upon the purely subjective freedom of *L'être et le néant*. But, it should be noted that though the group-in-fusion and group-by-oath result in humans acting together in the name of freedom, these groups are not engendered by any intentional human project; rather, they are the result of extreme historical circumstances.

With respect to freedom, power, as elucidated by Foucault, is certainly a more plausible concept than Sartrean scarcity. Unlike the transcendental quality of scarcity, power provides a much more detailed historical account that reveals specific strategic situations. Moreover, unlike scarcity, power is not a limit to be overcome; rather, it relates to the horizon of freedom that human activity produces. Thus, it is important to note that when Foucault raises the idea of freedom in tandem with power, he does not seek a removal of all limits; rather, he recognizes that freedom always takes place within a context. This point is novel in that Foucault is not entertaining an idea of a pure or an ideal

state of freedom. For instance, unlike Sartre, he is not setting out to find a future where reciprocity and freedom are sovereign. His suggestion for a new economy of relations of power implies that asymmetries within social relations will always exist, but presumably, this new economy will entail more freedom and less asymmetry. All the same, in this context, one would expect Foucault to say more about freedom than presenting it along the lines of Hegel's master and slave dialectic. Admittedly, in light of his untimely death, Foucault may have elaborated upon this issue. Yet, as it stands, his account of freedom remains unsatisfactory.

As noted, though freedom is certainly intended to be positive in Foucault and Sartre their thought presents a dilemma. This difficulty relates to the following: if Foucault's aesthetics of existence and his notion of agonism are dismissed as inadequate strategies for freedom, and if Sartre's idea of the birth of humanity is deemed to be too radical, what happens to the status of freedom? The quandary that Sartre and Foucault present is that if history is a never-ending process of struggle which is the result of human freedom, what happens to positive freedom, the possibility for change? Before addressing these queries, let us return to two important interpretations of Foucault and Sartre.

As noted in the Introduction of this thesis, while explaining that European modernity gave rise to the two new and equally opposed moral dispositions of "an ethos of individuality" and "an ethos of authority", Barry Allen locates Foucault in the camp of the former which recognizes that the best polity accommodates the largest number of different patterns of conduct.¹⁰⁵ Elaborating that "Foucault belongs to the first generation to live under the full-blown security- and welfare-state, born from the new experience of total war, the total mobilization of an entire society for the prosecution

¹⁰⁵ Allen, 'Foucault and Modern Political Philosophy', 166.

of an end at once military, political and ideological”, Allen explains that on the other side of the watershed these events define Foucault’s work in an effort to find a new way for conceptions adequate to the experience of government.¹⁰⁶

Allen reasons that the problem that Foucault’s idea of power, defined as a mode of action that governs, raises is: “not how to get rid of it ... but how to make the inevitable asymmetries compatible with the greatest personal liberty for subjective individuality”.¹⁰⁷ In the eyes of Allen, Foucault’s late work on governmentality can be situated in the normative context that specifies how forces are aligned against the modern ethos of individuality. Foucault, according to Allen, reaffirms the traditional message of modern political individualism: “the political government is properly subordinate to ethical ends, to the ethos of individuality, to what makes *individual* life worth living, rather than to collective ends imposed on individuals for whatever reason, in the name of whatever stirring ideal (social justice, democracy, progress, and so on)”.¹⁰⁸

As also mentioned in the Introduction, Knee explains that “Sartre tries to come to grips with the political problem of modernity: the self-institution of society without a transcendent framework of legitimacy”.¹⁰⁹ Sartre’s thought, Knee elaborates, is motivated by the Rousseau-inspired Jacobin ideal that the French Revolution gave itself: “a starting anew after the destruction of the Old Order, the myth of a new origin symbolized by the execution of the King”.¹¹⁰ In the eyes of Sartre, since the

¹⁰⁶ Allen, ‘Foucault and Modern Political Philosophy’, 167.

¹⁰⁷ Allen, ‘Foucault and Modern Political Philosophy’, 177.

¹⁰⁸ Allen, ‘Foucault and Modern Political Philosophy’, 190.

¹⁰⁹ Knee, ‘Sartre and Political Legitimacy’, 142.

¹¹⁰ Knee, ‘Sartre and Political Legitimacy’, 142.

institution of society has no ultimate grounding, a new order has to be sought: a form of collective existence that can provide an adequate translation of the standard of reciprocity.¹¹¹

To understand this Sartrean project, Knee elaborates that it is useful to appeal to the historical tradition of anarchism, specifically the nineteenth century critique, resulting from the French Revolution, that was a denunciation of the hypocrisy and formalism of bourgeois democratic institutions.¹¹² Knee explains that this tradition is partly inspired by Rousseau's idea of the contract of the unity of wills but, at the same time, vigorously opposes this concept in order to emphasize another aspect in Rousseau: "direct democracy and the rejection of political representation".¹¹³ According to Knee, like the anarchists¹¹⁴ before him, Sartre defines a political project that is based upon the critique of all political institutions. This paradoxical political strategy manifests itself not with reference to anarchism, but to Marxism.¹¹⁵

Knee argues that the political institutions which Marx dismisses as unreal, force Sartre to rethink Marxian epistemology along the lines that the Stalinist Party and the State are seen as a degradation of individual praxis:¹¹⁶ forms of violence which imply that the historical process has

¹¹¹ Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 144.

¹¹² Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 144.

¹¹³ Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 144.

¹¹⁴ It can be noted that Foucault's thought also has a relation with anarchism. For instance, J.G. Merquior states that "libertarianism, indeed, is the best label for Foucault's outlook as a social theorist. More precisely, he was (though he didn't use the word) a modern anarchist" (J.G. Merquior, *Foucault*, 154-156).

¹¹⁵ Expanding upon this explanation, Knee notes that an aspect of Marx's thought that is commonly overlooked is what Marx, in the *Jewish Question*, calls "the 'double of existence' of man and citizen (in Rousseau's terms) or of civil society and the State (in Hegel's terms)". Marx seeks to achieve an actual democracy that, based upon Man's species being, is not represented in a separate sphere but is "*immediately political*" (Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 145-146).

¹¹⁶ Knee adds that "coming after Merleau-Ponty's analyses, the *Critique* is Sartre's effort to confront on the theoretical plane the very problems of institutions and of social passivity left unthought by Marxism" (Knee, 'Sartre and Political Legitimacy', 147-148).

become locked in the circle of institutional violence. In light of this predicament, political practice becomes a movement of spontaneous and violent reaction to the violence of institutionalization: “whether it be that of bureaucratic Stalinism, fascism, or liberal democracy”.¹¹⁷ Yet, Knee observes that though this posture provides Sartre with a formidable weapon for the critique of institutional policies, Sartre realizes that he has no solution to offer concerning the problem of stable structures that are both required by political action and, at the same time, threaten political action with inertia.¹¹⁸ What remains is “a politics of punctual, local resistance with no other end than itself” that corresponds to the concrete militancy of the seventies in which Sartre revelled: a politics characterized by a refusal to go beyond freedom as sheer independence and revolt, and the demand that the values of individual independence be given immediate reality.¹¹⁹

Knee maintains that Sartre’s politics can be related to another contemporary thinker, Foucault, apparently Sartre’s philosophical opposite, but himself very much at home in the movements of the seventies, and sympathetic to questioning the moral and political order in the name of the value of individual independence. Like Sartre’s punctual resistance, Knee explains that “Foucault minutely decodes the modern systems of normalization and social control while participating in localized initiatives of contestation”.¹²⁰ He notes that however different their intentions may be, Sartre and Foucault encourage all initiatives which undermine power relations

¹¹⁷ Knee, ‘Sartre and Political Legitimacy’, 147.

¹¹⁸ Knee, ‘Sartre and Political Legitimacy’, 148.

¹¹⁹ Knee, ‘Sartre and Political Legitimacy’, 150.

¹²⁰ Knee, ‘Sartre and Political Legitimacy’, 150.

and provide toolkits whereby social institutions can be demystified; but nothing more.¹²¹ Whereas Sartre offers no alternative for structures that are inevitably required by a polity, Knee observes that Foucault recognizes that “political theory and practice which remain in the traditional framework, attempting to extend or to reverse the contractual idea of legitimacy by proposing or struggling for alternative forms of power without breaking out of the model of the former ones, are ... hopelessly anachronistic and can only produce repeated failures”.¹²² According to Knee, in Foucault’s view, “what is required is not so much a new political theory but an attitudinal leap which accepts the impossibility of any general political project”.¹²³

From the above analyses of Allen and Knee it can be seen that Sartre and Foucault are two thinkers who are concerned with individual freedom – what Gutting describes as the defining characteristic of twentieth century French philosophy.¹²⁴ As argued in the preceding chapter, the political activity of Sartre and Foucault reveals that they are ethically motivated by the perception that humans have a tendency to gaze upon their world and themselves through an objective lens which inevitably limits freedom. Their political activity can be explained as a reaction to the forces that hinder individual freedom. Quite simply, it can be stated that for Sartre and Foucault, individual

¹²¹ Knee, ‘Sartre and Political Legitimacy’, 150.

¹²² Knee adds: “just as Sartre’s politics can be understood by reference to the French Revolution’s myth of regeneration and a quest for a new social order ... so Foucault’s politics also proceeds from the crisis symbolized by the beheading of the King. But for him this event, although it does capture the condition of modern man having lost his marks, is not the symbol of a new existential or philosophical quest for meaning. Such a quest, according to Foucault, would only lock itself in the interminable experience of finitude. No longer the symbol of a search for a new political legitimacy, it is rather a sign that a tradition of politics conceived in terms of sovereignty and centralized power has come to an end” (Knee, ‘Sartre and Political Legitimacy’, 151).

¹²³ (Knee, ‘Sartre and Political Legitimacy’, 151). Foucault states: “Je dirais que dans la rationalité politique quotidienne l’échec des théories politiques n’est probablement dû ni à la politique ni aux théories, mais au type de rationalité dans lesquelles elles s’enracinent” (*DE II* 1646).

¹²⁴ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 380.

freedom is important, since social formations smother this ideal. Moreover, one can say that the importance of individual freedom provides the thought of Sartre and Foucault with a normative thrust. All the same, if the political activity of Sartre and Foucault reveals such a motivation, at the same time, on the theoretical plane, their political endeavours rest upon sketchy grounds. As noted, Knee explains that Sartre offers no proposal related to the necessary structures that the political realm requires. Although Allen claims that Foucault seeks a new concept of government that nurtures the ethos of individuality, as Knee recognizes, such a political bearing for Foucault is contingent upon an attitudinal leap. Because this leap can only occur in the future, what about the present, a defining concern of Foucault, and presumably Sartre?¹²⁵ Sartre and Foucault are two philosophers marching together in the name of freedom, but two thinkers who have no ground beneath their feet for how this idea of freedom could be carried out in the political realm. Has, as Gutting asks, the twentieth century French problematic of freedom worked itself out?¹²⁶

In what follows, it will be argued that unless Sartre and Foucault introduce an idea of the good into their social theories, then indeed freedom will have exhausted itself.

As noted in the previous chapter, Alain Renaut explains that "la démarche sartrienne" meets with the contemporary critiques of humanism on the questioning of the universal.¹²⁷ According to Renaut, in Sartre's view, the universal that humanism puts forth is violently opposed to freedom as a singularity.¹²⁸ In other words, it is against individual freedom. As discussed, a similar sentiment

¹²⁵ In light of this observation, one is reminded of Martin Heidegger's famous remark in his last interview: "Only a god can save us now" (Martin Heidegger, 'Only a God Can Save Us', *Der Spiegel*, May 31, 1976).

¹²⁶ Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 390.

¹²⁷ Renaut, *Sartre, le dernier philosophe*, 237.

¹²⁸ Renaut, *Sartre, le dernier philosophie*, 237-238.

manifests itself in Foucault in that his reluctance to put forth a concept of the subject relates to his suspicion of humanism and the idea that these concepts are oppressive and limiting, as they lead to asymmetries within social relations. All the same, it can be stated that the great strengths of Sartre and Foucault, at the same time, become their chief weaknesses. As observed, Busch claims that the philosophical underpinnings of Sartre's political activity imply that the issue of identity is at the heart of justification for oppression.¹²⁹ Therefore, Sartre is at his best when he brings to light the injustices of issues such as racism and colonialism.

As noted, Connolly argues that Foucault's studies demonstrate how the norms of subjectivity are too demanding of the self to which they are applied.¹³⁰ Thus, Foucault is at his best when he shows the extremely cruel and arbitrary implications that such a norm implies, especially when it is presented as having humanist or progressive intentions. Yet, Foucault, like Sartre, is at worse when it comes time to say what should be done in light of this predicament. Related to this point, Nancy Fraser acknowledges that one of the ways that Foucault's rejection of humanism can be read is on substantive normative grounds, as humanism is intrinsically undesirable.¹³¹ She explains that from Foucault's studies one can imagine a "perfected disciplinary society" in which "normalizing power is omnipresent".¹³² Yet, she explains that the challenge that such a vision presents is: "what is wrong with this hypothetical society and why should it be resisted?".¹³³ According to Fraser, for Foucault

¹²⁹ Busch, 'Jean-Paul Sartre and Judith Butler', 45.

¹³⁰ Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, Third edition, 235.

¹³¹ Nancy Fraser, 'Michel Foucault: A "Young Conservative"?', in *Critique and Power*, 201.

¹³² Fraser, 'Michel Foucault: A "Young Conservative"?', 202.

¹³³ (Fraser, 'Michel Foucault: A "Young Conservative"?', 204). To this point, Habermas, citing Fraser, states: "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? ... 'Why is struggle preferable to submission? Why ought

to meet this challenge, what is required is a “new paradigm of human freedom” or an “alternative, posthumanist ethical paradigm”.¹³⁴ Without providing such a paradigm, Foucault’s normative rejection of humanism, in the eyes of Fraser, cannot make sense.¹³⁵

In outlining how such a project could be carried out, Fraser proposes a hermeneutical dimension which “demands that we weigh alternative ways of situating ourselves with respect to our past history and that we conceive ourselves in relation to possible futures ... as political agents and potential participants in oppositional social movements”.¹³⁶ As noted, although neither Sartre nor Foucault provides a vision of a polity that relates to freedom, at the same time, the project that Fraser outlines, according to this thesis, suspiciously resembles the impetus that lies behind their political activity, and what they were criticizing.

It may be recalled that in Chapter Four it was explained that the social realm gives rise to the intolerable, the intuition that something is wrong. Drawing upon Gilles Deleuze, it was noted that Glücksmann elaborates that the intolerable can be perceived when a universal seeps into, and becomes dominant in, the social apparatus. It was also observed that Glücksmann notes that the intolerable can be related to a “*ratio essendi*” and a “*ratio cognoscendi*”, respectively explained as an intuition of the good in the present and the future. In light of these two interpretations, it was

domination to be resisted? Only with the introduction of normative notions of some kind could Foucault begin to answer this question. Only with the introduction of normative notions could he begin to tell us what is wrong with the modern power/knowledge regime and why we ought to oppose it” (see Habermas, ‘Some Questions Concerning the Theory of Power: Foucault Again’, in *Critique and Power*, 95-96; Nancy Fraser, ‘Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions’, *Praxis International*, 1, 1981, 283).

¹³⁴ (Fraser, ‘Michel Foucault: A “Young Conservative”’, 205). It may be noted that Fraser’s reading relates to the possibility of a perfected disciplinary society. It can be added this reading can be extended to include a perfectly governed society.

¹³⁵ Fraser, ‘Michel Foucault: A “Young Conservative”’, 205.

¹³⁶ Fraser, ‘Michel Foucault: A “Young Conservative”’, 206.

argued that the thought of Sartre and Foucault brings to light the dangers that occur when a standard exists within the social sphere, and their political activity can be described as response to this problem. As this thesis has argued, Sartre and Foucault can be interpreted in a manner that sees them appropriating Kant's idea of freedom to the context of the social realm. In this chapter it has been observed that, indeed, Sartre and Foucault describe freedom as occurring within the social sphere. Of equal importance, as noted in the previous chapter, the political activity of Sartre and Foucault can be explained as a response to those situations where freedom is extremely limited, a response that rests upon the intuition that it is wrong that freedom should be extremely limited. This intuition relates to an understanding of an idea of the good that may materialize in the future. With Sartre and Foucault, this intuition can be explained as relating to a "*ratio cognoscendi*" of there being more freedom in the future. Thus, the political activity of Sartre and Foucault reveals an alternative paradigm of human freedom that relates to a possible future. Moreover, their political activity does not point to an idea of wholesale social transformation. Rather, it implies a small movement of freedom in that specific situations will possibly be remedied in the future.

All the same, if Sartre and Foucault put this idea into political practice, they fail to explicitly employ such a notion in theory. Specifically, neither thinker introduces an idea of the good into the field of possibilities. According to Flynn, Sartre misses an important chance to refine his theory of practico-inert meditation by determining degrees of exigency and the like.¹³⁷ In other words, Sartre fails to bring to light aspects of the social realm that may be more limiting to freedom than others. Although Foucault may abide by the ideal that the ethos of individuality relates to what makes individual life worth living, at the same time, he fails to convincingly show which relations of power

¹³⁷ Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason*, 131.

should be attacked to promote this ideal. Means of escape or resistance are always possible within relations of power, according to Foucault, but no direction for which route should be followed to promote a new economy of power relations is provided. If individual freedom is truly important, and if freedom is intended to be positive, then within the social sphere it *must* provide a means by which specific circumstances can be judged to be more or less free than others. For if freedom cannot provide an evaluation along this line, then it disappears.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been shown that Sartre and Foucault explain freedom as taking place in a socio-historical field that determines its possibilities. Both maintain that although this field is not the result of any ultimate historical goal, it is the result of human action or freedom. As noted, although both Sartre and Foucault historically appeal to the idea of struggle to illustrate the freedom of humans, neither formulates an explicit ethical orientation that would alleviate this struggle. As argued, since neither Sartre or Foucault introduce an idea of the good into their analyses of the social field, both eliminate any positive understanding of freedom.

CONCLUSION

For a certain period, when moral questions were asked, it became clear that the meaning of some of the key words involved in the framing of those questions was no longer clear and unambiguous. Social changes had not only made certain types of conduct, once socially acceptable, problematic, but had also rendered problematic the concepts which had defined the moral framework of an earlier world.

Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*

The double trajectory of Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault certainly exhibits that each philosopher travels a unique path. Sartre and Foucault are original thinkers who, as it has been observed, have their own distinct methodological assumptions. Yet, as divergent as the paths of Sartre and Foucault may be, when looked upon through the question of freedom, one discovers that their trajectories are not exclusively parallel lines insomuch as lines of flight that intersect at key junctures. It is precisely these convergences that this thesis has brought to light.

One of the key meeting points between Sartre and Foucault concerns the status of the subject. As noted, in the eyes of both, there is nothing essential about the subject. According to Sartre's formulation of the subject, as outlined in Chapter Two, the subject's defining characteristic is that it has no defining characteristic, its definition is that it has no definition, its essence is that it has no essence.¹ While Sartre arrives at this conclusion by presenting a theory of the subject, Foucault, from

¹ Alain Renaut, *Sartre, le dernier philosophe*, 237.

a different route, arrives at a similar conclusion. As noted in Chapter One, Foucault's historical studies bring to light the contingency of the practices that have led to subjects being objectively defined as specific types of subjects, along the lines of an insane or sane subject, a healthy or sick subject, and a criminal or lawful subject. With Foucault it can be stated that the defining historical characteristic of the subject is that it has no defining historical characteristic.

In Chapter Three it was observed that Foucault was once confronted with a resemblance to Sartre on the issue of the subject, and denied any such similarity. Yet, it was shown that Foucault's denial rested upon a misinterpretation of Sartre. It was argued that the creative activity which Foucault prescribes that the subject engages in is not entirely different than Sartre's idea of how the subject should approach its freedom. As noted, in response to creating oneself without recourse to knowledge or universal rules, Foucault, via his aesthetics of existence, suggests that one approach existence in a creative manner and make one's life beautiful, akin to a work of art. Accordingly, morality becomes something to be created and existence something to be turned into a work of art. The rendering of life into a work of art is the equivalent of a morality. All the same, it was shown that Foucault's aesthetics of existence is not *terra nova*, as it is precisely on this ground that Sartre, in his early thought, attempted to formulate an ethics which finds its most complete expression in the concept of authenticity. For Sartre, authenticity entails that because existence is not defined in advance, it can be created. Authenticity is a response to the bad faith tendency of subjects clinging to the values that are encountered within world. Values, according to Sartre, are not already-made, but ready to be created. Therefore, in this third chapter it was argued that both Foucault and Sartre presume a subject that, in light of having no nature, has the freedom to create itself.

If Foucault and Sartre can be found side-by-side on this issue of the creative freedom of the

subject, Chapter Three also suggested that these two can be located in the shadow of Immanuel Kant. As discussed, both Foucault and Sartre reject the Kantian realms of pure and practical reason for the reason that such concepts relate to an essential nature of the subject and a universal idea of morality. However, it was noted that the Kantian realm of aesthetics appears appealing for Foucault and Sartre, two philosophers seeking an ethical route that relates to the subject's creative freedom. In this chapter it was shown that the sphere of Kantian aesthetics, as relating to an idea of creative freedom, finds its purest expression in modern art. Accordingly, it was argued that Sartre and Foucault appeal to a specific historical concept of freedom: an idea of artistic freedom that postulates art as being separate from the spheres of the social and historical. It was discussed that this idea of the freedom of modern art, as evolving from the Kantian sphere of aesthetics, is a contentious issue. Of equal importance, it was argued that the notion of creative freedom in Sartre and Foucault implies an empty ethical suggestion; in no way does it provide a guide for what a better life would be. In fact, it was noted that its implications are disastrous.

In Chapter Four, the aim was to show that, at other points in their oeuvres, an ethical impetus in the thought of Sartre and Foucault can be discovered. By tracing the common theme of the gaze, it was argued that both Sartre and Foucault are motivated by a specific perception: the observation that human relations have objective tendencies, tendencies that limit freedom. In this chapter it was also shown that the gaze casts doubt upon the projects of creative freedom that can be found in these two. As discussed, the gaze provides subjects with an objectivity or an essence; it implies objectification, since the subject internalizes how it is gazed upon and becomes visible to others as the object that it is.

Also, in this fourth chapter it was argued that the lack of reciprocity in social relations that

the gaze perpetuates points to a further affinity between Sartre and Foucault. It was observed that although the lack of reciprocity or asymmetry may call to mind Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative, both Sartre and Foucault rule out a Kantian kingdom of ends. It was noted that both declare the impossibility of a universal morality and acknowledge that non-reciprocity is a fact of society and history. All the same, it was shown that this admission sheds light upon an ethical motivation in their thought. Precisely, it was argued that, as André Glucksmann explains, a moral orientation in Sartre and Foucault can be discovered that does not relate to an idea of the good that is universal and eternal, but instead draws upon a perception of the intolerable.²

This thesis noted, by reference to Kant again, that this insight relates to an intuition of the good that may arrive in the future, but is founded on an idea of the good in the present. It was argued that in Sartre and Foucault, this impetus, as discerned by their thought regarding the gaze, and as exemplified by their political activity, can be explained as the necessity of responding to the visible violence that results when humans gaze upon their social world and themselves through an objective lens. Accordingly, it was argued that the ethical task becomes the identification of those situations in the present where freedom is extremely limited in the hope that, in the future, such a predicament will be ameliorated.

In Chapter Five it was shown that on the question of freedom, the thought of Sartre and Foucault meets on the idea that freedom occurs in a socio-historical field. As noted, the historical analyses of Sartre and Foucault reveal that history is not unfolding towards any ultimate end-point. Yet, both recognize that history is intelligible through the concept of struggle. Moreover, both explain history as the result of the activity of humans. In other words, history is the result of human

²André Glucksmann, 'Le nihilisme de Michel Foucault', in *Michel Foucault Philosophe*, 396.

freedom.

As discussed in this chapter, freedom is certainly intended to have a positive status in the thought of Sartre and Foucault; it is meant to present the possibility for change, the possibility that humans can exist in social formations that are more free than those in the present. Yet, it was argued that if one deems the respective proposals offered by Sartre and Foucault as inadequate, then a problem arises. Specifically, if history is a never ending process of struggle, and freedom is elaborated as occurring in a social horizon that shapes or defines its outcome, then what happens to its positive status?

In this fifth chapter it was argued that because Sartre and Foucault do not introduce some kind of an idea of the good into the social field, they both eliminate any positive understanding of freedom. It was observed that Nancy Fraser's critique of Foucault, equally applicable to Sartre, refers to his lack of any new paradigm of human freedom: an alternative, posthumanist ethical paradigm.³ Fraser argues that such a paradigm implies that we entertain alternative ways of situating ourselves from our past history in order to conceive of new relations in light of possible futures. All the same, this chapter suggested that the political activity of Sartre and Foucault suggests a new paradigm of human freedom. Why were they protesting, if not to bring to light intolerable situations in the present with the hope that these situations can be remedied in the future? It was argued that since individual freedom is of crucial importance for Sartre and Foucault, they could certainly introduce into the social field this idea as a standard. As explained, such a dimension would not lead to a perfect future where absolute reciprocity and freedom would reign, but it would nevertheless lead to a future that opens up more possibilities for freedom.

³Nancy Fraser, 'Michel Foucault: A "Young Conservative"?', in *Critique and Power*, 205.

Thus, in presenting three key convergences between Sartre and Foucault, this thesis has demonstrated that they are not worlds apart on the question of freedom. But moreover, this study of Sartre and Foucault has been presented in a manner that encourages one to rethink the idea of freedom.

As observed, neither Sartre or Foucault desires to present a moral theory that is contingent upon universal rules or rationality. Instead, by ridding the subject of these concepts both attempt to put forth an ethical orientation related to the subject's freedom to create. It should be noted that in the eyes of both, the concepts of rationality and universality are rejected on strategic grounds: they pose as an essence, or human nature, and suffocate individual freedom. All the same, if these concepts are rejected, then so too should the concept of a subject that is synonymous with freedom. Authentic freedom or an aesthetics of existence is intended to promote a wider range of individual conduct, but such projects in no way guarantee or even show how such a feat could be accomplished. More importantly, the idea of the creative subject as a source of freedom *per se* is incoherent in light of other theoretical assumptions in the thought of Sartre and Foucault. In conjunction with the gaze, the subject's freedom is unavoidably bound to the other. In light of their analyses of history, the subject is inextricably linked with human action, and the effects that this multiplicity gives rise to. These analyses undermine an idea of the subject as *subjectum*, an underlying ground or foundation, and instead point to the idea of the subject as *subjectus*, subject to something other.⁴ For freedom, as outlined towards the end of Chapter Five, the task becomes the introduction into the social field of an ideal that will follow the threads of Ariadne to bring to light those situations where freedom

⁴Christina Howells, 'Conclusion: Sartre and the Deconstruction of the Subject', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*, 321.

is extremely limited and, therefore, present the possibility of a new order in the future for subjects to be subject to.

In the course of writing this thesis a balance has been attempted in the presentation of Sartre and Foucault. Admittedly, in walking a fine line between Foucault and Sartre, one realizes that not all works by these two can be considered⁵ and that some issues raised by these two could receive further treatment. Foucault's idea of power and its implications for freedom could have warranted further treatment. Moreover, the question of whether or not Foucault has to present some kind of an elaboration of the subject, aside from simply equating it with human action, is certainly a topic that could have been addressed. Possibly, Sartre's elucidation of the subject in the *Critique*, as constantly interiorizing and exteriorizing itself in a material environment could shed light on this issue. As this thesis concluded in Chapter Five, if the question of freedom is to remain a viable concept for political and social theory, then a study of Sartre and Foucault demonstrates that more work needs to be done.

In the course of this thesis one may struck by the frequency of the appearance of Kant's

⁵ Admittedly, *Les mots et les choses* has received a somewhat cursory treatment in this thesis and *L'archéologie du savoir* has not even been addressed. Yet, as explained in the previous chapter, freedom is not at the fore of Foucault's thought in these two works and, further, they are marginal works in his oeuvre. Also, it should be mentioned that towards the end of his life, Sartre, in a series of conversations with Benny Lévy, indicated a new direction that his thought might embrace. In these controversial sessions, Sartre discusses an idea of hope in relation to the religious viewpoint of Judaism. As interesting as these sessions may be, they are marginal to Sartre's oeuvre. As Gutting explains, "we have no way of knowing how he might have eventually related them to the existentialism that defined his philosophical thought for his entire life" (see Sartre, *L'espoir maintenant* (interviews with Benny Lévy), Lagasse: Verdier, 1991; Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, 128n18; B-H Lévy, *Le siècle de Sartre*, 633-652). Moreover, Sartre's three volume, and unfinished biography of Gustave Flaubert, *L'Idiot de la famille*, has not been considered. Although Philip R. Wood suggests that there is much to be learned regarding the idea of the subject in this biography, its sheer size and its presumption of an in-depth knowledge of the life and works of Flaubert have dictated its exclusion from this thesis (see Sartre, *L'Idiot de la famille. Gustave Flaubert de 1821 à 1857*, Paris: Gallimard, Volumes I and II, 1971, Volume III, 1972. Revised edition, 1988; Philip R. Wood, 'Derrida Engagé and Poststructuralist Sartre: a Redefinition of Shifts in Recent French Philosophy', *MLN*, 879).

name. All the same, it was Kant who made the concept of freedom the “*keystone*” of his philosophy⁶ and thus it should not be a surprise, in a thesis on freedom, to find Kant’s prints. Yet, for all the talk of modernity and postmodernity, this thesis demonstrates that a study of Sartre and Foucault, two of France’s most prominent twentieth century philosophers, shows that any project of freedom occurs in a Kantian framework. It is this horizon that shapes our understanding of the question of freedom, and it is within this horizon that freedom needs to be rethought.

⁶Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, 139.

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