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To Ourselves and Others: Toward a Human Ethics of Relation

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**To Ourselves and Others:
Toward a human ethics of relation**

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Research Honors Thesis in Religion
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4.21.03

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Introduction

The project that follows is my attempt to respond to two serious problems within the field of ethics. Firstly, I believe that too many ethical systems begin with an abstracted conception of how human beings *should act* in the world, only afterwards taking account of a conception of the way we *are* in the world, a conception that becomes deeply influenced and distorted by the ethical imperatives already formed. This type of ethical approach is characterized by unfounded metaphysical assumptions about a certain type of nature lurking below the surface of the world, marking out that which is good and that which is evil. I find this type of ethics problematic, for, instead of asking how we should act based upon an existing world, it asks how we should act based on a description of a non-existent world, a world distorted by the imperatives formed before we can even begin; the reason this method of ethical practice is problematic is that, in overlooking our experience as human beings, in twisting its descriptions of the world to fit those ethical imperatives it wishes to push, it pushes actions that are often politically ineffective, frequently misunderstood, and always subject to the sort of refutation and conflict brought on by a disagreement with the flawed worldview formed by the system itself.¹ Secondly, I am troubled by the difficulty that arises in practicing *any* ethical system in the world; quite simply, this project begins with the admission that to exist in a world with others is an often overwhelming proposition, a proposition that is complex beyond perhaps our wildest imaginings. Yet, most ethical systems operate through a mode of simplification that seeks to clarify the complexity of experience in order to prescribe action as unambiguously as possible. This mode, however, is a dangerous one, because ethical concerns and dilemmas are rarely simple, and the move to make

¹ Perhaps the clearest example of the difficulties brought on by this type of ethical practice comes when it interacts with the problem of pluralism. That is, when two systems formative of descriptions stemming from their imperatives and not of imperatives stemming from their descriptions interact, the impossibility of constructive dialogue or peaceful resolution becomes readily apparent.

these concerns unambiguous all too often dismisses complex considerations within them, simplifying richly complex issues and thereby positing a false understanding of the way we should conduct ourselves in the world. This simplification leads to a great deal of misunderstanding and dogmatism, and, thereby, to a great deal of hate, oppression and pain in the world. I will attempt to respond to these problems by arguing for a practicable ethics that grounds itself in the complex reality of human experience.

In order to respond to these problems within the field of ethics, we will take the central question of this text to be this: how is it that we might formulate a practicable ethics, one that finds its foundation on and motivation from the condition of the human being existing in a world with others? It is my belief that if we can begin to formulate a satisfactory answer to this question, we can begin to learn to act in a way that finds motivation not from a contrived imperative, but from something that touches us as human beings, something that we will fundamentally understand, something that will spark us to ethical action, not coerce us there. I believe that if we find ourselves successful in this task, we will have begun work on something of great significance to the very way we live our lives.

It seems, then, that we would best begin to answer the question of the formation of a practicable ethics based upon the condition of the human being with a description of this condition. This beginning has led me to focus on Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenological descriptions of the ontological condition of the human being contained in his first major work, *Being and Nothingness*. It seems to me that the construction of a practicable ethics grounded in human experience must start with phenomenological description, for phenomenology is the only philosophical approach that both demonstrates a method for and a true concern (and *consistency* of concern) with the accurate description of the structures and forms of human reality.

Phenomenology does so by focusing on the transcendental condition that underlies all human experience, including the human experience of the world itself. It achieves this through the phenomenological reduction, what Husserl calls the *epochē*. The *epochē* is the act of withholding our assumptions about the world in order that we may see beneath our prejudices into the structures and forms of our experience as such. From its inception in the Socratic tradition, philosophy has been “aimed at uncovering and overcoming prejudice” (Fryer and Sabat 1), yet it has often gone far astray of this goal;² I hold that the phenomenological tradition continues to hold this aim, continues to attempt to uncover and overcome prejudice, continues to be successful in describing human reality as accurately as possible. Specifically, I have chosen Jean-Paul Sartre’s study of the human condition in a world with others because I feel it gives us the most accurate, apt descriptions of our human situation, descriptions, moreover, that provide us with both an explanation of and a motivation for an ethics of free commitment and self-aware action.

Phenomenology (as Sartre conceives of it) falls short of our purposes, however, when we begin to address the complexity of our experience with social totalities and social institutions. Because Sartre’s phenomenology describes the experience of the subject only in relation to the Other, it often has difficulties when attempting to move *beyond* a description of that limited field of relation between the subject and others.³ Thus, it seems to me that it is necessary to attempt to

² I would argue that far more than a majority of what is characterized as analytic “philosophy” is guilty of doing so and, indeed, is guilty of promoting the creation of further prejudices, further obstacles to understanding our human reality in the world. This is a guilt with for which much of analytic philosophy should feel deeply ashamed, for in promoting itself as “philosophy,” it makes implicit claims to discovering these prejudices, claims that it not only disappoints but confounds and contradicts in an ethically irresponsible manner. If Foucault claims that psychology is the shame of twentieth century science, I will here claim that analytic philosophy is the shame of twentieth century thought.

³ In an attempt to remain consistent throughout the body of this work—despite the inconsistency of both philosophers when discussing the point—we will capitalize “Other” when referring to “the Other” and will not capitalize “others” when referring to the plurality made up of other people. This choice is intended to allow the most consistency between this work and *Being and Nothingness*, the work with which we will most be concerned with when it comes

expand Sartre's method of analysis by turning to another philosophical methodology that is compatible to Sartre's purposes, yet more adequate to the task of describing the complex relations between human beings and social totalities. To fulfill this purpose, I have turned to the work of Michel Foucault. This turn would no doubt disturb an experienced phenomenologist, but as I will argue in Chapter Six of this project, Foucault's philosophical program is best understood as a kind of phenomenology, one founded upon the kind of phenomenological description of ontological reality performed by Jean-Paul Sartre; particularly, I will argue that we can understand power relations as the specific instances of our ontological relations with others. Thus, I will here argue that we can understand Foucault as a phenomenologist of a different sort, one concerned with a description of human reality with regards to wide social totalities, even if he is not strict in employing classical phenomenological method, especially with regard to the employment of the *epochē*. Thus, while it is almost unheard of to suggest Foucault as a phenomenologist, I feel it is inarguable that Foucault is concerned with overcoming prejudice in understanding such wide social institutions, and (as we will come to understand in the process of this project) he is ultimately concerned with the subject, with individual experience as the most relevant focus of philosophical endeavor, founding his genealogical descriptions upon an explication of certain features of subjectivity itself. Thus, I have chosen the work of Foucault in order to attempt to provide a complimentary methodology to the practice of an ethics based on the condition of the human in the world, a methodology that allows us to deal with the complexity of human experience without avoiding or simplifying the difficulties inherent in doing so.

to the Other and others; however, both Foucault throughout his work and Sartre in *Notebook for an Ethics* do not capitalize "Other" in reference to the ontological or ontic category.

Specifically, I believe Foucault's work provides us with a unique understanding of the human in relation to social totalities. Because I am concerned with founding an ethics that does not *simplify*, but instead *describes* the complexity of human experience, and because Foucault's genealogical work and his work on care of the self are attempts to give a method to the construction of just such descriptions, I will here utilize them to bridge the gaps in understanding that Jean-Paul Sartre's phenomenological descriptions leave to us. The knowledge and methodology that Foucault will give to us is one that will be an invaluable tool in the practice of an ethics grounded on the condition of the human in the world with others.

Why is it, then, that we do not simply begin and end with Foucault's genealogical work and his work on care of the self, given that I have claimed that they demonstrate both a description of the human being enmeshed in power relations and a methodology for uncovering these descriptions without reducing them to simple binaries? This is the question that we will address in Chapters One and Two. In these chapters, we will trace a move within Foucault's later work from his broad work on power within social totalities to a focus on, ultimately, the individual subject. What this will suggest to us is that Foucault's late work demonstrates his belief that genealogical work is most effective at its most local levels, as specifically practiced within the care of the self. This is an interpretation of his later work that I believe fills a gap in current scholarship focusing on Foucault.⁴ Specifically, there is a demonstratable lack of work

⁴ H.D. Harootunian's article, "Foucault, Genealogy, History: the Pursuit of Otherness," is perhaps the closest interpretation to the one we will draw out, arguing that Foucault's work is an exploration of the history of otherness. It does not, however, argue anything of subjectivity, ethics or their connection to genealogy, instead focusing on Foucault's earlier work. It is an interpretation, then, of a mostly separate body of work, ending almost exactly where we will pick up—with "Two Lectures." It is, however, an interesting interpretation of that earlier work, one to which our interpretation of the later work might be added. C.G. Prado also deals with Foucault's later work in relation to genealogy and ethics, but he leaves the two concepts to themselves (i.e. sees them as separate and relatively unrelated elements of Foucault's philosophy) arguing that there is a shift in Foucault's work, but that it is not a shift that is telling of a connection between genealogy and ethics, but of a changing emphasis. We will argue against this interpretation, showing that Foucault himself subtly demonstrates the connectedness of the two. In doing so, we will fill in a gap in the understanding of Foucault's late work.

concerning Foucault's use of care of the self, the connection of this idea to his ethics and the importance of this idea to his philosophical program. There is especially a lack of critical work surrounding his interview entitled, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," an essay that we will see is central to his late work.⁵ Moreover, there is very little work concerned with Foucault's ethics in general, and we will attempt, in explaining his use of care of the self, to add to that body of work. In addition to adding to work on Foucault's ethics, we will see how Foucault's new focus on the individual subject necessitates and indeed must be founded upon an ontological description of the subject in relation to others that Foucault himself never provides. It is his failure to provide this description of the ontological condition of the human within the world that will lead us to combine the descriptive powers of his genealogical work and his work on care of the self with the phenomenological work of Jean-Paul Sartre on the condition of the human being in a world with others.

Chapters Three and Four will offer an interpretation of Sartre's descriptions of the human condition within the world and the way that this condition founds and motivates an ethics of free commitment and self-aware action. This is an interpretation that is sorely lacking in Sartrean studies, and one that I believe must be undertaken. Studies surrounding Sartre's ethics are generally lacking in an understanding of the connection to his ontology, and those that do

⁵ In brief, there is a near complete failure to even mention this interview in discussion of Foucault's ethics, the only comments that we might describe about it being drawn from its complete absence from a wide variety of texts. James Bernauer and Michael Mahon's essay for *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, an essay entitled, "The Ethics of Michel Foucault," completely fails to mention "The Ethics of Concern for Self" as does Arnold Davidson's essay, "Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the history of ethics, and ancient thought." Allison Leigh Brown's work, entitled *On Foucault*, is a work that claims that Foucault's concept of morality is one of "a set of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies" (65). While this is not incompatible with our interpretation, it seems rather unfulfilling an understanding, denying the complexity of Foucault's idea of care of the self. Brown's chapter entitled "Care of the Self" in this work, however, does offer a reasonable interpretation of the concept, but it fails to connect the concept to Foucault's genealogical work, only suggesting its importance to the constitution of subjectivity (it, too, fails to mention "The Ethics of Concern for Self"). Brown herself says, "Criticism of Foucault in the moral realm is not as widespread as it is in the political and epistemological arenas" (72). I would argue the truth of her statement, adding only that there is a great misunderstanding of his ethics as well, one we will try to overcome here.

attempt to posit this connection are generally lacking in both their ability to connect the two and their interpretation of either. Most of the work, in fact, focuses on Sartre's later work, ignoring the difficult issue of his early ontological work in connection to his ethics.⁶ In Chapter Five, we will discuss the limitations of these descriptions, of the fact of their want in regards to descriptions of the human involved in wide social totalities and the way that this want necessitates a methodology such as Foucault's genealogical work and his work on care of the self. Thus, by the end of Chapter Five, we will have seen the necessity of forming some sort of partnership between the work of Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault, the necessity of finding a possible synthesis of their work in order to ground our ethics on the condition of the human while still allowing this ethics to be practicable within the complex network of social relations in which we are intertwined.⁷

⁶ For example, see Sarah Hoagland's article entitled, "Existential Freedom and Political Change." It is a fine demonstration of the need for forming such a connection, for she very briefly attempts to do so, yet seems to give up and makes no true effort towards using Sartre's ontology, instead looking to the work of Beauvoir, Fanon and others. Moreover, the laxity of the piece is evidence, I believe, for the need to demonstrate the connection between Sartre's ethics and ontology in a strict manner. Thomas Anderson's work, *The Foundation and Structure of Sartrean Ethics* is a work that also attempts to address this void. Anderson himself writes that the lack of a demonstrable connection is often attributed to the fact that "the ontological positions of *Being and Nothingness* have undermined its possibility" (6). Anderson's attempts, however useful, fail to fully address the connection, leaving him to claim there is no full and fundamental relation between the two. Herbert Marcuse, himself, claims that Sartre's "political radicalization lies outside his philosophy, extraneous to its essence and content," essentially arguing that Sartre's ethical commitments had no relation to his ontological work ("Existentialism" 27). Thus, we will attempt to address the broad lack of understanding in the connection between Sartre's ethics and ontology by forming our own reading of *Being and Nothingness* and then relating this reading directly to his ethics.

⁷ This is a suggestion of partnership that, to the best of my knowledge, has only been vaguely hinted at. Mark Poster, Peter Caws, and Christina Howells perhaps give the most direct suggestion of such a partnership. Poster's work, *Foucault, Marxism and History*, is a work that lightly suggests such, and this suggestion is developed in his work *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism*. Both, however, are concerned not with developing this partnership, but with showing the ways that the two philosophers (or types of philosophy) are lacking in their ability to deal with "postmodern" concerns. Thus, instead of drawing out any connection, Poster simply seems to argue they are subject to the same critiques. Peter Caws' "Sartrean Structuralism?" is a piece devoted to suggesting that Sartre may be conceived of as a structuralist, but it focuses almost entirely on Sartre's later work, only suggesting that if Sartre had slightly changed some of his earlier work he could be understood as such. It is an interesting piece, but one that is of little value to us in showing how Sartre and Foucault might be intertwined to form a practicable ethics. Christina Howell's conclusion to the *Cambridge Companion to Sartre* is equally suggestive that Sartre might be understood as a forerunner to the structuralists and poststructuralists, but Howells too eventually slides to Sartre's later work, leaving his ontological work in *Being and Nothingness* as the ground on which he might move off of in his later work to a more "structuralist" position. More commonly, a partnership between the two is viewed as difficult and contradictory, in such works as Thomas Flynn's *Sartre, Foucault and Historical Reason*, Julien Murphy's

Chapter Six will serve us as a demonstration of the possibility of such a synthesis. The particular argument in this chapter will work towards exposing the manner in which Foucault's descriptions of power relations are founded upon the ontological descriptions of the human being provided by a philosophy such as Sartre's. In other words, we will see how we can understand power relations as the specific emanations of our ontological relations with others, relations that are constituted by two free partners engaged in a struggle to form and reform the field of possible action. In doing this, we will both demonstrate the compatibility of Foucault's work to Sartre's ethical program, and, as importantly, prove the possibility of carrying the ethical implications of Sartre's work—the ethical impetus towards an affirmation of the human condition in the world—through to Foucault's genealogical work and his work on care of the self, thus motivating us to perform works such as Foucault's from the condition of the human being in the world.

We will conclude this project with a brief description of our ethical program as we can begin to understand it. It will be an ethics based upon Sartre's phenomenological descriptions of the human condition and utilizing Foucault's genealogical work and his work on care of the self. In doing this, we will begin to tentatively form an answer to the central question of this text: how is it that we might formulate a practicable ethics, one that finds its foundation on and motivation from the condition of the human being existing in a world with others? We must keep in mind that the answer to which we will come at the conclusion of this text is only a beginning, only the opening foray into the practice of such an ethics. But, I hope by providing such a beginning, we will stimulate further critical inquiry into the formation of such an ethics as I hope we will bear out here; and, more importantly, I hope that this will motivate us to begin to find a way to act ethically in the world, a way that avoids the dangers of most traditional ethical

introduction to *Feminist Interpretations of Jean-Paul Sartre*, Nancy Fraser's "Michel Foucault: A 'Young Conservative'?" and Jana Sawicki's article, "Feminism, Foucault, and 'Subjects' of Power and Freedom" (although this final article does allow for a modification of Foucault's work for more humanistic purposes).

systems while inspiring us to affirm who we are, to affirm ourselves as human beings and to learn to value our relations with others equally well.

Chapter One

In this chapter and in Chapter Two, we will examine the later work of Michel Foucault. Our intention will be to demonstrate a move within Foucault's work toward a focus on the individual. Specifically, in Chapter One we will be concerned with demonstrating the way that Foucault begins to re-examine and reform his genealogical critiques through a reconceptualization of power in an effort to create these critiques as politically effective. What we will see is that Foucault focuses on the individual involved within relations of power in order to do this, relations that Foucault argues are constitutive of individuality itself. In Chapter Two, we will trace the narrowing of this focus on the individual, a narrowing that argues that Foucault's often dismissed work on the care of the self is, in actuality, a move that he found necessary to the reactivation of genealogical critiques. What we will begin to see is that care of the self can be understood as genealogical work on the most local of levels, that of individuality. At the end of Chapter Two, we will offer a critique of Foucault's care of the self as philosophically problematic in its lack of an ontology and its lack of focus on the importance of the individual in relation to others; this is a critique, however, that aims at fitting Foucault's work to our uses in this project—the formation of a *practicable* ethics based on the condition of the human being in the world. We will begin our examination of how we might use Foucault's work in the formation of a practicable ethics with two lectures he delivered in January, 1976, entitled, appropriately, "Two Lectures."

Lecture One

At the beginning of "Lecture One," Foucault complains of the fragmentary nature of his studies, of the way that, over the five or so years preceding the Lectures (delivered at the beginning of 1976), his researches had failed to come together into anything that would approach

a coherent whole. Foucault begins the first lecture with this comment on his work over the five previous years: “Repetitive and disconnected, it advances nowhere” (78). Foucault argues, however, that the failure of his researches to come together cannot necessarily be attributed to a failure on his part, but, in fact, to the time period in which his work arose. He claims that this time period is demarcated by two characteristics that are both the cause of the nature of his work and the reason for its failure to create anything but a “prudent silence” on the part of those against whom his work is aimed.

The first trait that characterizes the period in question, the period encompassing such works as his *Madness and Civilization* and *Discipline and Punish*, stems from what Foucault calls “the efficacy of dispersed and discontinuous offensives” (80). It is because of the growth of these offensives during this period that Foucault argues we can find a greater willingness to criticize nearly everything—especially those traditional institutions which have existed unchallenged for quite some time. This willingness to critique everything is the first trait that Foucault points out, and it leads Foucault to assume that we have established a relatively new, “autonomous, non-centralised kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of established regimes of thought” (81). In other words, Foucault believes that this period has been marked by a significant subversion of those institutions, practices and knowledges which have for so long constituted the foundation of what was valid, right and true. Put simply, Foucault explains that suddenly it seems as if cracks have opened up in the foundations of all that on which we stand.

It is from these cracks that have crept the second characteristic feature of the period in which Foucault has done his work prior to “Two Lectures.” Foucault claims that there has been “*an insurrection of subjected knowledges*” that has come of the critique of established forms and

practices (81). Gradually, Foucault argues, these knowledges that had previously been buried, rejected and disqualified have now come to gain meaning and value (in large part, we might suppose, due to Foucault himself), to be the very instrument by which the criticism of established form has been carried out; the resurrection of these knowledges is the second characteristic of the period in question. Foucault defines these as “a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated... beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity... unqualified, even directly disqualified knowledges... particular, local, regional knowledge[s]” (82). These knowledges, by virtue of that which they reveal, by virtue of the fingerprint of historical struggle that we find on them, have been the most powerful tool in the period of critique, this period in which Foucault’s work has flourished.

So what has arisen from this period that Foucault attempts to characterize in “Two Lectures” is a retroactive understanding of the program that he has pursued and the knowledge with which he now, at the beginning of “Two Lectures,” appears to be disenchanted. What has arisen is what Foucault terms, “genealogical researches, a painstaking rediscovery of struggles together with the rude memory of their conflict” (83). Put simply, from the combination of a critique that is not centralized or validated by an established authority and the re-valuation of those knowledges that have been hitherto disqualified and rejected comes a form of research that takes full advantage of both, that positions itself in a non-centralized place and utilizes subjected knowledges in order to map the discovery of historical conflicts that have previously been buried. This is Foucault’s genealogical method. These genealogies, Foucault claims, have functioned to “entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory,” a body that would care to keep these knowledges out of play in the first place (83). Thus, Foucault argues, his genealogical work has

been motivated by the period in which it has come forth, a period marked by critique and the reemergence of the power of subjected knowledges.

Genealogies

Let us look closer at these genealogical critiques in order to define them more clearly.¹ First, we here understand genealogical research as a tactic of struggle. Foucault writes, “a genealogy should be seen as a kind of attempt to emancipate historical knowledges from subjection, to render them, that is, capable of opposition and of struggle against the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse” (85).² Genealogical critique forms a challenge by which we can undermine the established hierarchy of knowledge, by which we can make claims against the validity of dominant discourses, by which we can oppose the coercion of those massive, unitary, theoretical structures that threaten to leave no room for the play of local discursives. This is undertaken, as we have already stated, by a recovery of those forms of subjected knowledges that have been disallowed, that have been buried along with the history of the struggle through which they *were* disallowed. In recovering them, one is allowed to mount a challenge, to oppose those bodies of knowledge that are so often considered unchallengeable, so often considered beyond the realm of doubt.

So, the recovery of subjected knowledges and of the historical struggles surrounding them allows us to raise a challenge. We should be clear in our understanding of what it is that these challenges are aimed against. Foucault writes:

We are concerned, rather, with the insurrection of knowledges that are opposed primarily not to the contents, methods or concepts of a science, but to the effects of the centralising powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organised scientific discourse within a society such as ours. (84)

¹ C.G. Prado’s work, *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy*, is a valuable work to fill out the brief description we will undertake here from Foucault’s own words.

² Archeology is the “methodology of this [genealogical] analysis of local discursives,” the way by which we come to the description employed in genealogical tactics. We will not be as concerned with archeology, here, however.

It is, in other words, against the claims to legitimacy of only a limited number of discourses that genealogy can best be applied. The aim of genealogical critique is to counter the effect of institutionalizing one certain form of knowledge over another, an effect which is threefold: 1) it disqualifies other forms of knowledges, 2) it diminishes the subject of experience and knowledges (what we might consider the human being), 3) it puts in place a “theoretical-political *avant-garde*,” which is then exempt from the challenges of the disqualified knowledges that surround it (84). Thus, the effect of the establishment and operation of certain scientific discourses is the establishment and maintenance of a certain “hierarchisation of knowledges,” a hierarchisation that is effective at disqualifying both those knowledges that would challenge it and those subjects with whom it is concerned (85). Genealogical critique is aimed directly at this hierarchisation, is aimed at the establishment and maintenance of those scientific discourses that are so powerful. Moreover, Foucault’s genealogical critique has arisen in a period that is friendly to its use, a period in which those large and unitary bodies of knowledge have begun to be challenged, in which everything is subject to questioning.

So, Foucault’s genealogical method has emerged in a period in which it appears absolutely necessary, undeniably useful. But again, Foucault is not satisfied with the progress of his work up to the point at which he delivers “Two Lectures.” He raises the anxious question: “why not continue to pursue a theory [of genealogy] which in its discontinuity is so attractive and plausible, albeit so little verifiable?” (86). Foucault gives three reasons for this, but it is only the third to which he attributes much weight. He argues that, while it is possible that the knowledges that are recovered and used in genealogical critiques could be re-codified or re-colonized by the discourse they are used against, or, if protected against this annexation, may begin to form their own unitary discourses, what is truly problematic for the series of researches

he has carried out in the years before 1976 is that, in his own words, they “remain as they have always been, surrounded by a prudent silence” (87). Foucault finds his researches ineffective against the coercive discourses at which they are aimed. Simply put, they have failed. To be sure, they have not failed to disinter the buried knowledges after which they have sought; nor have they failed to describe those historical struggles through which these knowledges have come to be disqualified. What they *have* failed to do is to mobilize themselves in a way that provokes any response, and lack of response, for Foucault, is the surest mark of the failure.

Reconceiving power

According to Foucault, the failure of these genealogical critiques is predicated on the failure to understand the workings of power. What must be completed, then, given the ineffectiveness of the genealogical critiques launched so far, is an explication of the purpose of the struggles Foucault has tried to ignite. He says, “Our task... will be to expose and specify the issue at stake in this opposition, this struggle, this insurrection of knowledges against the institutions and against the effects of the knowledge and power that invests scientific discourse” (87). We must, in other words, know what we are fighting for, and what we are fighting for, according to Foucault, is the constitution of the very nature of the power in our time. More specifically, Foucault argues that it is the nature of “the various contrivance of power in our society which is at stake” (88). What now needs to be answered, then, is what power is and, more importantly, how it functions in the current order of society. This is the inquiry that must be taken up and completed before genealogical critiques can become an effective strategy in political struggle, before they can be employed in their most potent form.

Foucault begins his explication of power relations—his attempt at correcting the current theories of power in a way that might activate genealogical critiques—with a refutation. He

begins by dismissing the two most common models of power, ones united by a theory of power that stresses power's economic relation. These models are the Marxist and judicial conceptions, and, in both, power is conceived of as a commodity, as something that is transferred as a good. Foucault dismisses the economic theory of power that unites these models based on his claim that the economic theory, while explaining the intimate connection between economics and power, fails to describe a useful model of pure power relations. What is needed, then, is a theory of power that is capable of understanding political power as something other than an economics. Foucault asks: "What means are available to us today if we seek to conduct a non-economic analysis of power?" (89). His answer: "Few" (89). The economic model of power fails to provide an analysis of power that is adequate to Foucault's purposes, yet his recourses are small in number; indeed, he will find it necessary to adapt one to his own purposes in order that it be useful to genealogical critiques.

If the economic theory of power is lacking in both breadth and explanatory power, we must, of course, conceive of a different theory in order to answer the question central to Foucault's projected project: what type of power operates in our age and in what mechanisms is it invested, i.e. how does power function? Foucault begins constructing his new model of power with this assertion: "power is neither given nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised, and that it only exists in action... a relation of force" (89). This is a conception of power directly opposite that of the economic model; indeed, instead of conceiving of power as a good, or rather, an object, Foucault begins by characterizing power as an active force that is *exerted* in relations-between. Power ceases to be a passive object and instead becomes an active force that functions only in the relations between and among individual subjects, institutions, structures, systems and discourses.

If power is conceived of as a relation of struggle, then we must formulate certain questions to further fill out its representation. Foucault asks: “if power is exercised, what sort of exercise does it involve? In what does it consist? What is its mechanism?” (89). For Foucault, the first step toward answering these questions is taken by analyzing power as we might analyze war, struggle, or conflict. War, after all, exists only in action, only in a relation between two or more forces, only in the exercise of strength. From this analogy, Foucault draws three conclusions about the way power should be analyzed. The first of these is that the role of political power, like that of war, “is perpetually to re-inscribe [a] relation [of disequilibrium between forces] through a form of unspoken warfare” (90). In other words, the role of political power is to constantly keep inequalities at play between and among institutions, discourses, subjects, even bodies. Thus, political power legitimates the existence of disequilibrating practices within social forms. The second conclusion Foucault comes to from the analysis of political power as war is that no political act, no social struggle or re-arrangement should be understood as anything but an act of war, a continuation of battle with all that implies. Foucault writes, “none of the phenomena in a political system should be interpreted except as the continuation of war” (91). Every political move is an act against someone, somewhere, a hostile act that attempts to shift the balance of power relations in the struggle to gain advantage. The third consequence of a model of power as war is that the end result is that of war—a “recourse to arms” (91). Arms of what type, Foucault does not specify, but we might consider the possibility of a war in which truth and knowledge are the only weapons, given the conception of power we have begun to outline above. It is with this conception of power, then—where specific knowledges become the weapons of force in power relations—that Foucault believes genealogical critiques (which redeploy buried knowledges) become useful. Thus, we begin our

analysis of power with the assertion, “political power is war, with all that implies,” even if it is a war by other means, means that necessitate the use of genealogical critiques.

Foucault offers this theory of power as war against one of the few competing non-economic theories: that of a repressive power theory. These two theories are not opposed diametrically, however, and Foucault considers that we might even consider repression as one of the many strategies employed in the exercise of political power as war. Indeed, he suggests that the theory of war as power—with repression as one of its mechanisms—might be pitted against a juridical model of power—a model that he believes is distracting. Thus, instead of understanding power as a right, as a result of entering into a social contract and understanding the violation of that contract as oppression (as does the juridical model) we might begin to conceive of power as a relation between two forces and repression as a legitimated strategy within this relation. Thus, Foucault writes, “repression is none other than the realization with the continual warfare of this pseudo-peace [i.e. power relations], of a perpetual relationship of force” (92). Repression is no longer a violation if politics is war; rather, it is one of the inevitable consequences of war; with political power will come repression because of power’s disturbance of the relations of force. Repression, essentially, is the effect of being pinned to the mat in struggle, with little recourse to any point of leverage, without regaining or disturbing the equilibrium of forces. It is this notion of power as war-repression that Foucault believes must be analyzed more closely in order to better understand how genealogical critiques can be utilized.³

³ He claims he has already been operating under the assumption of the war-repression theory, and it is the concept of repression in this model that he believes must be put to further test in “Lecture Two” and beyond in order that we might examine whether it is a valid way of understanding power relations.

Lecture Two

Foucault claims that if we are to conceive of power as war, as containing all the mechanisms and strategies that might be employed in struggle, then it becomes of the greatest importance for us to gain a more detailed understanding of the nature of power today. We must, in other words, know in what ways power as war functions in our society. This is Foucault's concern in "Lecture Two." In this lecture, he outlines a theory of power that reveals itself in the fact of domination while covering over itself with a theory of right. Essentially, Foucault begins to diagram a model of power that centers itself on the individual, is coercive in nature, and operates through an intricate interplay of right, power and truth. He then goes on to outline a series of methodological precautions that he believes are necessary to further pin down the nature of this power. We will here concern ourselves with what Foucault has to say about the interrelation between right, power and truth and will then analyze his methodological precautions. In doing so, we will see how his conception of the relation between right, power and truth, along with his precautions for the study of power demonstrate the necessity of reconceiving the utilization of genealogical work.

Right, power and truth

Foucault begins his examination of the concept of repression and his outline of a theory of power as war not with a detailed description of repression's mechanisms or a demonstration of its non-existence, but with a discussion of what he finds to be the anchoring points of his philosophy over the past several years: right, power and truth. He considers the three to exist in concert with each other, the effects of rules of right producing limitations on power, the effects of truth produced by power, and the power that is produced by these effects of truth (93). Essentially, rules of right are established by relations of power and then eventually produce

discourses of truth; these discourses of truth, in turn, lend legitimacy to the rules of right that support relations of power. Foucault writes, “We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. This is the case for every society, but I believe that in ours the relationship between power, right, and truth is organised in a highly specific fashion” (93). Thus, Foucault begins his examination of the repressive model of power with a description of a theory of power that claims its major mechanism as a productive power—it is productive of truth, power and the legitimization of right—a description that undermines the repressive model of power by overwhelming it. In short, power as repression is too narrow a view in light of what Foucault believes the real function of power to be. Moreover, if the function of power is directly related to the production of truth and knowledge, then we can begin to see how genealogical critiques might be activated against certain forms of power.

To continue to re-envision the nature of power, Foucault takes on the theories of right that he believes are distracting from the real operations of power. Because Foucault takes a theory of power that is ultimately productive in nature to explain power relations in our time, he believes that the theories of right used to characterize and limit the functioning of power are inadequate to the task. He claims that the focus of the discourse that would (or at least should) limit and describe power for us has been that of the sovereign. At the center of theories of right and power has always stood the figure of the King. Those theories cannot be very useful to us, however, because they cover over the actual productive techniques and mechanisms that are intrinsic to the operation of power. Thus, Foucault writes, “When we say that sovereignty is the central problem of right in Western societies, what we mean basically is that the essential function of the discourse and technique of right has been to efface the domination intrinsic to

power” (95). Instead of a useful theory to analyze power, Foucault characterizes the theory of right based on sovereignty as a mechanism whereby the domination that is necessary to the functioning of the power that he is trying to characterize is carried out without the visibility of dominating practices coming to the foreground. This limits our conception of power and keeps us from understanding the way that knowledge and power interrelate.

Foucault’s project, then, has been, at least in part, to expose the brute domination that exists in the workings of the mechanisms of power within Western societies. Moreover, he has tried to expose the subjugation caused by theories of right that would cover over the relations of domination put in place by the very practices based on the premise of these theories of right (96). He characterizes the goal of his endeavors as a way to “substitute the problem of domination and subjugation for that of sovereignty and obedience” (96). Because Foucault conceives of a productive model of power, one that functions through an interrelation of power, truth and right, one that reproduces itself while effacing the fact of its dominating practice, he believes that the conception of right and power that we hold today—a conception based around ancient theories of sovereignty—must be replaced with a conception of power that focuses itself on the practices of domination and subjugation. Without such a replacement, any effort—such as that of Foucault’s genealogical researches—will go unnoticed, will remain “surrounded by a prudent silence” because it will fail to rightly understand the relation between power and knowledge and therefore will fail to put in place effective strategies to counter dominating practices of power.

Foucault believes that when we begin to examine power in its productive mode, when we throw off our conception of power as based on sovereign theories of right, we will begin to see that power has taken a very new form in the past few centuries, has come to be invested in a

wholly different type of mechanism from those described by theories of sovereignty. He writes of this new mechanism:

This new mechanism of power is more dependent upon bodies and what they do upon the Earth and its products. It is a mechanism of power which permits time and labor... to be extracted from bodies... which is constantly exercised by means of surveillance... [which] presupposes a tightly knit grid of material coercions... a genuinely new economy of power... [which] must be able simultaneously both to increase the subjected forces and to improve the force and efficacy of that which subjects them. (104)

This is a disciplinary power, a power that is located, produced and exerted through the minutiae of the most mundane interrelations within society and then woven into the most coercive of discourses. The theory of sovereignty, Foucault claims, has existed simply to cover over the workings of disciplinary power, “to guarantee to everyone, by virtue of the sovereignty of the State, the exercise of proper sovereign rights” (105). In simpler terms, the theory of right based on sovereignty is a complex smoke-screen disguising and distracting from the brutal truth of the mechanisms of disciplinary power. These mechanisms work through knowledge about the body, about the individual; they are mechanisms that he will use to characterize his theory of power and which will begin to turn his focus to the level of the individual subject.

So, Foucault comes to characterize the model of power he will be using even more specifically; it is a model of power that posits an intricate relation between right, power and truth, one that is far more complex than a model that would take sovereignty and repression as its guiding principles. It is also a model that, in its ultimate productive capacity, gives rise to what Foucault calls a “society of normalisation” (107). This is a form of society in which the productive capacity of true discourses in their power over relations with and between subjects creates relations of domination and subjugation that have the effect of normalising, of codifying these relations in ways that try to minimize the possibility of struggle. They do so in their subtle utilization of knowledge about the individual subject. Thus, a society of normalisation is

productive of a norm over and against which relations of power are measured and classified, judged and condemned. It is in this type of society that Foucault believes we live, and it is therefore in the concrete mechanisms of power within such a society that he believes we should find our concern after “Two Lectures.”⁴ In doing so, he believes that we will affect a new understanding of power that will allow us to see how genealogical critiques can be utilized at the individual level in order to begin to understand the constitution of the disciplinary individual and to fight against this constitution in so far as it produces relations of domination. Let us examine this attempt at a new understanding further by examining the methodological precautions that Foucault gives for the study of disciplinary power.

Methodology of study

In “Two Lectures,” Foucault gives a series of methodological concerns and prescriptions that must be taken in order to further the study of the operations of power within a normalising society. These are the precautions and prescriptions that Foucault believes must guide the study of power in order to understand the combination of right, power and knowledge that functions within our society and which is necessary to have in order that Foucault’s work on knowledge, power and the subject—his genealogical critiques—might be realigned more potently against those bodies of knowledge and power at which they are aimed. The method outlined will help to substitute the problem of domination and subjugation for the problem of sovereignty and obedience, and will help to focus on a conception of power that is productive and active, existent

⁴ We can understand Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* as the beginning of the sort of concrete analysis suggested by Foucault’s new outline of the disciplinary model of power. The first volume is essentially a text that works to refute the repressive model of power in relation to sexuality and to characterize the discourses surrounding sexuality as much more productive, much more active in the construction of “sexuality” than is often supposed. Our interest in it, then, would be for what it says of Foucault’s growing model of power, of the characteristics of a productive disciplinary power that Foucault can deduce from the history of the discursive production of sexuality. We can understand that an explication of his new model of power was Foucault’s purpose in this work to begin with, and given this, we might rightly look not for the concrete, historical descriptions of sexuality in our time, but for a more fleshed out model of power than we are given in “Two Lectures.” This will not be our concern here, however, but is an area of great significance in tangent to the work that will be undertaken here.

only in its own exercise. Thus, the method outlined will guide Foucault's study from this point on, and, as we will argue, will be a method that finds its primary focus ultimately at the level of the individual subject. Our use of it will be not simply for its concerns of study, however, but also for the way these concerns demonstrate to us Foucault's reconceptualization of power, of its narrowing focus on the individual.⁵

Foucault begins with the precaution that the study of power should not begin at what might be considered centers of power. He writes, "the analysis in question should not concern itself with the regulated and legitimate forms of power in their central locations, with the general mechanisms through which they operate, and the continual effects of these" (96). To look for power only at its center would be futile, for it exists only in its exercise, in a relation. Thus, Foucault writes, "it [the analysis] should be concerned with power at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary" (96). Foucault believes that this point of extremity, at which power becomes most capillary, is in "regional and local forms and institutions" (96). So, the analysis of power should focus on power's "ultimate destinations," the places at which its exercise seems outside the jurisdiction of those central localities of power. As Foucault sums up this portion of the methodology, he writes, "one should try to locate power at the extreme points of its exercise, where it is always less legal in character" (97). This conception of the analysis is consistent with what Foucault will later say of power in *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, his first publication after "Two Lectures" and a work written almost concurrent with it: "Power comes from below... in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions" (94). All of these localities are below the radar of the legal conception of power—the mechanisms by which they operate are not of those based on right, but

⁵ William Turner argues that there is a gross misunderstanding of Foucault's work in regards to this turn, a misunderstanding that we will try to remedy here and in the following chapter (*Genealogy* 69-78).

of those based on a different form of power, one reliant on knowledge. Thus, it is at these local centers of power, at the limited group that we must aim our analysis according to Foucault.

The second methodological precaution sticks close to the first. Foucault writes of the analysis that it “should not concern itself with power at the level of conscious intention or decision” (*Two* 97). The analysis of power should not concern itself with who has power and what this person intends with it. Power, after all, is not a good, not “something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds onto or allows to slip away” (*History* 94). To ask who has power and what they intend is a relatively useless question, for it still fails to say how this power is exercised, how we might resist it. Thus, Foucault says, “What is needed is a study of power in its external visage, at the point where it is in direct and immediate relationship with that which we can provisionally call its object, its target, its field of application, there—that is to say—where it installs itself and produces its real effects” (*Two* 97). Power needs to be studied at the level of relation, at the point at which that which exercises power comes in contact with that on which it bears. This means that the analysis of power is not so concerned with those who exercise it and those on whom it is exercised (as Foucault will later write, “Power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective”); rather, it is concerned with the strategies employed in relations of power, with “the great anonymous, almost unspoken strategies which coordinate the loquacious tactics” of the operation of power (*History* 95). This analysis is necessary in order that we understand how “subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted... [the form of] subjection in its material instances as a constitution of subjects” (*Two* 97). In performing this analysis, Foucault hopes that we might begin to concern ourselves not just with power’s location, but with its productive capacity, with the “how” of its operation.

The third methodological precaution relates to a notion of power we have already mentioned: power is existent only in its exercise, is not to be conceived of as a good or commodity, is not something grasped, hoarded, possessed at all. Foucault writes, “Power is employed through a net-like organization,” an organization of lines of force, of engaged relations of power (98). To conceive of power this way means that we must place the individual—for the second methodological precaution focuses the analysis on the subject—in relation to power; we must understand her positioning with regards to relations of power. Foucault says of this: “they [individuals] are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its *inert or consenting target* [emphasis mine]; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application” (98). Power is conceived of only in relation; thus the individual cannot be understood as a target for power, a “point of application,” because this would presume that power was a commodity, that power existed as a good and could be thus used as an object against others, not as a force only present in its exercise. The individual, for Foucault, is conceived as the element of power, its medium. Moreover, the individual is its medium in that power plays itself out through the knowledge it both garners and produces about the individual.

As such, Foucault understands individuals as “one of the prime effects” of power (98). Or, more clearly, he conceives of the notion of the individual as subject as one of the productive functions of power, the way that “certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires come to be identified and constituted as individuals” (98). This means that the individual as subject is constituted by power, and, being such, the individual is always that through which power is articulated. Foucault’s third methodological precaution, then, warns against the conception of power as a good, instead favoring a conception of power as a force within social

relation, a force that is predicated on knowledge of the subject, on creating and calculating power through knowledge. This precaution focuses the analysis on the individual subject, on the way she is a prime productive effect of power, on the individual's relation to knowledge and power.

Given that we should conceive of power as a force of social relation, the fourth methodological precaution is that power is to be analyzed through an ascending method; that is to say, power should be analyzed at the lowest levels of social relation, "starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms," Foucault writes, "which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own technique and tactics" (99). From these "infinitesimal mechanisms," Foucault believes we can begin to build a view of the larger mechanisms that are put in place, the "more general mechanisms of global domination" (99). This is a necessary analysis because, as Foucault will later write in *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, "Major dominations are the hegemonic effects of all the [localized] confrontations," the product of the amalgamation, the colonization of the most immediate forms of power relations by the more generalized centers of power (94). And, if we are to substitute the problem of subjugation and domination for that of sovereignty and obedience, then we must understand how these relations of domination are formed and practiced, the way they strategize with regards to the myriad local relations of power. So, Foucault writes, "It is only if we grasp these techniques of power... that we can understand how these mechanisms come to be effectively incorporated into the social whole" (*Two* 101). In order to make the analysis of relations of power at their most extreme, immediate and effective level fully useful, we must begin to understand—starting from their most immediate points—how they are used by those practices of domination.

The fifth methodological precaution is that we should not simplify the analysis of power to the level of ideological production, that is to say, analyze power only to that level. Foucault

believes that the form of power to be analyzed is much more than an ideological construction; he writes, “It [power] is the production of effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge—methods for observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses of control” (102). In other words, the analysis of power cannot take place simply at the level of ideological abstraction, but instead must view the concrete and myriad mechanisms through which power operates. This means that the analysis of power at the local levels is directly related to Foucault’s earlier work on knowledge and power, but that this work must be realigned to a more local level; the local levels to be analyzed, the descriptions of the constitution of relations of subjugation and domination, are to be recognized as the basis, the foundation and aim of Foucault’s genealogical critiques, a foundation that is essentially the individual subject in relation. Ultimately, the analysis Foucault hopes to undertake will finally put into play those genealogical critiques that are currently “surrounded by a prudent silence” by activating them at the level of the individual’s constitution through relations of power.

Foucault ends his section on methodological precautions for the study of disciplinary power in societies of normalisation with a summary of the work to be undertaken:

I would say that we should direct our researches on the nature of power not towards the juridical edifice of sovereignty, the state apparatuses and the ideologies which accompany them, but towards domination and the material operators of power, towards forms of subjection and the inflections and utilisations of their localised systems, and toward strategic apparatuses. (102)

This is the analysis that Foucault will try to complete over the next eight years of his life. It is one that, we will see, was left incomplete, and one that, ultimately, failed. What we will suggest in Chapter Two is that this analysis became increasingly centered on the individual subject involved in relations of power. The culmination of this re-centering comes in Foucault’s work on the concept of care of the self. In the end, we will see that care of the self is the method to

which Foucault comes in his reconception of power in an attempt to reactive genealogical critiques as politically useful. We will suggest at the end of Chapter Two, however, that Foucault fails to understand and describe those relations on which his method was to focus. More specifically, Foucault fails to understand the consequences of his own conception of the position of the individual subject, his own conception of the individual's position in relation to his genealogical critiques. Ultimately, we will see that Foucault does not understand the implications of his conception of the constitution of the individual subject, that he lacks an ontology that he admits is necessary to his work, but that his work on genealogical critiques and care of the self is necessary to us nonetheless. We will, in fact, argue in Chapter Five that genealogical critiques and care of the self are ethically necessary to our ability to carry out a practicable ethics in the world. But, first let us to Chapter Two, where we will examine the use of and problems inherent to Foucault's new focus on the individual subject.

Chapter Two

Discipline and Punish

Written in 1975, *Discipline and Punish* predates “Two Lectures” by two years. It is, however, a work that we might understand as the beginning of the type of analysis of power that Foucault makes explicit out in “Two Lectures.” It is, in other words, directed toward “domination and the material operators of power, towards forms of subjection and the inflections and utilisations of their localised systems, and toward strategic apparatuses” (*Two* 102). It is a work that attempts to locate the operation of penal power at its lowest levels, looking at the immediate site on which its effects are played out—the individual. Foucault works from this analysis in *Discipline and Punish* to a theory of power in a disciplinary society. Specifically, the chapter entitled “Panopticism” is a section devoted to showing through the panoptical model of power utilised in the penal system—an “artificially decanted system of power”—how a disciplinary power works, how it is exercised. It is a chapter that is devoted to analyzing the disciplinary power of the panopticon and showing how this power was generalized to the lowest levels of the social body. Foucault writes, “the panoptic scheme, without disappearing as such or losing any of its properties, was destined to spread through the social body; its vocation was to become a generalised function” (*Discipline* 207). The panoptic system, then, is the opportunity for Foucault to analyze the operations of power in a disciplinary society in an artificially clear form. In doing so, he shows how disciplinary forms are integrated into the social body, controlling the balance of a myriad number of power relations without a great deal of expenditure.¹

¹ It is important to note that Foucault is not singularly concerned in *Discipline and Punish* with showing that panopticism is the only method by which disciplinary power is exercised. In an interview he will after give in 1979 (four years after *Discipline and Punish*’s publication), he will say “the procedures of power that are at work in

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that the mechanisms of disciplinary power function by individuating subjects, constituting them as the very mechanism by which they are subjected to power. He writes,

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (*Discipline* 203)

What essentially occurs is that the individual is put into relation with herself; she becomes the gaze that watches, interrogates, judges and condemns. The individual is thus the extreme limit of power, its ultimate destination and construction. The individual is put in relation to herself, thus establishing at the most minute level possible a power relation that operates with cold efficiency, with little cost and with terrible efficacy. The model of power that Foucault draws out lays the mechanisms of subjection and domination within a disciplinary society at the feet of the individual. If Foucault believes that power is ultimately to be conceived of as productive, then we must say that he establishes disciplinary power's most effective product as the disciplinary individual, the individual who works for her own subjection to the normalising, leveling tendencies of a disciplinary society.

Thus, Foucault gives us a description of the operation of power within a disciplinary society, a society of normalisation. This is, of course, the type of society in which we live, and he understands the individual subject today to be a disciplinary individual—a “prime effect” of disciplinary power. We might understand from this that Foucault has begun, even before the delivery of “Two Lectures,” to take the first tentative steps toward the analysis of power he outlines in “Two Lectures.” He has already begun, in 1975, to analyze power relations at their

modern societies are much more numerous, diverse and rich. It would be wrong to say that the principle of visibility governs all technologies of power” (*Eye of Power* 148). However, what we may conceive of as Foucault's purpose in *Discipline and Punish* is to explicate the operations of disciplinary power by viewing them in a specific, material form.

most capillary, in their immediate location where they have their prime effects. This is an analysis that focuses on the individual subject. This focus, however, can hardly be surprising to us. We might have read, already, in the methodological precautions we have outlined that the analysis must take place at the site of individual subjectivity—at the most immediate, capillary, illicit site. Thus, with *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault has launched us down the path towards a study of the individual subject in relation to power and knowledge. He sees that his genealogical critiques, his analysis of the relations of power and knowledge, will remain ineffective as long as the individual put in relation goes unstudied. In short, Foucault's description of the mechanisms of power in disciplinary society, along with his outline for a method of study in the analysis of power, necessitates that he embark upon a study of the individual subject placed in relations of power in order that he might hope to activate resistance to those relations of domination through genealogical critique.

The subject in relation to power and knowledge

This being the case, we can understand Foucault's essay, "The Subject and Power," published in 1982, as a statement of his intention to complete his study of power through a study of the individual in relation. The essay, in other words, is a clarification, an opportunity, and an advancement in the analysis that Foucault hopes to complete. Early in the essay, then, Foucault writes something that might originally seem strange to those familiar with his work, but that we can understand as a clarification of his purpose given what his method and analysis have so far dictated. He writes, "Thus, it is not power, but the subject, that is the general theme of my research" (*Subject* 327). Foucault explains here that his study of the subject has taken three forms: the study of the way the discourses of the "so called" sciences objectify the individual, the study of "dividing practices" by which subjects are divided from others and themselves, and

finally the study of the way the individual turns herself into a subject. He writes that it is this study of “the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject” that is the current form of his work (327). It is the form because, as we have already demonstrated through “Two Lectures” and *Discipline and Punish*, it is necessary to understand the relation of the subject to herself and to knowledge in order to understand the operation of power. Foucault writes,

It is true that I became quite involved with the question of power. It soon appeared to me that... [the human subject] ... is placed in power relations that are very complex.... It was therefore necessary to expand the dimensions of a definition of power if one wanted to use this definition in studying the objectivizing of the subject. (327)

It was necessary, in other words, to re-envision power, to begin to understand how it operated in its most immediate relations, in order that Foucault’s previous work on power and knowledge could have an effect. It was necessary to analyze the relation of the individual to those knowledges that are utilized against it in order to understand how the individual might resist this utilization.

Foucault believes this analysis to be necessary because he now believes that philosophy, besides having the role of fixing the limits of reason, has gained an additional task: “the role of philosophy is also to keep watch over the excessive powers of political rationality” (328). In order for philosophy to do so, an analysis of the relationship between the individual and mechanisms of power must be undertaken, an analysis which focuses on specific localities, specific rationalities. This is the analysis Foucault has outlined for us in “Two Lectures,” one of the struggle, the relationship, the exercise and application of power. Foucault writes in “The Subject and Power” that this analysis “consists in taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point” (329). To do this, he believes, will be to highlight power relations at their most capillary, at the point at which they are naked relations of force disguised beneath political rationalities. Furthermore, he claims that in doing so (in works such as

Discipline and Punish), in looking through the many forms of resistance in our society, he finds similar objectives, objections and questions. He writes of these struggles: “To sum up, the main objective of these struggles is to attack... a technique, a form of power... a form of power that makes individuals subjects... a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to” (331). If we are to struggle against the “excessive powers of political rationality” we must understand, then, that it becomes a struggle for control of individual subjectivity. It is a struggle that attempts to disturb the equilibrium of a practice of power—a disciplinary practice—that ties individuals to who they are, that marks them as self-same, as singular, as subject to rules and games of truth that demand of them submission. It is, in short, the struggle against disciplinary power in its most specific forms, forms that have rapidly become usurped by the modern state and employed against the individual.

The problem then becomes to find ways to “refuse who we are” (336). If one task of philosophy is to combat the powers of political rationality, and if the powers of political rationality are disciplinary in nature, if they operate by making the individual subject to herself and to laws of individuating identity, we must counter these practices by envisioning new ways of being individuals. Foucault writes:

[T]he political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state’s institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several years. (336)

All of this is to say, given the analysis of disciplinary power, given the way it places the individual in a relation such that she is the element by which she is made subject to disciplinary power, we cannot simply liberate the individual from the disciplinary state, but, rather, we must understand how we are placed in relation to ourselves, what power relations we are caught up in,

how we are constituted in our individuality as subjects to innumerable games of truth and power. This will involve a specific understanding and analysis of the knowledge employed against the individual, and will involve a necessary redeployment of subverted knowledges; in short, it will involve a reapplication of genealogical researches.²

It becomes necessary, then, to understand how the forces of political rationality operate on the individual. Foucault begins his explication of this simply, saying: “The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between ‘partners,’ individual or collective; *it is a way in which some act on others* [emphasis mine]” (340). Or in another manner: “Power exists only as exercised by some on others, only when it is put into action, even though, of course, it is inscribed in a field of sparse available possibilities underpinned by permanent structures” (340). Power, in other words, only operates in situation, on the field of possible action; it is a way of arranging choice for the other, but not a way of choosing. Out of this conception of power comes something interesting—a conception of freedom. If we are to conceive of power as a relation of struggle, of possible movements engaged in situation, we must conceive of the participants in a power relation as “free” subjects; subjects engaged in power relations must, in other words, have some degree of choice. Foucault writes, “Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are ‘free’ ... In this game, freedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power” (342). This is a seemingly marked addition to the conception of the individual for Foucault—to conceive of the individual not simply as the articulation of power, but as an active subject. It is an addition, however, that is necessary given his conception of power as struggle, as a way of “structuring the possible field of action of others.” It is an addition that also necessitates two other points:

² We will suggest later in this chapter that the care of the self is the ultimate method to which Foucault comes in attempting this redeployment.

A power relationship... can only be articulated on the basis of two elements that are indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that 'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up. (340)

Thus, the analysis of power as struggle necessitates the existence of free subjects faced with a possible field of action on which they must conduct themselves.

The study of power thus takes the form of the analysis of these fields of action. Foucault writes, "What would be proper to a relationship of power, then, is that it be a mode of action on actions. That is, power relationships are rooted deep in the social nexus... to live in society is, in any extent, to live in such a way that some can act on the actions of others" (343). The study, in other words, is concerned with those infinitesimal social relations that are built up into the form of society. Society is impossible without relation, and relation necessitates society. Foucault thus writes—keeping in mind that the philosophical task is to check the powers of political rationality—that it is our task to call into question the very basic power relations that form the foundation for the social nexus. We must do this with an understanding of the way in which we are put in relation to ourselves, to knowledge, and to power; we must do this, in other words, with an understanding of the historical struggles through which these power relations that constitute our individuality have come to exist.

To do so, we must directly engage in the struggle, in structuring the possible field of action; if we are to question and analyze those relations of power that constitute and maintain the foundation of our society, we must enter into direct struggle with them, to engage them. For Foucault, this implies the formulation of *strategies* of power. By strategy, Foucault means three things: 1) "the means employed to attain a certain end;" 2) "the way one seeks to have advantage over others;" 3) "the procedures used in a situation of confrontation to deprive the

opponent of his means of combat... the means destined to attain victory” (346). Given this conception of strategy, we can understand the actions performed in power relations as strategic moves. More importantly, in understanding these moves as strategy, we underline the ever-constant possibility of struggle that lies at the heart of power relations. Foucault writes that if we understand power relations as struggles between the “principles of freedom, then there is no relation of power without the means of escape or possible flight” (346). Resistance is always both possible and feasible. Thus, if our task is to limit the powers of political rationalities, to resist and question the formulations of the social network by performing an examination of relations of power, by a questioning of our situation, by asking the question Foucault believes is the most important philosophical question—who are we?—we need to formulate strategies of struggle in order to counter the subjection that exists at the heart of our society.

So, with specific reference to the analysis of disciplinary power Foucault has given us—a power in which the individual is ultimately constituted in such a manner that there exists an internal relation of power—how might we formulate strategies (what we also might call, following Foucault, “practices of freedom”) by which we can hope to question, analyze, and ultimately counter the operation of disciplinary power? This is the question Foucault attempts to answer in an interview he gave almost exactly eight years after his delivery of “Two Lectures” and only six months before his death. It is one of his last significant statements and one in which he attempts to formulate a final synthesis between his work on disciplinary power and the subject—which we have been examining—and his work on knowledge and power—his genealogical critiques which his later work attempted to reapply. This interview is, in some ways, a last gasp, the terminal stage in Foucault’s philosophical program. This is not to say, however, that it is utterly flawed. In fact, I would like to suggest that it is an interview that

expresses to us the peak to which Foucault aspired and one that only narrowly eluded his grasp. We shall examine this interview—entitled, “The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom”—both for the method it gives to us for understanding the historical struggles through which power relations have come to constitute our individuality and the way that Foucault’s conception of this method will fail us.³ In doing so, we will hope to begin to see the fatal gap in Foucault’s work, one which we will be concerned with overcoming later. This gap is a minor one, and yet it is utterly destructive to Foucault’s attempt to effectively apply genealogical critiques at the level of the individual subject. What we will see is that in attempting to align genealogical critiques with practices of the self—to activate them at the level of the individual subject—Foucault misses the fact of our primary involvement with the Other, with the necessity of aiming an analysis of knowledge and power not just at our selves, but at our selves in relation to others. This slight mistake, this gap, in Foucault’s program is one that will keep Foucault from fully rescuing his genealogical critiques from the “prudent silence” that surrounds them. It is also one that, in exposing, we hope to eventually remedy. But for now, let us to the interview.

Practices of freedom

In the interview, “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” the interviewer asks Michel Foucault if he conceives of a break between his former research on the subject and truth and the research Foucault is performing at the time. Foucault responds thus: “Up to a point I had conceived the problem of the relationship between the subject and games of truth within terms of coercive practices or theoretical or scientific games... In my lectures at the

³ As commented on in the introduction, there is an utter lack of concern for this essay, its mention nearly impossible to find within any essay written on Foucault’s ethical work. As example, see Bernauer and Mahon’s “The Ethics of Michel Foucault,” Davidson’s “Ethics as Ascetics,” or Brown’s *On Foucault*.

Collège de France, I tried to grasp it in terms of what may be called a practice of the self' (*Ethics* 282). It is this practice of the self that Foucault understands as uniting his work on the subject, truth, and power, a practice that he will go on to term "the care of the self." In this, Foucault introduces to us the care of the self, or the work of the self on the self. As he writes, "It is what one could call an ascetic practice... an exercise of the self on the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain a certain mode of being" (282). Care of the self is a labor, a work, an exercise of power by the self, on the self. It is, in short, a way of re-constituting oneself in the world, a way that we can understand as the redeployment of genealogical critique to the level of the individual.

Foucault is careful not to be understood as saying that care of the self is necessarily a liberatory practice. He argues that it should not be understood as a sort of primal return, a practice by which "man will be reconciled with himself, rediscover his nature or regain contact with his origin" (282). Foucault argues, in fact, that to understand the practice as such is to assume premises with which his thought cannot be reconciled. He says, "I have always been somewhat suspicious of the notion of liberation, because if it is not treated with precautions and within certain limits, one runs the risk of falling back on the idea that there exists a human nature" (282). Liberation, for Foucault, is only to be understood as a possibility within relations of domination, in which the field of possible action is so structured as to eliminate the possibility of resistance almost completely. Liberation, in other words, is only the concern of the practice of freedom to the extent that it disrupts relations of domination at least to the point where there is certain mobility, a certain possibility to actually enter into struggle. "Liberation," Foucault writes, "paves the way for new power relationships which must be controlled by practices of freedom" (283-4).

The problem Foucault is concerned with, then, is not liberation—although liberatory struggles do have their importance. Rather, Foucault is concerned with the way that freedom can be practiced within power relations, with the way, in other words, that strategies of power can be employed given the individuating practices of disciplinary society. He states that his concern is the ethical problem of the practice of freedom: “How can one practice freedom?” (284). He is careful, here, to qualify what he means by ethics; he states, “for what is ethics, if not the practice of freedom” (284). Foucault is concerned with how we might ethically practice freedom within disciplinary society, with the way we might respond to, question, and counter strategies of power employed against us. And, because Foucault conceives of the mechanism of power in disciplinary society to be the individual who subjects herself—the disciplinary individual—he conceives that the ethical practice of freedom, the strategy we must employ, is the care of the self. In other words, if the strategies that are employed against us are ones that attempt to position us in a certain relation to ourselves such that we no longer practice freedom but simply operate as the articulation of the power exercised over us, we must counter them by practicing the care of the self—a work on the self, by the self, and a work that implies a thorough understanding of the self and its imbrication in relations of power and knowledge.

Care of the self is, therefore, to be understood as a strategy employed by subjects in disciplinary society, a strategy that implies knowing the social relations in which one is intermeshed. Thus, it implies a knowledge of the relations of power and truth. Foucault states:

Taking care of oneself requires knowing oneself. Care of the self is, of course, knowledge of the self... but also knowledge of a number of rules of acceptable conduct or principles that are both truths and prescriptions. To take care of oneself is to equip oneself with these truths: that is where ethics is linked to the game of truth. (285).

Care of the self is essentially the labor of knowing oneself and knowing how and why the field of one's possibilities—one's situation—has come to be structured by relations of power. It is, in

short, awareness of self and situation. As such, it allows for a reactivation of Foucault's work on power and knowledge—his genealogical critiques—for it implies being able to understand how one has come to be constituted in the world. Care of the self is essentially a project by which one will come to know how to act, how to ethically practice freedom; it is, in short, a genealogical work on the self, the re-application of genealogical researches at the level of the individual subject in order that the individual can challenge the mechanisms of disciplinary power by finding new ways to be a subject.⁴

To explain this further, Foucault conceptualizes this in another manner. He argues that we can understand the care of the self as a practice which allows one to build an “*ethos*... a way of being and of behavior” (286). The practice of freedom, thereby, is embodied in an individual's *ethos*, in her way of being and behaving. Care of the self allows one to be and behave in a way that is knowledgeable of the nexus of social forces, the myriad number of power relations, in which one is constantly intertwined. It is a practice that thus allows the individual to enter into and counter relations of power that attempt to dominate, to starkly narrow the field of possibility that is part of the individual's social positioning, by allowing the individual to constitute herself with knowledge of these historical struggles by which relations of power and knowledge come to be established in the first place, by which the individual herself comes to be established.

Moreover, Foucault conceives of care of the self as care for others, as well, even if in an indirect way. He states, “the care of the self is ethical in itself; but it implies complex relationships with others insofar as this *ethōs* of freedom is also a way of caring for others...

⁴ Much has been written on Foucault's care of the self as a political strategy, but no work has seriously treated its connection to his genealogical researches on the ethical plane. See Brown's *On Foucault* and Nancy Fraser's “Michel Foucault: A ‘Young Conservative’?” as well as C.G. Prado's work on genealogy.

Ethos also implies a relationship with others, insofar as the care of the self enables one to occupy his rightful position in the city, the community, or interpersonal relationships” (287). Care of the self implies the ethical practice of freedom both of the self in relation to itself and in relation to others. It is, for him, “A conversion [of power]... a way of limiting and controlling power” (288). Care of the self is this limit and control of power because it helps the self to know its desires and also the desires that are imposed on it by the games of power and knowledge that surround it, thus helping the self to minimize the extent to which it might seek to dominate others. It is this limit, this control of power that care of the self affords, that suggests itself to Foucault as the strategy through which relations of power might be ethically practiced.

Given this analysis, Foucault seems to advocate care of the self as a way to ethically practice freedom. There is a point, however, which might concern us, that might be summed up by what seems to be a relatively unimportant question from the interviewer: “Doesn’t care of the self, when separated from care for others, run the risk of becoming an absolute? And couldn’t this ‘absolutization’ of the care of the self become a way of exercising power over others, in the sense of dominating others?” (288). The concern, in other words, is that with such a thorough knowledge of the self and of the social nexus in which one is intertwined, with such a thorough understanding of the power relations within which one is engaged, does not one risk the possibility of structuring relations of power in such ways that the practice of freedom is given over to the practice of domination? In short, what should hold us back?

Foucault’s response, his answer, is this:

No, because the risk of dominating others and exercising a tyrannical power over them arises precisely only when one has not taken care of the self and has become the slave to one’s desires. But if you take proper care of yourself, that is, if you know ontologically what you are, if you know what you are capable of, if you know what it means for you to be a citizen of a city, to be a master of a household... if you know what things you should and should not fear... if you know what you can reasonably hope for and... what things

should not matter to you, if you know, finally, that you should not be afraid of death—if you know all this, you cannot abuse your power over others. (289)

Foucault believes that the care of the self, if practiced in this way, will lead the individual to conduct herself properly, without the danger of lapsing into relations of domination. He states, “the *ethos*, the practice of the self... will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible” (298). And, because Foucault conceives of playing these games with as little domination as possible as the “hinge point of ethical concerns,” because he conceives of the ethical practice of freedom as the attempt to avoid dominating strategies, he believes that care of the self is the best way to practice freedom ethically.

What care of the self then necessitates is an understanding of what one ontologically and ontically is. This means that we must have a conception of both the concrete relations in which we are intertwined and the deep structures and forms of existence below these relations. It is obvious that Foucault’s genealogical critiques give us the opportunity to garner an understanding of the concrete relations in which we are intertwined. The genealogical analysis of the historical struggles through which knowledge of the individual has been produced and disqualified, the recovery of these histories, allow us a unique look into what it is for us to be “a master of a household,” “a citizen of a city,” a sexualized individual, a sane or mad individual, etc. These researches teach us how to reconceive our concrete relations in the world in ways that counter these ontic relations, that challenge what seems to be their immutable truth. Genealogical research is necessary to this process, and for us to further carry out these researches is of the utmost importance to conceiving of ways to form resistant subjectivities.

Foucault, however, leaves us with a very vague picture of what we are ontologically. Indeed, although his first claim about the practice of the care of the self is that we should “know ontologically what [we] are,” he gives us no conception of what this is. Furthermore, what we

are ontologically seems to be quite a hinge point in Foucault's method for forming resistant subjectivities, for it is on this point that he rests the primacy of the care of the self over the care of others; he writes, "The care of the self is ethically prior in that the relationship with oneself is ontologically prior" (287). Indeed, this is perhaps one of Foucault's only ontological claims about the individual. We must attempt, then, to look toward what type of ontological conception it will lead us to, in order to begin to see how, in addition to re-activating genealogical critiques in order to discover what we are ontically, we might begin to see what conception we should have of ourselves ontologically.

Recovering an ontology

This claim of Foucault's—that there is a relation between, presumably, our ontological being and our ontic self, a relation that is primary—must be our start. We must break it down and understand what it might mean for us. In order to do this, we must first understand the construction of the ontic self to which we have an ontological relation. We must, then, see how this relation plays out, given Foucault's own conception of the production of the ontic self. Finally, we will examine how this ontological relation to the self—this relation that Foucault calls primary—might actually be understood as only equi-primordial or even, perhaps, as a secondary relation. In examining this, we will show not that Foucault is wrong in his claims for the practice of an ethics, but that he is wrong in his conception of the understanding this practice necessitates; that is, we will show that Foucault misunderstands our ontological relation to the self—a misunderstanding that places him counter to his own conception of the constitution of the individual and one that will make him further mistake that which should be the jumping off point for an ethics of the practice of freedom. Let us first, then, examine what Foucault believes about the creation about the ontic self.

For Foucault, the ontic self—the one involved in those concrete social roles such as a “master of a household” or a “citizen of a city” that Foucault believes we must understand in order to practice care of the self—must be understood as a product of relations of power. If we remember what Foucault has said in the methodological precautions outlined in “Two Lectures,” it seems that the ontic self must be understood as a product of an interaction between our ontological being and the other of power relationships. He writes in “Two Lectures” that the individual is a productive function of the way that “certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires come to be identified and constituted as individuals” (98). In other words, the disciplinary individual—which Foucault believes is the current ontic form of our selfhood—is a creation of power relations, of the way that bodies, gestures, discourses, and desires are identified in relations with others. It is a self that is the “prime effect” of disciplinary power relations, one that is produced through (what we must assume)⁵ is a relation between that ontological being that we are (and of which Foucault speaks almost nothing) and others. This means that the ontic self that we must know is a product of a more original relation with others. The ontic self, then, to which we have (what Foucault considers) a primary ontological relation, seems to be a secondary product of an original relation of power, a relation that takes place through others. The ontic self to which our ontological being has a relation, then, is a product of power relations with others.

Thus, the creation of the ontic self is dependent upon relations with the Other of power. This is easily understood as a consequence of Foucault's claim, in “Subject and Power,” that the other is necessary to maintain relations of power; if the ontic self is a product of a certain discourse, a certain way of understanding how we are in the world, then this product is

⁵ We must *assume* we have an ontological being because Foucault only leaves us with a vague reference to it. We read the existence of this ontological being from the fact Foucault claims we must know “what we *are* ontologically [emphasis mine].” This assumes the existence of an ontological being that Foucault leaves otherwise unmentioned.

dependent on the Other for its formation, for it is through power relations that this knowledge and understanding of individuality come. Because the ontic self is a product of a certain way of structuring the field of possible action, of a certain way of relation between freedoms, we must understand others as necessary. More specifically, we must understand that there is a necessary relation between the ontological being that we have (and which Foucault leaves assumed) and the being of others. Thus, it seems that the ontic self is dependent on both the ontological being that Foucault leaves only vaguely spoken of and the Other on which he claims all power relations depend.

If this is the case, if the creation of the ontic self is an effect of power relations, we must challenge Foucault's claim that the ontological relation to one's self is primary. If, as Foucault's own conception of the creation of the ontic individual seems to imply, the ontic self is dependent on relations to others, we need to understand that there may be a more primary, or at least equi-primordial relation to the other of power; that is to say, if the ontic self is a product of an ontological relation with others, we need to understand our relation to others as much as we need to understand our relation to our selves. This means that we need to challenge Foucault's assumption that the ontological relation to the self is primary; indeed, it seems that it is an equi-primordial relation at best, one that is too tightly involved in the relation to others to be separated out. Put simply, if the self to which we have an ontological relation can only exist *after* we have already engaged in power relations with others, it becomes very difficult—and indeed even contradictory—for us to hold, as Foucault does, that our relation to this self is primary. Instead, because of the consequences of Foucault's own conception of the creation of the ontic self, it seems we must hold our relations to others as, at least in part, our primary ontological relation.

If we hold this relation to others as at least partly having primacy, we must then reexamine Foucault's claim that there is *ethical* primacy to care for the self—i.e. that care of the self starts with the self and then leads to an understanding of others. It seems that Foucault claims that ethical primacy is based on ontological primacy—a claim which we will not dispute—when he says, “Care for others should not be put before care of oneself. The care of the self is ethically prior in that the relationship with oneself is ontologically prior” (287). If this basis for ethical primacy is the case, then, given what we have shown of at least an equi-primordial relation with others, we must understand care of the self *and* care for others as equally necessary tasks to the ethical practice of freedom. This means that we must understand not just who we are ontologically, but we must also understand who we are as ontological beings in relation to others; the two understandings are inseparable. While this might not seem to be a significant difference, it is one that modifies Foucault's conception of the practice of an ethics of freedom. It means that we need an understanding not just of who we ontologically are, but we also need an understanding of who the Other is ontologically and what sort of relations we are capable of in regards to this Other. This implies a massive undertaking that is, to understate the case, sorely lacking in Foucault's work.

Moreover, it is this task of understanding ourselves in ontological relation to others that provides for us the underpinning to understanding those concrete relations that Foucault's genealogical critiques expose so well. It will do us little good to understand only our concrete relations with others if *ontology* provides the basis for ethical primacy and if we fail to understand what we are ontologically in relation to others. Thus, Foucault's ethical program, one that is synthesized around an attempt to form subjectivities that are resistant to the coercive individuating practices of disciplinary societies by re-activating genealogical critiques at the

most local of levels, is left, by him, only half-explicated. Moreover, in the little we can trace of Foucault's ontological understanding, we see that he fails to understand the ontological implications of his own thought on the construction of the ontic individual.

It is at this point, then, that we will turn to the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. We will examine the work of Sartre in an attempt to find Foucault's ethics in a compatible ontological description, one that fills in the underpinning necessary to the ethical practice of freedom through the formation of resistant subjectivities. Moreover, in examining not just Sartre's ontological descriptions of our relation to our being and to others, but also Sartre's ethics of free self-commitment and self-aware action, we will find that Sartre's ethics is lacking precisely the understanding of the individual in concrete relation to the social nexus that Foucault's work on power and knowledge gives us—an understanding that is necessary to the *practice* of a Sartrean ethics. In other words, we will find that precisely what haunts the partial failure of Sartre's ethics is the lack of such a genealogical program as Foucault's, especially with regard to the care of the self. Thus, let us move on to Jean-Paul Sartre and his work, *Being and Nothingness*.

Chapter Three

Much of Jean-Paul Sartre's work on the ontological relation of the human to being takes place in his philosophical treatise, *Being and Nothingness*. We will here undertake a selective overview of this work in order that we might lay a groundwork for understanding his attempts at an ethical program. We will be interested, especially, in his work on the ontological relation of the human to the Other. This interest, of course, stems from the work that we have undertaken so far with regards to Michel Foucault's philosophical program in which we showed Foucault's definitive need of an ontological description of our relation to others and the lack of just such a description. It will not be our place, here, however, to undertake to show the compatibility of Michel Foucault's philosophical work on genealogical researches and Jean-Paul Sartre's work on our ontological relation to our being and to others. That will be our subject in Chapters Five and Six. What we will perform in this and the following chapter is simply an analysis and interpretation of Sartre's ontological descriptions and the way that these descriptions influence and limit Sartre's ethical program.¹ In doing this, we hope to provide a solid foundation for the work we will perform in synthesizing Foucault and Sartre's programs in the latter chapters of this work. So, we will begin with Sartre's ontological descriptions of our relation to being and to the Other; it is through these ontological descriptions that we will move in order to understand Sartre's attempts at an ethics of free self-commitment and self-aware action.

¹ In showing the connection between Sartre's ontological descriptions and his ethics, we will hope to bridge a gap in understanding Sartre's early philosophical program. Thomas Anderson, in an attempt to do the same, argues that most understandings of Sartre's ethics are premised on their autonomy from his ontology, on the fact that there cannot be a consistent line drawn from one to the other. Anderson himself, in attempting to do so, occasionally relies on countering Sartre's ontological claims and prescriptions, also often resorting to using outside sources to shore up areas where Anderson does not feel the connection is clear or teneable. Herbert Marcuse argues that one cannot understand Sartre's ethics in light of his philosophy, and this is an interpretation common among many. For example, see Sarah Hoagland's "Existential Freedom and Political Change."

Being-in-itself, being-for-itself

There is, first, the claim that we make the world. Sartre, in his phenomenological explication of consciousness, tells us that it is human reality that makes the world. Beginning from being, Sartre first examines being-in-itself, that is, being as full positivity, as being that is what it is. This is the common conception of being. To say that being-in-itself is what it is seems, to us, to be a trite and obvious statement. What it means, though, is that being is fully and utterly itself, it is nothing which it is not, it knows no outside or other (*Being* 29). Sartre then has this to say: "Being is. Being is in-itself. Being is what it is" (29). Being exists, being knows no outside, being is necessary.

Sartre says we cannot conceive of human reality as just such a being, however, for we, as participants in human reality, can question this being. That is, we can put ourselves in a mode of relation to being such that we question what being is. The question, Sartre points out, presupposes the possibility of a negative answer; in asking a question, we always open ourselves to the possibility of a "no." Thus, Sartre writes, "I admit *on principle* the possibility of a negative reply... This means that we admit to being faced with the transcendent fact of the non-existence" (35). If there is the fact of the possibility of non-existence, of the negative, then we admit the fact of something that stands opposed to being-in-itself, something which is not what it is. This is the fact of negation, of nothingness. The fact of negation is not in being, however, for being admits of nothing which is not itself—being is absolute positivity. Thus, it is through human reality, through consciousness of the world, that negation, non-existence must come to the world; if we have established that it is the human being that questions, and if it is through the question that we can derive the possibility of non-existence, it must be through the human that non-existence comes to the world.

This, for Sartre, raises some questions as to the nature of consciousness, as to the nature of human reality, questions that, when answered, will begin to give us a conception of the human in relation to being. Sartre asks this: if the human being can question being and, in doing so, bring non-existence to the world, what must be the position of human reality with regards to the two; that is, what must consciousness be such that it can set up such a relation between being and nothingness? Essentially, if we start from consciousness as that by which the question of being comes to the world, then we can say that consciousness is that by which the world is constituted, that is, that by which the world is arranged in its form. To explain further, Sartre writes, “This means both that ‘human reality’ springs forth *invested* with being and ‘finds itself’ in being—and also that human reality causes being, which surrounds it, to be disposed around human reality in the form of the world” (51). Human reality causes being to be “disposed around” it as a world by distinguishing being from itself, by positing negations between objects which all have one and the same being-in-itself. So, in positing the objects of the world as separate through the process of negation, human reality causes there to be a world. Thus, if the human being can question the world, can bring the possibility of nothingness to the world, and if—as Sartre holds—it is through this possibility of nothingness that being is structured in its form as world, it must be through human reality, through consciousness that the world comes to being, that being is formed into the world.

From the assertion that it is through human consciousness that the world comes to being, we can begin to see some of the ontological structures of human reality after which we are searching. Firstly, we know that human reality has being-in-itself. But, we also know that it is from being-in-itself and through consciousness that being comes to be organized into a world, that being comes to be constituted as world. This means that one of the ontological structures of

human reality must be capable of nihilation, capable of forming negations and thus bringing the world to being. This structure cannot be the structure of being-in-itself, however, because being-in-itself cannot pass beyond itself, cannot be outside of itself. Thus, Sartre argues that we must conceive of a second ontological structure by which nihilation comes to the world. He will term this structure “being-for-itself,” the structure through which negation comes to the world.

So, beginning from being-in-itself, Sartre shows how human consciousness creates negation and in so doing brings the world into being. From this, he posits that ontological human reality is composed of at least these two basic structures: being-in-itself and being-for-itself. These are two structures that are opposed to each other—indeed, it is from their opposition that comes the world—and as such, Sartre is interested in exploring how they operate in human reality. Being-in-itself is utter interiority, entirely itself and fully necessary; being-in-itself is what it is. Being-for-itself, however, is complete exteriority, entirely conditional and nihilating; it is not what it is and is what it is not. We must examine the relations between these two structures more thoroughly; this, for Sartre, becomes the central examination in *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre reasons that to follow this examination further, to understand the opposition of these two structures as creative of the world, we must analyze an attitude taken up by consciousness toward the world. But, there are far too many attitudes that we might choose, he says, and so he takes one that he finds essential to human reality, one that is a relation of consciousness to itself; this attitude is bad faith. As Sartre writes, “It is best to choose and to examine one determined attitude which is essential to human reality and which is such that consciousness instead of directing its negation outward turns it toward itself. This attitude, it seems to me, is *bad faith*” (87). So, Sartre will examine bad faith in order to better understand the relation of the for-itself to the in-itself.

Bad faith

Sartre tentatively begins to define bad faith as a lie to oneself, which means that bad faith is a project that is taken up by a single consciousness. He writes, “Bad faith... implies in essence the unity of a *single* consciousness” (89). Yet, a lie to oneself assumes that one knows what truth one is hiding and at the same time hides the truth from oneself; it assumes, in other words, a duality at the heart of consciousness that would permit of such a project. This duality, Sartre argues, is the duality of being-in-itself (facticity) and being-for-itself (transcendence). Thus, he writes, “The basic concept which is thus engendered utilizes the double property of the human being who is at once a *facticity* and a *transcendence*” (98). These two properties are and should be capable of coordination or a synthesis, but bad faith constantly “seeks to affirm their identity while preserving their differences” (98). This has the effect of confusing each for the other. In order to escape the situation, human consciousness in bad faith might either confirm itself in its facticity only—thus denying its freedom, its ability to act—or might consider itself only its freedom—thus denying its factual (read: factual, situational) position in the world (98). Thus, bad faith either treats freedom (being-for-itself) as a thing, as being what it is (which it is not); or, bad faith treats facticity (being-in-itself) as a possibility that it might be, that is, as something being-in-itself is not. Simply put, bad faith is a confusion of being-in-itself for being-for-itself or vice-versa.

The possibility of bad faith as an attitude that can be taken up by human consciousness toward itself has great implications for the ontological nature of human reality. It means, first of all, that there is a relation between being-in-itself and being-for-itself that is contradictory, for it is this contradiction that bad faith exploits. At the heart of human reality lies one ontological structure that posits the being of the human as what it is and another which posits the being of

the human as not what it is; the fact that these two structures operate together within bad faith means that the human reality is what it is not and is not what it is. Sartre puts this contradiction succinctly: “On all sides I escape being and yet—I am” (103). The fact that human reality must be what it is not and not be what it is, ultimately, is one of the major discoveries that an examination of bad faith allows us.

Sartre goes further, however, to the examination of the fact that bad faith is *faith*, is a structure of belief. To do so, he examines good faith and in doing so finds that bad faith is always not only a possibility of faith, but is the very foundation of faith as an attitude of consciousness. Sartre finds that this is so because to have faith is to know that one has faith, is to take a stance toward prereflective consciousness such that consciousness is no longer the same as its object. This is to necessarily no longer have that faith; Sartre writes, “But the nature of consciousness is such that in it the mediate and the immediate are one and the same being. To believe is to know that one believes, and to know that one believes is no longer to believe. Thus, to believe is not to believe any longer because that is only to believe” (114). This needs further explication. Essentially, what Sartre is arguing is that belief is an attitude a consciousness can assume toward the world; to believe is to believe *about something*. But, to do so implies that consciousness must no longer take a stance toward that something about which it would believe, but must, instead, take a stance toward the belief itself—it must decide to either believe or not believe. Thus, belief is never the immediate relation to an object by which it is defined, but instead belief entails something else as well, something that escapes it. This means that the consciousness that believes is never quite simply the consciousness that believes, for to be conscious of believing is to not wholly believe what one does. Thus, Sartre writes, “The ideal of good faith (to believe what one believes) is... an ideal of being-in-itself. Every belief is a belief

that falls short; one never fully believes what one believes” (115). Perhaps a more succinct way to look at this is to reflect on the phrase, “to have belief;” to have belief implies possession, to have something one is not, and thus to have what one is not. Thus, good faith is a construction of bad faith, an impossible goal, for it masquerades as something which it is not.²

Sartre’s analysis of good faith reveals to us the relation of the fundamental ontological structures of human reality. Sartre writes:

[T]he first act of bad faith is to flee what it can not flee, to flee what it is. The very project of flight reveals to bad faith an inner disintegration in the heart of being, and it is this disintegration which bad faith wishes to be. In truth, the two immediate attitudes which we can take in the face of our being [to be what we are not or to not be what we are] are conditioned by the very nature of this being and its immediate relation with the in-itself... If bad faith is possible, it is because it is an immediate, permanent threat to every project of the human being; it is because consciousness conceals in its being a permanent risk of bad faith. The origin of this risk is the fact that the nature of consciousness simultaneously is to be what it is not and not to be what it is. (116)

The possibility of fleeing—in fact, the necessity of consciousness as a flight toward being—coupled with the fact that consciousness *is* (that is to say, consciousness is a being) makes bad faith possible; it is, in turn, bad faith that reveals this fled-fleeing. Thus, human reality is such that it is factual (it has a being-which-it-has-been) and such that it constantly transcends this facticity—flees it—toward a being which it is not. This is a construction of human reality that speaks both to the situated nature of human reality—toward its facticity—and also to its freedom—its possibilities within the situation. Thus, we might sum up this section of Sartre’s analysis by saying that human reality is a freedom in situation, a consciousness of a set of possible actions which are limited only to the extent that possibility can only exist in situation (for otherwise nothing would be *possible*, all would simply *be*). Human reality does and, in fact, *must* consist of both freedom and situation, transcendence and facticity, being and nothingness.

² In this sense, Sartre calls a belief in good faith, “naïveté.”

Sartre's analysis of human reality, of the human's relation to being cannot, however, stop at an analysis of being-in-itself and being-for-itself. There is for Sartre a relation of the human toward being "as fundamental as being-for-itself" (298). This relation is being-for-others. Being-for-others, is, as well, most important for us. We must understand Sartre's view of the ontological relation to others in order to begin to understand how his ethics is constructed and how it eventually fails. It is his description of the ontological relation to others that we will find most useful in doing this, as well as in attempting to synthesize the philosophical program of Sartre with Michel Foucault's. Thus, we will examine Sartre's descriptions of the human's ontological relation to the Other in order that we may begin to lay a groundwork for an understanding of his ethics.

Being-for-others

Sartre begins his examination of being-for-others with this claim about notions such as shame, vulgarity and awkwardness: "they are meanings and as such they surpass the body and at the same time refer to a witness capable of understanding them and to the totality of human reality" (303). For Sartre, the existence of such notions as shame, vulgarity or awkwardness (along with a slew of others) supposes that there is a relation between the human and being that does not refer entirely toward a singular consciousness, but toward an-other. Sartre, however, tells us that this new type of being, this being-for-others, "does not reside *in* the Other," but rather resides in our own human reality. As, Sartre writes, "shame is shame *of oneself before the Other*; these two structures are inseparable. But at the same time I need the Other in order to realize fully all the structures of my being" (303). A description of this relation must be undertaken, then, given that being-for-others is a fundamental structure of our relation to being.

Sartre will begin his analysis of the human in relation to the Other with an examination of the look. It is the look, he claims, that reveals the Other's presence in the world and thus the look that is one of the fundamental structures of the human's relation to others. He begins by describing the look as the way by which consciousness unfolds the world in relation to itself. He writes, "this woman whom I see coming toward me, this man who is passing by in the street, this beggar whom I hear calling before my window, all are for me *objects*.... Thus, it is true that at least one of the modalities of the Other's presence to me is *object-ness*" (340). It is through our look toward the Other that we can posit the Other as an object. But, for Sartre, if the Other-as-object were our only mode of relation to the Other, the existence of the Other would remain only "purely conjectural" (340). This is because the Other would then be only an object of knowledge for us, and, as such, would only be given to us on the plane of conjecture, not as a necessary derivative of the human in relation to being. Instead, Sartre would like to examine the Other as a subject in order that we might both confirm the existence of the human's relation to the Other and examine this fundamental relation; and it is through the look (although, in this case, through the look of the Other) that he believes we might examine this relationship of being-for-others in more detail.

As we have said, the Other appears as an object for me. Within this object-ness, the Other remains purely conjectural. However, as the Other appears to me, I realize a flight of those objects that I arrange around me toward the object of the Other. Sartre writes, "The Other is first the permanent flight of things toward a goal which I apprehend as an object at a certain distance from me but which escapes me inasmuch as it unfolds about it its own distances" (343). The appearance of the Other as an object is something which deprives me of the world that I have unfolded about me; no longer are the objects arranged in relation to me, solely, but are

arranged in relation to the Other, as well. Thus, the Other “steals” the world from me, causes the appearance that the world is organized solely around me to disappear. The Other, however, is still an object at this point, for she remains only the object by which this occurs. We must, then, continue to try to escape from this manner of thinking in relation to the Other in order to find her nature as subject. Sartre believes that it is in the possibility of being seen that we can discover the Other as subject

We can discover the possibility of being seen from the fact of our existence as an object in the world. It is, Sartre writes, impossible to exist as an object for an object; one cannot be an object for something other than a subject. We cannot be an object for ourselves, however, for that would imply that we could make the world be and exist in it as an object simultaneously. Sartre writes, “my objectivity can not itself derive *for me* from the objectivity of the world since I am precisely the one by whom *there is* a world” (345). In other words, because we must act as a subject in making the world, we cannot be objects for ourselves in the world, for that would be the collapse of the world for us. The objectivity of the world for us presupposes our action as a subject. Thus, our existence as an object in the world must refer us to the permanent possibility of being seen by a being other than us, the permanent possibility of being seen by an-other. The Other’s look, then, is always present as the possibility of realizing ourselves as objects.

The possibility that we can realize ourselves as objects leads us to the permanent possibility of being-seen-by-another. The meaning of this being-seen-by-another is that, first of all, we have realized the Other as a subject. The Other that sees us is the Other that is a subject. But, this being-seen-by-another is, in turn, the realization of ourselves as having a foundation in the world which is outside of ourselves. This is because the realization of being-seen-by-another is the realization of a having a self; that is, it is a realization of our existence as a totality within

the world. Sartre writes, “I am conscious of myself as escaping myself, not in that I am the foundation of my own nothingness but in that I have my foundation outside myself. I am for myself only as I am a pure reference to the Other” (349). Suddenly, with the realization of our being-seen-by-another, we realize that we are thus founded in a world—that is to say, brought into place in an arrangement of being—which we do not, ourselves, arrange. This means we suddenly are a totality that is in reference only to an-other, and thus we have a being-in-the-world, a self, which we do not found.

This being-in-the-world means that we must be capable of certain relations with our being-in-the-world through the Other, relations that we must examine. Sartre writes that because we do not found ourselves in the world, we realize a certain indeterminacy in our being-in-the-world, a certain aspect which escapes us. It is this aspect that reveals to us the Other’s freedom; Sartre writes, “the Other’s freedom is revealed to me across the uneasy indetermination of the being which I am for him... it is the limit of my freedom” (351). We are separated from an understanding of how it is we are constituted fully in the midst of a world for the Other, and this separation, this realization of the Other as a subject which founds us in the world for herself, points us to the existence of the Other’s freedom as a limit to our own. Suddenly, with the existence of our being-in-the-world-for-another, there is an aspect of our being that escapes us, that we cannot control. Sartre writes that “[e]verything takes place as if I had a dimension of being from which I was separated by a radical nothingness; and this nothingness is the Other’s freedom” (351). We cannot see how we are in the world for the Other, and this reveals to us a fundamental limit to our freedom.

Moreover, our being-in-the-world for the Other reveals to us “a subtle alienation of all [our] possibles” (354). As we arrange being into a world, we reveal it to ourselves as a world of

possibilities, as an arrangement of objects that we might always transcend toward our own use. Suddenly, with the realization of our being-in-the-world-for-another, we realize the possibility that every one of our acts, every one of our possibilities can also be surpassed by the Other for the Other's own use. Sartre writes, "In other words every act performed against the Other can on principle be for the Other an instrument which will serve him against me" (354). We might always have our action turned against us for an-other's use, and thereby, there is a dimension of the situation that now always escapes us, of which we are not in control. Thus, Sartre writes, "The appearance of the Other... causes the appearance in the situation of an aspect which I did not wish, of which I am not master, and which on principle escapes me since it is *for the Other*" (355). It is not that we do not remain free toward the situation; it does not escape us as our possibility. Instead, while the situation still remains our possibility, there is now an element of indeterminacy within the situation that we cannot control.

The alienation of our possibles is also accompanied by the new possibility of being offered up for judgment to the Other. As objects in the world for the Other, the possibility arises that the Other can form judgments about us, can make us the subject of values and can position us as instruments that it might transcend to some degree. Thus, Sartre writes:

In so far as I am the object of values which come to qualify me without my being able to act on this qualification or even to know it, I am enslaved. By the same token in so far as I am the instrument of possibilities which are not my possibilities, whose pure presence beyond my being I can not even glimpse, and which deny my transcendence in order to constitute me as a means to ends of which I am ignorant—I am *in danger*. (358)

This enslavement to the judgment of others, this ignorance of our own instrumentality for the Other, this danger to our being—all of these are a permanent structures of being-for-others.

They are, moreover, the ways in which, ultimately, we *relate* to the Other.

Thus, it is through the Other that we “gain” two structures of being. Because the Other is a presence we have determined to have existed through my being-as-object, we find, first, that we gain our objectivity through the Other. That is to say, we gain an awareness of our object-ness in the world through a realization of the Other, and it is only through the Other’s look that we can do so. Thus, Sartre writes, “the Other is first the being for whom I am an object; that is, the being *through whom* I gain my object-ness” (361). This is to say, then, that we gain our being-in-the-midst-of-a-world, our position within an instrumental totality. Secondly, it is only through the Other that our possibles can be limited and fixed. In no way can we fix ourselves as a totality for ourselves, for we can never alienate our possibles from ourselves in order to structure them as a totality in the world; however, for the Other, we are precisely this alienation, we are precisely this totality of possibles structured into a world. Thus, it is the freedom of the Other to structure us into a world whereby by our possibles can be limited and fixed. It is not for ourselves that this takes place but rather, as Sartre points out, for the Other. He writes, “the Other does not constitute me as an object for myself but *for him*” (367). It is this constitution of ourselves as objects for the Other that gives us the second structure of being we gain through the Other: being-in-the-world-for-others.

It is through the Other that I gain both my object-ness and my being-in-the-midst-of-the-world-for-others. Sartre says that, though we can be certain we are looked-at, that which looks at us is uncertain; that is to say, while we gain the two structures of being outlined above through the Other, we gain them through the Other-as-subject, and therefore the “concrete, historical” presence of an Other is uncertain; to clarify, because it is through the Other-as-subject that I gain these two structures of being, and because the Other-as-subject cannot be an object for me (because I am looked-at, not looking, and therefore the Other maintains her distance from me), I

cannot be certain of the Other by which I come to gain my object-ness and my being-in-the-midst-of-the-world-for-others (368-70). Thus, Sartre sets out justify the assumption of the existence of the Other. We will examine Sartre's attempt at justification not so much for what it tells us about the existence of the Other as what it tells us about the creation of the self and how this creation is interrelated to the Other. So let us to Sartre's justification.

The self and the Other

In trying to justify his assumption of the existence of the Other, Sartre points to the absence of the Other; he does so because the Other—as we said earlier—cannot be a presence for me (because she is a subject) and thus the Other-as-subject exists as an absence. This absence, in turn, points us to a mode of human reality that is in relation to others. Sartre writes, “absence is defined as a mode of being of human-reality in relation to locations and places which it has itself determined by its *presence* [emphasis mine]” (371). This means that absence is a fundamental modification of a certain form of presence. To explain, we can understand that this certain form of presence is the situatedness of each human reality to all others. This means that human beings exist in relation to each other through a “human space,” through a space which is determined not by “longitude or latitude,” that is, not by a fixed set of points, but by the presence of a multitude of human realities (372). Thus, Sartre writes:

In short it is in relation to every living man that every human reality is present or absent on the ground of an original presence. This original presence can have meaning only as a being-looked-at or as a being-looking-at; that is, according to whether the Other is an object for me or whether I myself am an object-for-the-Other. (373).

In other words, we are only situated in space through the look—whether we are looked-at or looking—and because of this, we can be certain that, because we know ourselves as situated, we are looked at or we can look. The fact that we can be looked at means that, while we cannot be certain that the object we look at is capable of fixing us with a look, we can be certain that there

is a concrete bond between the Other and ourselves which is the possibility of being fixed or fixing an-other as an object. Thus, Sartre writes, “What appears to me then about which I can be mistaken is *not* [emphasis mine] the real, concrete bond between the other and me; it is a *this* which *can* represent a man-as-object as well as not represent one” (373). So, the problem of the existence of the Other is solved by pointing to our relation to the Other, to the fact that we can either fix the Other as object-for-us or can be fixed as an object-for-the-Other. And, it is here that we are finished with the look; the presence of the look shows us that our fundamental relations with the Other can take two forms: being an object for the Other or making the Other as an object.

What we are interested in here, however, is what it means that our fundamental relation to the Other can only come by either being an object for the Other or making the Other an object for us. For Sartre, this points to a reciprocity at the heart of our relation to our being-for-others. It is not a reciprocity in the sense of a shared affirmation, however, but rather a reciprocity in the sense of a shared negation. Sartre writes this: “consciousness is in no way different from the Other so far as its mode of being is concerned. The Other is what consciousness is. The Other is For-itself and consciousness, and he refers to possibles which are his possibles; he is himself by excluding the Other” (379). We know that the Other is no different from ourselves in this way because the possibilities of our relations with others suppose just this; because the Other can make me an object for herself, and because the only other relation possible between us is that I might make the Other an object in relation to myself, we can see that the structures of being that are in relation are perfectly similar. Thus, there must be a negation on both sides of the relation between us and the Other; that is, we must make ourselves not be the Other while the Other makes himself not be us. Sartre explains this negation thus: “The Other exists for consciousness

only as a *refused self*. But precisely because the Other is a self, he can himself be refused for and through me only in so far as it is his self *which refuses me*" (379). Thus, the first meaning to be drawn from the fact that our fundamental relation to the Other can only come by either being an object for the Other or making the Other an object is that there is a reciprocal negation by which the Other who is identical in being to us comes to be a distinct Other.

This meaning has radical consequences for Sartre's conception of selfhood. Because there is a reciprocal denial at the heart of the relation between others and ourselves, we posit our selves through this negation, but also find that the Other has posited us as refused selves. Thus, in the first case—in our denial of the Other—we posit ourselves as selves; but this is incomplete unless the Other also effects the negation, and thus, we must also face the refused selves the Other makes of us (who is a Me-refused) in order to come to a distinct selfhood. This means that there exists, as real for us, both a self and a refused-self (the refused self formed by the Other). We must accept this refused self in positing our own selfhoods. Sartre writes of this refusal that, "I thereby recognize and affirm not only the Other but the existence of my Self-for-others" (380). In order to affect the distinction between ourselves and the Other (which is the only possible relation between the Other and our selves, that is, as distinct beings), we must, in other words, both admit the existence of others and take up the existence of our self-for-others. It is this self-for-others that the Other can make us be in being an object. And it is this self-for-others that we can make the Other be by making her an object. Thus, selfhood, for Sartre, is the function of two consciousnesses limiting each other, affecting a negation between each other and also being forced to face these negated selves in order to maintain their not-being-the-Other. Selfhood, in

other words, is the meaning of the conflict between the Other and ourselves, a conflict that is waged over the possibility of making each other an object.³

It is with this explication of the formation of the self that we will conclude this chapter concerning the exploration of Sartre's ontological descriptions.⁴ In this exploration, Sartre has exposed to us that the two fundamental relations we can have with the Other are to either make the Other an object or be made an object by the Other. One of the consequences of this is the realization that our selfhood, the way we come to be a self-in-the-world, is a product of this very conflict. Our selfhood is the limit over which we must cross in order to make the Other an object and over which the Other might pass in order to make us an object.

All of this leaves two fundamental questions unanswered: what is the object that the Other makes of us? And what is the object we make of the Other? These are the questions that Sartre will attempt to answer in his section entitled "Body." The answers he will find will also be our foundation for understanding our concrete relations with others and thereby our stepping stone to understanding both Sartre's ethical program and the problems inherent with it. All of this will serve to lead us to the synthesis of Sartre's and Foucault's work, in which we will show the compatibility of the descriptions undertaken here with Michel Foucault's work on knowledge, power and the subject, as well as show the necessity of Foucault's work in this area to the ethical program towards which we are working.

³ Christina Howells, in her conclusion to the *Cambridge Companion to Sartre* argues that this point is one on which we might understand Sartre as a forerunner of the structuralists and poststructuralists. I believe she is correct in saying so, and yet may have even gone further to suggest Sartre as their foundation as well. This is what we will attempt to demonstrate in Chapter Six (although through power relations, not subjectivity), thus moving beyond the mere suggestion of a connection to its demonstration.

⁴ Sartre himself concludes otherwise, with the positing of the metaphysical question, why are there others? Sartre will leave this question unanswered, and this is because it is a question of the totality of others, that is, this question asks of the totality of others within which we exist. Because we exist within this totality it is essentially impossible for us to take a viewpoint on the collectivity of others; we cannot step outside our our-being-for-others and our very own participation in the structure of otherness without it collapsing. Thus, the reason for the existence of others will be a question Sartre believes must go unanswered.

Chapter Four

Sartre's examination of the body will lead us through his conception of our concrete relations with others to his attempts at formulating an ethics. We will first examine the body-for-itself, the body-for-others, and the body-for-itself-for-others. In doing this, we will see how Sartre reveals to us our facticity, the facticity of the Other, and the alienation of being that results from these modalities of being. We will then examine how these modalities of being and their results directly influence the way the for-itself relates to the in-itself in the presence of the Other; essentially, what we will determine is the impossibility of realizing a relation between the for-itself and the in-itself in the presence of the Other that is not entirely problematized by our relation to the Other. We will then examine how the impossibility of such relations, as well as our factual situation in the world, is the motivating force behind Sartre's ethics, pushing him to advocate an ethics of free commitment and self-aware action. In doing all of this, we will lay the foundation for understanding Sartre's ontological descriptions as the underpinning to that work we undertook in Chapters One and Two, in which we demonstrated the necessity of such descriptions to Foucault's ethics for the practice of freedom. We will also demonstrate, in Chapter Five, the problem of the practice of Sartre's ethics in relation to the wide social nexus and will suggest that it is a problem solved by Michel Foucault's genealogical work. But first let us examine Sartre's ontological descriptions of the body and our concrete relations with others.

The Body

Sartre begins his examination of the body with caution; he believes that there is a problem that is commonly encountered and that frustrates nearly every attempt at explaining the body. Sartre writes, "these difficulties [in thinking about the body] all stem from the fact that I try to unite my consciousness not with *my* body but with the body *of others*" (401). The basic

problem when we think about the body is that we think about the body solely as it is for others. In doing so, we deprive the body of two of its three basic ontological dimensions. Thus, Sartre believes that we need to begin by distinguishing the body-for-itself from the body-for-others (the third dimension being the body-for-itself-as-known-by-the-Other). In doing so, he hopes to expose the meaning of the body and the relations we take towards it more clearly.

Sartre begins this examination of the body with the body-for-itself. Again, it is important that we remember the body-for-itself is a relation of consciousness to the body it exists, and not the relation of a consciousness to a body it is not. The examination of the relation of consciousness to the body should begin with what Sartre calls the “primary relation to the in-itself: our being-in-the-world” (405). Thus, Sartre believes that we need to examine the for-itself in relation to the world that the for-itself arranges about it, the objects it orients toward itself, the instruments it makes exist as its possibilities, for this is what we have learned from our earlier examination of being-in-the-world.

In examining the for-itself in relation to the world it arranges, Sartre sees that the order into which we arrange the world reveals to us two separate meanings of the body-for-itself. The first of these meanings he draws from the orientation of the world toward what appears to be a single point; this is to say that as we draw being into the world, we arrange it about us in ways that indicate a singular point of reference. As Sartre writes of the objects that we arrange about us, “I establish that they are not presented to me in just any order; they are *oriented*” (417). In this, it seems that in the for-itself’s upsurge into the world, in its arrangement of the in-itself into a world, there is a reflection of the necessity of taking a point of view on the world in order to arrange it, in order to engage it. Furthermore, in the for-itself’s upsurge into the world, the objects of the world are also revealed to us as instruments, as objects that we might utilize, as

possibilities for action. These instruments arranged about us reveal the existence of a key to their instrumentality, a being capable of unlocking their possibility and making it real. Sartre writes, "Thus the world from the moment of the upsurge of my For-itself is revealed as the indication of acts to be performed" (424). The instrumentality of the world, the fact that the for-itself reveals a world of possibility, suggests to us the presence of a center of reference for which these instruments exist, on which their potentiality depends. Ultimately, both the point of view revealed through the arrangement of objects in the world and the center of reference which might unlock the instrumentality of the world as created by the for-itself refer us to the necessity of our being-in-the-world as well as the contingency of the same. Let us examine this further.

The orientation of objects in the world and their instrumentality as revealed by the for-itself—both suggest a singular point to which they refer. This singular point of reference is that creative force that arranges the world, which makes it a world of possibles. As such, this force is indicated as the foundation of the arrangement of being into a world of oriented, instrumental objects, and because it is this very foundation, it is indicated as necessary by the objects in the world; this necessary creative force is the for-itself. Sartre writes, "Thus my being-in-the-world, by the sole fact that it *realizes* a world, causes itself to be indicated to itself as a being-in-the-midst-of-the-world by the world which it realizes... it is necessary that I lose myself in the world in order for the world to exist and for me to be able to transcend it" (419). This absolute necessity of realizing ourselves in the world is founded on the absolute necessity of the for-itself to flee from the in-itself toward the world; the for-itself is this very flight from the in-itself, and thus, the for-itself *must* engage itself in the world in order to escape being-in-itself, must nihilate the in-itself as it moves toward the world. Thus, there is a necessary engagement in the world that the arrangement of the world about a singular point of reference suggests to us. This

engagement in the world not only posits the world as orderly, but also reveals the objects of the world as possible instruments that it might surpass.

The very possibility of this surpassing refers us to the contingency of the for-itself's *particular* engagement in the world; that is, because the for-itself reveals a world that it can manipulate, because the for-itself arranges a world that it might re-arrange, it also reveals its engagement in the world as a contingent one, for it might always be otherwise engaged. Sartre states, "while it is necessary that I be engaged in this or that point of view, it is contingent that it should be precisely in this view to the exclusion of all others" (408). In short, the possibility for surpassing and changing the arrangement of the world—the very arrangement that indicates our engagement with the world—reveals the contingency of the form of our being-in-the-world, the possibility of our being-in-the-world as otherwise engaged. This is an *ontic* contingency, one that is concerned with the form of our engagement in the world; it cannot be an *ontological* contingency, for it is an *ontologically necessary* fact of human reality that we exist as engaged as a being-in-the-world. In other words, the arrangement and instrumentality of the world reveals to us the contingency of the way we choose our engagement, but has no effect on the necessity of our choosing *some* way of engaging.¹ Thus, the arrangement and instrumentality of the objects in the world reveals to us both the necessity of the for-itself's engagement in the world and the contingency that haunts this engagement. Moreover, because this engagement is both necessary

¹ I believe that this is, in truth, one of the most vital points to understand in Sartre. One way to possibly understand the distinction between the necessity and contingency of the ontic and ontological situation of human reality is to understand that the ontological structures of the for-itself and in-itself are fully necessary; however, because the for-itself—as its necessary and defining feature—always flees the in-itself to engage in the world, thus forming our being-in-the-world, our being-in-the-world is *necessary* in that it must exist as a result of the for-itself's very nature as a flight towards the world and is *contingent* in that the way that it is existed is constantly changing (also as a result of the necessity of the for-itself to flee into the world). Thus, being-in-the-world is both necessary and contingent. What grows confusing is that being-in-the-world is an ontological structure that, in some indistinguished way, seems to be affected by the ontic world. I would suggest that being-in-the-world serves as a bridge between the ontological structures of human reality and the ontic form of the world; to suggest so, however, would require more than this rather unfulfilling explanation here, and so, we will leave the explication of the possibility of understanding being-in-the-world as such to a later time.

and contingent, it reveals the unjustifiable nature of the for-itself's engagement in the world as well as the necessity of engaging in the world as unjustified. We are, in a word, alone, necessary and unjustified, thrown into a world in which we have no reason to exist except that we must.

Thus, Sartre believes that we can say that it is necessary for the for-itself to engage the world and contingent in how it chooses to do so.² The necessity of this contingent point of view on the world, the necessity of a key to unlock the possibility of the world in an infinite combination of ways—this points us to the facticity of the for-itself, specifically to the body as the manifestation of this facticity. Because the for-itself must engage in the world, but because this engagement is not fixed but, rather, fluid, always capable of change, and because this engagement is always both necessary and unjustified, Sartre writes:

This absolutely necessary and totally unjustifiable order of the things of the world, this order which is myself in so far as I am neither the foundation of my being nor the foundation of a *particular* being—this order is the body as it is on the level of the for-itself. In this sense we could define the body as *the contingent form which is assumed by the necessity of my contingency*. (408)

The body is the necessity of engagement with a world for which it is responsible for making, the necessity of the for-itself existing in a contingent situation. Thus, the body-for-itself is existed by consciousness as its facticity. Consciousness, in coming to the world and arranging it as an instrumental totality, exists the body as the necessity of its engagement in the world as well as the contingency of the point of view it takes on the world. The body is thus that by which consciousness comes to the world and that which consciousness surpasses in nihilating itself towards its possibilities.

² This implies, interestingly, the fact that it is impossible to see without being seen, to act without being acted upon. The implications of this fact, for a disciplinary society, are significant; it means that there *must* be a way to discover the look through which power is manifested in disciplinary society, the mechanisms through which disciplinary power works on individuals. And, while we will later argue that Foucault does a significantly better job than Sartre in manifesting the look (the mechanisms of disciplinary society) because of Sartre's poor conception of large, non-dual-subject relations, it is this fact that Sartre here exposes that explains the always present possibility of resistance.

So, Sartre shows us that the first ontological dimension of the body, the body-for-itself, reveals to us the body as the necessity of engaging in the world as well as the contingency of this engagement. As a body, the for-itself exists in a situation over which it always must exert its nihilating power; the body, as the point of reference for this situation, as the foundation on which the orientation and instrumentalization of the objects of this situation rest, is thus contingent in the sense that the orientation and instrumentalization of these objects might always be changed. The body-for-itself is, then, the instrument through which this engagement and surpassing must occur, yet it always remains that which escapes this engagement and this surpassing; the body-for-itself is, in short, that which always haunts the for-itself's project of flight, that which always re-engages the for-itself with the world not because the body flies after it, but because the for-itself must lug the body behind, because the for-itself must also *exist* as having-been/being.

Body-for-Others

If the body-for-itself reveals to us the necessary and contingent nature of our engagement in the world through a body, the body-for-others reveals to us the necessary and contingent nature of the body-of-the-Other. Sartre begins his examination of the body-for-others by reminding us that anything that can be said of my body-for-others can be said of the other's body-for-me, because, as we have earlier established, there is no difference between the being of the Other and my being except that difference that we make exist through a double negation; it is insignificant whether we choose to look at one or the other. So, Sartre writes, "It is then in terms of the Other's being-for-me that—for the sake of convenience—we shall establish the nature of the body-for-others" (445). We must, then, examine how the Other's body is for me in order to understand the second ontological dimension of the body—the body-for-others.

As Sartre has shown earlier, the Other is first revealed to us as an object that steals the world away from us, an object through which we experience an alienation from the world. Thus, the being of the Other is first revealed to us by the reference that the objects of the world make to it. This theft of the world is a secondary reference, a reference that moves from us to the Other; Sartre writes, “it is the Other-as-body whom things indicate by their lateral and secondary arrangements” (446). Thus, the Other’s body first comes to us as a secondary structure of the organization we make of the world; it is first in-the-world and then it is a point of view on this world, a being towards which the possibilities of the world as we make it escape. This flight of the possibilities and arrangements of the world toward the Other-as-object indicates to us the point of the view of the Other and the Other as an instrument that can utilize the same objects that we cause to exist as possible. The Other is thus secondarily referred to as a point of view and an instrument in the world by the arrangement of the objects of the world, by the instrumentality that flies toward the Other as object.

Thus, the Other is indicated much like the for-itself was indicated—as a point of view on the world which also arranges being into an instrumental-complex that it might surpass; this indication of the Other through the objects of the world reveals to us the facticity of the Other, of the necessity of the Other to take up a point of view on the world. The Other is revealed as a point of view which can also unlock the possibilities of the world that we make exist, one that must exist as engaged in a situation which is arranged contingently. The facticity of the Other, her body as existing engaged in situation is not, however, indicated *originally* by the arrangement of the world that we make exist. Sartre believes this is a significant difference, for it reveals to us the difference between the body-for-itself and the body-for-others.

Sartre writes, “On the other hand, because of the mere fact that *I am not the Other*, his body appears to me originally as a point of view on which I can take a point of view, an instrument which I can utilize with other instruments... it is integrated with *my* world, and it indicates *my* body” (447). The body-of-the-Other is revealed to us first as an object in the world, and, despite the fact that it makes the possibilities of the world flee from us, despite the fact that it causes a flight of the arrangement of the world from us, the possibilities and arrangements of the world are still *ours*; as such, the indication that they make of the Other and the point of view that they reveal to us are still ones that we cause to exist. Because we are the ones who originally arrange and instrumentalize the objects of the world which then secondarily indicate the Other, and because the Other is revealed through this arrangement and instrumentalization, the Other is thus understood as a being that we make exist, that we can know, arrange, and instrumentalize as well. The body-of-the-Other as revealed as a factual engagement in the world is thus given to us as *an object* in situation for *us*.

So, the body-for-others is revealed as an object in a situation that can always be otherwise, but also in a situation that makes reference to the point of view and possibility of surpassing the objects of the world that the body-for-others is. But, the body-for-others is also always revealed to us as an object that we can surpass, for we make it exist arranged in the world and as an instrument. The body-for-others is thus always revealed as transcendence-transcended, because it is our consciousness that positions it in the world, and it thereby makes reference to us in a way in which we surpass it. Sartre writes, “This body of the Other is given to me as the pure in-itself of his being—an in-itself among in-itselfs and one which I surpass toward my possibilities” (450). In other words, because we position the Other’s body in the world, and

because we realize it as a surpassable *object*, the other is a presence *for us*. Thus, the Other's body makes reference to us as the other objects in the world do.

The reference that the body of the Other makes to us, however, is different in significance from that which normal objects of the world make. As we said, with the upsurge of the Other comes a flight of the arrangements and possibilities of the world toward a second point of view, a second key that can unlock possibility in the world. This means that with the upsurge of the Other, a certain instability comes into the situation that we make exist. Suddenly, an infinity of possibility opens before us over which we are not master, but which the Other causes to come into the world. However, these possibilities are possibilities linked to the situation that we cause to exist, and they are made to exist by the Other which makes reference to our facticity in the world, to our necessary and contingent engagement. Sartre writes, "The Other's body is then the facticity of transcendence as it refers to my facticity" (451). The reference that it thus makes constitutes the situation in the entirety of meaningful relations that are possible; because the possibilities and arrangements of the world flee toward the Other's body as a facticity, and because this facticity makes reference to our own facticity, all meaningful relations with the world are constituted in our relation to the Other's body. Thus, Sartre writes, "The body is the totality of meaningful relations to the world" (452). This network of meaningful relations has its center as our own factual engagement in the world; we are the center that this totality indicates, and we are the point of view that makes this network of meaningful relations *meaningful*. Thus, the reference which the body-of-the-Other makes to us reveals to us the way we constitute the Other as meaningful. The constitution of the Other as a meaningful object in the world further means that we hold the secret to her being, that we are the being that holds a point of view on the Other, that grounds the Other in the midst of the world. Thus, the body-for-others is revealed as

that through which the facticity of the body is revealed by the Other and made to exist in the midst of the world.

Sartre's examination of the body-for-others reveals to us the facticity of the body as existing as an object in the world. Because the facticity of the body refers to an-other which fixes this facticity as a meaningful object in the world, the body-for-others is made an object-for-others, reveals the objectivity conferred on the body by others. In a word, it reveals the possibility of making the Other's facticity as existed in the body-for-itself into an object. This means that the first two ontological dimensions of the body reveal to us the necessary and contingent nature of the body—its facticity—as well as the way that this facticity can thus relate to the body of the Other, fixing and transcending it in a way that makes it exist as an object in the world, as a body-in-the-midst-of-the-world. We still have one final ontological dimension of the body to mention, and that is our body-as-known-by-the-Other. This is a dimension that is the full relation of the for-itself to the in-itself in the presence of others.

The body-as-known-by-the-Other

Sartre writes, "I exist my body: this is its first dimension of being. My body is utilized and known by the Other: this is its second dimension. But in so far as I *am for others*, the Other is revealed to me as the subject for whom I am an object.... I exist therefore for myself as known by the Other" (460). The third ontological dimension is the body-for-itself as known by the Other, our body as an object for the Other. Sartre begins the examination of this dimension through the look of the Other.

The Other's look fixes us as an object in the world; this, Sartre has already established. What he now examines, however, is what it means that the look of the Other fixes the body-for-itself as an object in the world. For Sartre, the body-for-itself is the necessity of existing as

engaged in the contingent situation. When the Other looks at us, fixes the body-for-itself, it fixes this necessary and contingent engagement as an object in the world. Sartre writes, “to the extent that I am conscious of existing for the Other I apprehend my own facticity... in its flight toward a being-in-the-midst-of-the-world” (461). The Other’s look fixes our engagement in the world and makes of it an object, a given, a transcendence-transcended. Thus, suddenly, our facticity escapes us; suddenly, we find our constant flight into the world away from being-in-itself as a flight that is fixed-in-itself; suddenly, we find that we are made to exist in-the-midst-of-the-world, an object among objects.

This flight of our engagement in the world towards the Other, the escape of our facticity towards a being that is made by the Other and which, therefore, escapes us, affects a radical alienation at the heart of our body-for-itself; through the Other’s look our body is made into an object-for-the-Other. Sartre writes, “My body is there not only as the point of view which I am but again as a point of view on which are actually brought to bear points of view which I could never take [because they are other]; my body escapes me on all sides” (461). With the look of the Other, we realize a form of being for which we are responsible—in that we have chosen to exist as engaged in the world—but of which we are not the foundation. Our body escapes away from us, its meanings stolen and made by the Other who arranges and utilizes it. In our body’s escape from us, an “infinity of contingency” opens up, a multitude of ways to be existed by the Other is created. This radicalizes the contingency of our existence; no longer is it contingent just how we exist ourselves, how we engage in the world; it is now also contingent how the Other exists us in the world, how we are made to be in the midst of the world by the Other. Thus, a radical alienation of the body-for-itself is affected, its meanings stolen from our control and

presented to the Other as its possibility. In Sartre's words, "My body is designated as alienated" (462).

Moreover, the alienation affected by the passing of the Other's look over our body creates a chasm within understanding over which we can never pass. The Other knows us, but we cannot know the Other as knowing, only as known. Thus, Sartre writes, "the Other accomplishes for us a function of which we are incapable and which nevertheless is incumbent on us: *to see ourselves as we are*" (463). We are responsible for what we are; it is necessary that we see ourselves as we are, and yet, we cannot. The Other accomplishes this for us, performs what we can not, but we can not know the knowledge the Other has of us.³ The knowledge the Other has of us, her ability to see us as we are, creates a perpetual alienation at the heart of our being-in-the-world, an alienation that we are responsible to overcome. Yet, we cannot overcome this alienation, cannot overcome the chasm opened up for us between the Other's point of view on our body and our point of view on our body. Thus, we are continually existing in the world as a failed project of trying to reapprehend, trying to assimilate the alienated being that the look of the other creates for us.

Thus, the our body-as-known-by-the-Other reveals to us the fundamental alienation of the meanings of our body that is affected by the existence of the look of the Other. This is the full relation of the for-itself to the in-itself in the presence of the Other; the body as the facticity of the for-itself-in-itself is alienated by the look of the Other, by the way the Other makes this facticity exist in the midst of the world. Our engagement in the world is fixed and made to mean, made to refer to an Other who we cannot grasp across the chasm of subjectivity. Yet, we

³ Sartre claims that language is the attempt at forming a bridge over this chasm of knowledge about our alienated self. He writes, "therefore it is language which teaches me my body's structure for the Other" (464). But this only teaches us about ourselves on the reflective plane, not on the plane on which the Other actually exists us as being what we are; thus, this representation of our alienated self that the Other can give to us through language is flawed and incomplete.

cannot cease our struggle to assimilate that which the Other makes of us for we are responsible for choosing our engagement in the world as what it is. This responsibility and its impossibility leads us to our next area of investigation: concrete relations with others. It is in these relations that Sartre shall reveal to us the conflict that is the product of our alienation and responsibility in the world in the presence of others.

Concrete relations with others

Sartre begins his examination of our concrete relations with others by specifying that each relation possible has the fundamental relation of the body-as-known-by-the-Other included within it. He writes, “Now we examine these concrete relations since we are cognizant of what the body is.... each one of them includes within it the original relation with the Other as its essential structure and its foundation” (471). Thus, the alienation of the body-for-itself toward the Other and the responsibility for this alienated being-in-the-world lie at the heart of each of these relations. Sartre is careful to explain, however, that they are not just modifications of this relation, but are “new modes of being on the part of the for-itself” (471). What these concrete relations represent, in fact, are the attitudes of engagement we can assume in a world in which we exist in the presence of the Other. They are the essential structures of our for-itself in relation to the in-itself in a world where there are others. Sartre writes, “When we have described this concrete fact, we shall be in a position to form conclusions concerning the fundamental relations of the three modes of being” (472). In essence, Sartre frames his examination of our concrete relations with others as the answer to the question with which he has begun *Being and Nothingness*: of what relations is human reality capable?

Sartre begins his examination with an outline of what he believes he has shown as the relation of the for-itself to the in-itself in the presence of others. He reminds us that the for-itself,

in fleeing the in-itself, is fixed by the Other in a way that places its being outside of itself, in the midst of the world.⁴ Because the relation of the for-itself to the in-itself is fixed by the Other as a totality in the world, Sartre writes, “the sole fact that I experience it [my fixed flight away from the in-itself] and that it confers on my flight that in-itself it flees, I must turn back toward it and assume *attitudes* with respect to it” (473). In other words, because the Other fixes the for-itself’s flight away from the in-itself precisely as that which the for-itself tries to escape, the for-itself is forced to return to that alienated in-itself, is forced to regard it in order to attempt to escape it again. Sartre believes that it is this that is the “origin of my concrete relations with the Other” (473). It is the attitudes we assume in turning back on our fixed flight, on the object the Other makes us be, that motivate our concrete relations with the Other.

For Sartre, then, we must assume an attitude toward that which the Other makes of our being-in-the-world; we must commit ourselves to a project of continual escape or assimilation from that which the Other tries to make us. It is the necessity of relating to the alienated object the Other makes of us that motivates the two attitudes we can take. Sartre writes this of the first attitude: “I can attempt to deny that being which is conferred on me from outside... I can turn back upon the Other so as to make an object out of him in turn since the Other’s object-ness destroys my object-ness for him (473). We can, in other words, look at the Other, cause her to be an object in the world as we make it in order to destroy the Other’s subjectivity as the cause of our object-state. Our look is the destruction of the gaze of the Other, one that fixes her in the self-same way that we are fixed by the Other. The second attitude that we can take toward the Other is to identify fully with the freedom of the Other, to assimilate it and thus be capable of making ourselves as the freedom of the Other makes us. Sartre says of this attitude, “if I could identify myself with that freedom which is the foundation of my being-in-itself, I should be to

⁴ This is essentially what we have just discussed in our summary of the body-as-known-by-the-other.

myself my own foundation” (473). If we can become our own foundation in the world, we would regain the mastery of the meaning of our engagement in the world. Thus, the two fundamental attitudes we can take towards the alienation of our engagement in the world are opposed to each other; we can either attempt to destroy or assimilate the freedom of the Other in order to know and take responsibility for what we are in the world. Each of these attitudes is a commitment, a project of recovery of our alienated being in the world.

It is important to realize, Sartre states, that each of these projects is opposed to the other and lying at the heart of its opposite. He writes, “Each attempt is the death of the other; that is, the failure of one motivates the adoption of the other.... Better yet, each of them is in the other and endangers the death of the other” (474). The fact that each of these projects in its failure leads to the adoption of the other is significant because it suggests to us that these projects are not ones from which we can free ourselves, but rather ones between which we can simply vacillate. Moreover, because the adoption of either of these attitudes toward the Other will necessarily lead to the adoption of one of the attitudes on the Other’s own part, the necessity of taking up one or the other project, one or the other commitment, results, necessarily, in conflict. That is to say, when we take up one attitude in respect to the Other, the Other takes up one or the other attitude in respect to us; if we try to destroy the Other’s freedom by making her an object or by assimilating her freedom, the Other will act against this attempt by taking one of the two attitudes towards us. Thus, Sartre writes, “Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others” (475). Our being-for-others is a constant struggle that is necessitated by the structure of our very being; the attitudes that result reflect this fully.

So, we should take a look at the structure of each of our possible relations with the Other in order to examine the way they embody this conflict. Both of these attitudes are in response to

the look of the Other, and thus they take attitudes towards the fixed engagement in the world that the Other makes of us. The first of these attitudes is to attempt to assimilate the freedom of the Other by maintaining the Other as the Other while attempting to identify ourselves with the Other's freedom (475-6). In order to do this, we must identify ourselves completely with the fixed engagement the Other makes of us in the world. Sartre writes, "I want to assimilate the Other as the Other-looking-at-me, and this project of assimilation includes an augmented recognition of my being-looked-at. In short, in order to maintain before me the Other's freedom which is looking at me, I identify myself totally with my being-looked-at" (476). In other words, in identifying ourselves completely as a being-looked-at, as an object-for-the-Other, we can hope to maintain the Other in her freedom (as our being-an-object-for-the-Other is the only way to maintain the Other's freedom), and thus we can hope that the Other will identify her freedom with us. If the Other identifies her freedom with us, giving us the alienated object she makes of us, we will be both our being-in-the-world and other-than-our-being-in-the-world. We would thus be our own foundation in the world-for-others as well as our being-for-itself, allowing us to know ourselves as we are for the Other.

This attitude, however, is bound to fail. The assumption of our complete object-ness for the Other is dependent on our ability to be unified with the Other-as-other. This is an impossibility given what we know of the Other-as-other; we have seen that the distinction between the Other and ourselves is created by a double negation that both of us must affect. The ideal of a unity with the Other-as-other must hope to overcome this double-negation, yet in overcoming, it would destroy the very thing that makes the Other other-than-us. Thus, Sartre writes, "We have seen that this contingency [of the double negation] is insurmountable; it is the *fact* of my relations with the Other... Unity with the Other is therefore *in fact* unrealizable" (477).

We cannot, in other words, achieve a unity with the Other in which the Other would be maintained as different from ourselves; and, because this distinction must be maintained if we hope to usurp the point of view by which the Other fixes our flight into the world, the impossibility of overcoming it leads to the necessary failure of our attempt at being unified with the Other's freedom.

The failure of this attitude results in the assumption of the second attitude toward our fixed engagement in the world (it should be kept in mind that neither attitude is prior, however). When, as a result of its very impossibility, our attempt to assimilate the freedom of the Other by making ourselves fully our object-ness fails, it can lead to an attempt on our part to destroy that freedom that refuses identification with us; this is the second attitude we can assume toward the Other. Sartre writes, "I am led to turn deliberately toward the Other and *look* at him. In this case to look at the Other's look is to posit oneself in one's own freedom and to attempt on the ground of this freedom to confront the Other's" (494). Thus, we attempt to confront and fix the Other's freedom, to meet it and control it, to work directly on it and by doing thus to make the Other make us as we wish. It is an attempt, in essence, to bow the freedom of the Other to our own.

This attitude, however, is doomed to fail as well. It is doomed to fail because in attempting to confront the Other's freedom, we already necessarily posit it as an object in the world for us; thus, we posit the Other's freedom as an object in the world, an object on which we can work. Sartre says of this, "by the sole fact that I assert myself in my freedom confronting the Other, I make the Other a transcendence-transcended—that is, an object" (494). In making the freedom of the Other an object, we destroy exactly that which we seek to confront and control. The ability of the Other to fix our engagement in the world and bring meaning to it is predicated directly on the freedom of the Other to act on us as a transcendence. In attempting to transcend

the Other's freedom, in attempting to utilize it for our own ends, we create the Other's freedom in the world as the exact type of object-in-the-world from which we are trying to escape. Thus, the Other's freedom made object, Sartre claims, is no longer that freedom that holds the secret to our being. The second attitude towards our fixed flight into the world is thus a failure as well.

So, both of the attitudes with regards to the fixed engagement in the world that the Other makes us be are, therefore, from their very outset resigned to failure. The failure of these projects is already foreseen in the relations between the Other's body and our own; because the Other exists our body in a way that alienates it from us in a way we can never know, and because this alienated body is still something for which we are responsible, we are given to attempt to recover that which is defined by its irremediable separation from us. Thus, our concrete relations with others are bound to reflect the necessity of this impossibility that is the product of the relations of the for-itself to the in-itself in the presence of others.

Moreover, our inability to recover that part of our being that we do not find in the world yet are responsible for leaves us guilty in the presence of the Other. The for-itself's very upsurge into the world is a limit on the Other's freedom (as the Other's freedom is a limit on ours), and it is this limit that makes any recovery of alienated being impossible. Thus, Sartre writes, "our upsurge is a free limitation of his [the Other's] freedom and nothing—not even suicide—can change this original situation" (531). Because we are doomed to fail to recover that being for which we are made responsible by our upsurge into the world, we are doomed to continually re-assert our upsurge—to choose to exist—in the face of the Other. This necessary and constant choice limits the freedom of the Other by bringing a freedom into the world over which the Other has no control, against which it cannot act. This limit of the Other is unjustified, however, for our very upsurge—as we have seen—is unjustified, is both necessary and *contingent*. Thus,

we can neither enter into relations of equality with the Other, nor can we justify our existence; we are guilty in the face of the Other and yet can do nothing for our guilt. We are responsible for the alienation of the Other's possibilities towards ourselves, yet we can in no way hope to return these possibilities to her, in no way can we help the Other to recover the alienated being we make of her because to do so would be to fix the Other as an object that we can act on once again. Thus, Sartre says this: "Thus I am guilty toward the Other in my very being because the upsurge of my being, in spite of itself, bestows on the Other a new dimension of being; and on the other hand I am powerless either to profit from my fault or to rectify it" (531). It is this powerlessness, this inability to assuage our guilt in the face of the Other which we will see as the motivating force behind Sartre's ethics. And it is to these ethics that we now turn our attention.⁵

An ethics of free self-commitment and self-aware action

We have seen that Sartre traces a path beginning from the very basic relation of human reality—the for-itself to the in-itself—and moving through being-for-others and the relations that we can take towards our body and towards the Other's body; from the conclusions drawn there, Sartre continues by examining our concrete relations with others and the impossibility of taking responsibility for our own alienated being or the alienation of being we cause in the Other. Thus, he describes to us how the implications of the ontological situation of human reality leads—of necessity—to our inability to recover our own alienated engagement in the world and our inability to avoid creating the same alienation in the Other. This description leaves us with only the question of action, of the most appropriate way of relating to the self which we can never fully recover and the Other to whom we can never restore unalienated being.

⁵ For an attempt at drawing out the connection between Sartre's ethics and his ontology against which this interpretation is partly written, see Thomas Anderson's *The Foundation and Structure of Sartrean Ethics*.

This question of action in the face of responsibility and guilt, this question of ethics, is one which Sartre attempts to answer in his speech, "Existentialism and Humanism," as well as his posthumously published, *Notebooks for an Ethics*. Here, our focus will be on "Existentialism and Humanism," but we will turn to *Notebooks for an Ethics* later, as we attempt to understand the necessity of Michel Foucault's genealogical critiques and care of the self to the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. What we will examine in "Existentialism and Humanism," then, is the way in which Sartre attempts to answer the question of action in the world with others, as well as the way that this program is limited in its scope. Essentially, we will see how his ethical program is motivated in one part by our responsibility with regards to our being and, in another part, by our guilt at having to exist as the limit to and problematization of the Other's freedom. We will then suggest a limit to Sartre's ethical program at relations within the wide social nexus. But let us to the text.⁶

⁶ To those familiar, it will be readily apparent in the description of Sartre's speech, "Existentialism and Humanism," to follow that we are leaving large sections of the speech untreated. Indeed, most of the content concerned with ethics in "Existentialism and Humanism" is focused on what we might summarize as Sartre's belief that each action we perform is productive of an "image of man." Thus, Sartre writes this:

When we say that man chooses himself, we do mean that every one of us must choose himself; but by that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men. For in effect, of all the actions a man may take in order to create himself as he wills to be, there is not one which is not creative, at the same time, of an image of man such as he believes he ought to be... Our responsibility is thus much greater than we had supposed, for it concerns mankind as a whole. (29)

This aspect of his ethics presented here is one out of which we have extracted the ethical program with which we will be concerned; it is also an aspect of Sartre's ethics which is flawed. What Sartre fails to see in his claim that we are productive of an "image of man" for which we are responsible is that the original responsibility for this image cannot lie with us. If, in acting, an "image of man" is created, it must be created by the Other. That is, we cannot make an object of ourselves, cannot produce an image of ourselves in the world (because, as Sartre as shown, we cannot both engage in the world and make ourselves an object in it at the same time); the Other must, then, be the one who produces this image of me. This means that it is the Other that observes us, that makes us an image, that fixes our engagement in the world, who is responsible for creating this image that Sartre erroneously claims we are responsible for. It is true, however, that we are secondarily responsible for this image and the direct effect this image then has on the Other, for the way that it limits the Other's freedom; moreover, we are also responsible for the image that we make of the Other, for the way this poses a limit to the Other's freedom as well. This is not, however the way in which Sartre seems to explain this responsibility for the image. Moreover, this responsibility for limiting the freedom of the Other is already addressed by Sartre's program in the admission of guilt in the face of the Other.

So, what Sartre fails to see, to be clear, is that the image of man we make is an image only of us *for-the*

Early on in “Existentialism and Humanism,” Sartre makes this claim: “Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism... if it is true that existence is prior to essence [i.e. that man is nothing but what he makes of himself], man is responsible for what he is” (29). This is a reminder of our responsibility that Sartre has drawn out for us earlier in his ontological work. We are nothing but what we make of ourselves; human reality is nothing until it chooses itself as an engagement in the world; this choice of ourselves as existing in the world means that we are utterly responsible for our being-in-the-world. This responsibility, however, is a responsibility for being-in-the-world-with-others. As we have seen earlier, while we are responsible for this being, the presence of the Other in the world into which we are an upsurge alienates this being for which we are responsible from us; its meanings slip from our control. Thus, while we are responsible for our being-in-the-world, we are unable to grasp this responsibility fully because the presence of the Other always causes it to re-escape us. This is the thrown situation of the human in the world; human reality is such that its being-in-the-world is irremediably alienated from it, even despite the fact that human reality is also utterly responsible for what it is in the world.

Other; it is not simply “an image of man,” but an image-of-man-made-by-the-Other. This problematizes Sartre’s ethics of “making man” in two ways. First, it limits this ethics of “making man” radically, for the image made is an image only for the present Other, and it is not a transcendent image (as Sartre seems to see it) but it a transcendent-transcended for the Other—an object. This limits the image to a simple object for the Other, one that does not affect her any more than do any of the other objects in the Other’s world. Secondly, it forces this creation of an image to rely on the presence of the Other; the making of the image of man cannot have the effect of “a butterfly flapping its wings,” cannot spread completely through the social nexus because it relies on the observation of the Other (although this point is not inarguable, to argue that it might be so is to draw Sartre’s ethics outside its useful concern with the situation). While it may be true that the Other may hear of our exploits, may see the choices we make through some media or other, we are not directly responsible for these images for they are reliant on the Other that speaks them, that produces and publishes them (this is an important distinction for conceiving of the ethics of media). Thus, we are only primarily responsible for our engagement in the world and the effect this has on the Other whose freedom is limited by our engagement and the image we make of her. And, as we have said, this is a responsibility with which Sartre’s program is already well-equipped to deal. Thus, we will ignore the focus on the “image of man” present in “Existentialism and Humanism” because it is both supercilious and dangerously distracting.

The first part of Sartre's ethics is motivated by the impossibility of our grasping the being-in-the-world for which we are responsible anyway. He writes of existentialism, "it tells him [the human] that there is no hope except in his action, and that the one thing which permits him to have life is the deed. Upon this level therefore, what we are considering is an ethic of action and self-commitment" (38). Let us break this down further. Sartre says, here, that the ethics he is outlining is an ethics of "action and self-commitment." First, let us see how this addresses the problem of the impossibility of our taking responsibility for our being-in-the-world. To act, Sartre has shown, is to choose a new engagement in the world, to commit oneself to a new, contingent engagement. To say that what he is outlining is an ethics of action and self-commitment is to say that it motivates choice, engagement, in a committed way; it is this motivation toward engagement, toward choice, that addresses our inability to take responsibility for what we are. If we are a constant choosing of an engagement in the world, we are a constant flight toward the world and a constant flight toward our alienated being lying out there in the world. And, while it is impossible that we can grasp this alienated being, we do, in committing ourselves to engagement, to free choice, also commit ourselves to *attempting* to grasp our alienated being, to *attempting* to take responsibility for it.⁷ Thus, an ethics of action and self-commitment is our best attempt at taking responsibility for what we are in the world, and, while it is an attempt that is almost certainly doomed to failure, it is one that does affirm part of what we are as human beings in the world with others; an ethics of action and self-commitment, is, in other words, an affirmation of our responsibility.

Second, this affirmation of responsibility for what we are in the world must lead us to address our guilt in the face of the Other. Because we must take responsibility for what we are in

⁷ We are, of course, condemned to choose anyway—it is necessary in other words. But, as we shall see, Sartre will address this issue as well.

the world, and because what we are in the world is, in part, an upsurge in front of the Other which—as we have seen—limits the possibilities of the Other by causing the world to escape away from her, we are guilty of our inability to *not* limit the other, our inability to take responsibility for what we are even as we affirm it. The way that we make the Other introduces into her being a new structure for which she must take responsibility—being-in-the-world-for-others (in the same way the Other introduces this structure for us); because we are responsible for this introduction, we are thus responsible for creating a necessary choice for the Other, a choice, a possibility that the Other did not create and over which she has no control, but to which she must still respond. Thus, we are guilty of forcing the Other to choose with regards to that which we make her. Thus, Sartre writes, “when I recognize, as entirely authentic, that man is a being whose existence precedes his essence [i.e. a being responsible for what it makes of itself and others]... at the same time I realize that I cannot not will the freedom of others” (43). We cannot will that the Other be free of that which we make of her; but, as we have seen earlier, we are called to will this same freedom for others. This, however, is an impossibility. To will the freedom of others would be to be able to confront the Other as a freedom, to act such that we will the Other’s freedom; to do so, though, is to make the Other an object, an end, to transcend the Other and thus destroy the Other’s character as freedom. Thus, we are guilty in front of the Other, for in our upsurge into the world we are called on to will the freedom of the Other yet cannot but fail to do so.

This guilt motivates the second half of Sartre’s ethical program as outlined in “Existentialism and Humanism.” Sartre writes, “one chooses in view of others, and in view of others one chooses himself. One can judge, first... that in certain cases choice is founded upon an error, and in others upon the truth. One can judge a man by saying that he deceives himself...

it is not for me to judge him morally, but I define his self-deception as an error” (42). The reason Sartre can form these judgments is that self-deception denies the responsibility for guilt in the face of the Other. To choose an engagement in the world in error, to choose an engagement that does not admit that the Other is free and that we are guilty in front of the Other for radically limiting this freedom, is to choose to deceive ourselves. So, we must choose with self-awareness. This imperative is not motivated by an a-priori assumption that self-deception is immoral, however, but is instead motivated by the responsibility that we *are* for our guilt in the face of the Other. It is imperative that, in being a free engagement in a world where there are Others, we take responsibility for this engagement and thus responsibility for the guilt that results from the limit this engagement imposes on the freedom of the Other. Thus, we must choose to be self-aware of what it is for us to be a human reality in a world where there are others. Sartre writes:

Thus, in the name of that will to freedom which is implied in freedom itself I can form judgments upon those who seek to hide from themselves the wholly voluntary nature of their existence and its complete freedom, Those who hide from this total freedom, in a guise of solemnity or with deterministic excuses, I shall call cowards. Others, who try to show that their existence is necessary, when it is merely an accident of the appearance of the human race on earth—I shall call scum. (43)

The second half of Sartre’s ethics is here motivated by our responsibility for our guilt, for being what we are in the world. While it does not attempt to overcome this guilt—to will the other’s freedom (an impossibility)—it does make imperative our admission of this guilt, that we, again, affirm it. Thus, the second part of Sartre’s ethics as outlined in “Existentialism and Humanism” is an imperative to be self-aware, to affirm our guilt in the face of the Other.

So, as we can see, the ethics we have constructed from Sartre’s “Existentialism and Humanism” is motivated by the ontological situation of the human being in the world. We are, as humans, thrown into a world where we must necessarily engage in the world in the face of

others, an engagement for which we are responsible and of which we are guilty. Sartre's ethics does not try to overcome this responsibility and guilt through a radical conversion of being—to do so would be impossible, and would, indeed, necessitate the very destruction of what it is to be human; instead, the ethics we have constructed from Sartre's speech, "Existentialism and Humanism," is an ethics of self-aware action and free commitments to projects of being-in-the-world-with-others. This ethics is an affirmation of what it is to be human, an affirmation of our responsibility and our guilt, and affirmation of the very freedom and limits that we are as humans. Thus, we can read Sartre's ethics not as a moral program for the affirmation of the Good, but a program for the affirmation of what it is to be human, what it is to be thrown in a world with others, to be both necessary and contingent, to be responsible and guilty of the impossibility of taking this responsibility. This ethics of the affirmation of the human condition is, from Sartre's ontology, the only possible, reasonable, and effective one. We must, then, attempt to realize it in the world.

It is precisely in the attempt to realize Sartre's ethics of free commitment and self-aware action in the world where we find before us a rather daunting task. This ethics of free self-commitment, this ethics of self-aware action can be somewhat simply put: choose what we are freely, take responsibility for what we choose, and realize it in a way that affirms our guilt in the face of the Other, in a way that affirms our freedom and the freedom of the Other. But to do so, to choose ourselves freely, in a way that affirms our freedom and that of the Other, implies a knowledge of *how* to do so. How is it that we can choose in a way that affirms our responsibility for ourselves and our guilt in the face of the Other? Sartre gives us no guidelines for doing so. We are left with imperatives, yet without the ability to follow these imperatives.

This lack is not precisely an oversight on Sartre's part, though, for it is the goal of Sartre's project, *Notebooks for an Ethics*. *Notebooks* is remarkable, however, not for its success in attempting to answer the question of how; it is remarkable, instead, for its failure to do so. *Notebooks* went unpublished, and, while this is not necessarily a sign of the failure of the work, Sartre seemed to treat it as such. And indeed, in reading over *Notebooks for an Ethics*, it is difficult to conclude that it is little more than a disjointed attempt at forming the outlines for a practice of an ethics of free commitment and self-aware action. It is not, however, a useless attempt, for it does suggest to us where and why Sartre failed in fully formulating a methodology by which we might follow his ethics.

The goal of the next chapter will be, then, to grasp the reasons for Sartre's failure, to find precisely that wall against which Sartre's attempts butt their heads. In doing so, in exposing and outlining the limit against which Sartre's attempts are frustrated, we will see opportunity; that is, in highlighting Sartre's difficulties with formulating a methodology for the practice of his ethics of affirmation of the human, we will see that it is precisely the problem of self-awareness in the face of the broad social nexus of relations, in the face of disperse and powerful discursive forms, that Sartre fails to solve. We will then look for a solution in the work of Michel Foucault. After doing so, we will trace the possibilities for a complementary relationship between the two thinkers in Chapter Six. In tracing these possibilities, we will hope to give not only a methodology to the practice of Sartre's ethics of free self-commitment and self-aware action, but also to give an ontology to that practice we left at the end of Chapter Three—Foucault's practice of the care of the self. After this is completed, our work will be done, and we will have hoped to have made a contribution to the search for and construction of a practical ethics of freedom and

responsibility, an ethics that is significant in that it is both practically grounded in genealogical research and powerfully motivated by the very condition of the human.

Chapter Five

We will begin this chapter with an examination of Sartre's attempts to formulate a *practical* ethics, particularly emphasizing his *Notebooks for an Ethics*. We will here suggest that *Notebooks for an Ethics* can serve as a gateway to understanding the way that Foucault's genealogical critiques can be used in and are necessary to any attempt to fulfill Sartre's ethics of free commitment and self-aware action. Furthermore, we will argue that Foucault's care of the self is the practice by which we can apply genealogical work in a way that allows us to affirm our responsibility and guilt in the world. From there we will move to Chapter Six, where we will both demonstrate that Sartre's conception of human reality in a world with others underpins Foucault's conception of power relations and how this underpinning leads us to posit a possible and necessary synthesis between the work of the two thinkers in order to begin to formulate a groundwork for a practicable ethics motivated by the situation of the human being in the world. This is the groundwork that we will then roughly sketch in our conclusion.

We should begin, first, with a note on Sartre's *Notebooks for an Ethics*. Sartre's *Notebooks* was never published in his lifetime. It is understood by most (including, it seems, Sartre himself) to be a failed project, the remains of his attempt at formulating the ethics he promises at the end of *Being and Nothingness*.¹ Our use of *Notebooks* here is to look into one specific passage included within it in order to provide an interpretation of the problems at work within the text. Specifically, we will draw out two notions inexplicitly at work in the text, two notions we shall term being-in-society and being-within-society. We will suggest in the work

¹ Thomas Anderson sums up this understanding clearly, arguing that Sartre's failure to finish the *Notebooks*—or any clearly stated ethics in general—was simply a failure caused by the difficulty of doing so based on Sartre's ontology. Sarah Hoagland, Herbert Marcuse, Julien S. Murphy and Mark Poster (among others) all seem to argue this is the case to one varying degree or another as well, claiming that Sartre's ethics are radically unfinished because of his failure to articulate a clear position. We will agree with their assessment here, only hoping to add an understanding to the *specific* problems within the text itself that is lacking in the literature about it.

that follows that it is Sartre's inability to explicitly draw out these notions that affects the failure of the *Notebooks*, a failure that we will see as an effect of the limited understanding afforded to him by his narrowed focus on the individual in relation to the Other. Thus, our purpose will be to examine these forms of being as unexplored possibilities within Sartre's work and, in doing so, to overcome those limitations expressed. To overcome these, we will demonstrate the use of genealogical critique and care of the self to Sartre's work. By the end of this chapter, we will have provided a practice to complete that which Sartre failed to complete; in doing so, we will overcome Sartre's difficulties in describing the individual in relation to social totalities, thus adding a practicality to what we have seen are the imperatives of Sartre's ethical project.

Being-in and being-within-society

In "Book One" of *Notebooks for an Ethics*, Jean-Paul Sartre attempts an analysis of social bodies, institutions (what he will call the collective unity, the "unity of other people's having done something") in relation to the individual (*Notebooks* 110). He analyzes social bodies first from the position of the individual external to such a "collective unity," in this particular case to the "Post and Telegraph Office." He writes of the social body of the post office:

It acts for an end and according to rules. It is an object of a special type in that I can *make use of it*... I am not unaware that its structures are based upon human spontaneity. Error is possible.... This concrete unit includes structures and forms of behavior. Its forms of behaviour are understandable and to a certain extent predictable. (111)

The individual external to a social collectivity finds it as a useful object within the world. The collectivity of individuals and objects is an instrument of which human beings compose a part, and, as such, it is an instrument that, to some extent, is not deterministic. It does, at best, imitate a determinism of function, however, trying, as Sartre puts it, to "[carry] out the rites and representations of the collectivity under consideration" (111). Thus, the individual external to

the collective unity of a social institution has no different relation to the collectivity than it does to a machine that might sometimes escape her grasp, a relation of only relative certainty, given that social institutions are governed by a system of rules of operation.

The individual internal to a social collectivity is little different from the individual external to it. Sartre's basic claim is that the individual internal to the collective unity is held to the other individuals within the unity; he writes, "In this case, I find myself united with a number of other individuals by: 1st, a form of work; 2^d, a condition of life; 3^d, interests; 4th, a hierarchy; 5th, rituals; 6th, frequently a myth" (111). This is a condition of unity that is held together by the certain structures and rules of the collectivity in which we might find ourselves a member. It is not, however, anything greater than relationships between individuals; that is, both the individual in external relation and the individual in internal relation to the social collectivity still function as individuals in relation to others. Thus, we are still in search of the relation of the individual to the social body as the concrete form in which we find the unity of other people's having done something.

According to Sartre, we find that relation when we become conscious of the gaze of the other as it fixes us as a part of the social unity, a certain part of the totality of social body. I will here term this the realization of our being-in-society.² Sartre writes:

Society exists when I become conscious of it. And I first become conscious of it *in the gaze of the other*.... Since their gaze transforms me into an object, they ground me in the collective totality and the effect of their gaze is therefore to transform me into part of a synthetic whole, that is, to present me to myself as inhabited by this whole and as lending my body and voice to it. (111)

The gaze of the other, as it plays across our body involved in a collective totality (as a postal worker or customer, for instance) fixes us as an object that is part of a whole, a whole from

² Sartre, himself, will term this "external objectivity," a term that is not useful to our purposes and somewhat confusing to them as well. I will substitute being-in-society, a term that is more compatible with the terminology chosen earlier in the work, as well as more descriptive of those aspects that we will deem important.

which our meanings are fully ascribed to us, a whole through which the meaning of our being comes. The gaze of the other gives to us (and again, I emphasize these are our words) our *being-in-society*. It is a being that is given its meaning through the structures and rules that govern the social body; it is a being that is fully given to us, founded by the Other.

We can imagine this, again, through Sartre's example of the post-office. More relevantly, however, we might examine this through the example of an army regiment. As a member of a regiment, I am an individual working in concert with other individuals toward a goal. The enemy that sees me, that fixes me with eyes that are other, this enemy fixes me as a working part of this whole, as a cog in the machine that advances towards her. She may see me as powerful and dangerous, or vulnerable and harmless; regardless, she fixes me as only one part of the whole, a part that has no meaning for her outside of that whole. These meanings outline me, create a structure through which the Other understands me, but a structure that does not define me in my individuality but in my being a participant in a whole. Thus, I am fixed as part of the totality, the entire meaning of my individuality ascribed to me by the gaze of the Other through the meanings of the collectivity, meanings that have no connection to my individuality apart from the fact I exist in situation with them.

Thus, we find that we have a being-in-society that the Other makes exist. Sartre expresses this saying, "[T]he other's gaze, external to the society of which I am a part, dissolves me into an objective totality of which I am an organic fragment, creating in me... a perpetual being *caught up in* a totality that I have to be but that precisely I am not" (111). The Other's gaze captures us in our individual relations to those around us and fixes us in a being-in-society that is defined through the structured and rule-bound meanings of these relations. Thus we are "a postal-customer" or "in-a-regiment" and nothing more for the Other. These meanings,

however, escape us. We cannot but fail to realize ourselves as “a postal-customer” or “in-a-regiment” for we are always something more than our being-in-society; the for-itself must always flee this structure of being (along with other structures) in order that it engage in the world.

According to Sartre, we cannot, therefore, take responsibility for our being-in-society. Just as we fail to take responsibility for our being-in-the-world-with-others, we must also fail to take responsibility for this structure of being (what we are calling being-in-society) that is fashioned only out of the whole, only out of the meanings of that social totality in which we are inscribed by the gaze of the Other. Sartre writes of this structure of being: “Through the gaze of other people, society as a whole... haunts me. *But I never fully reach myself in the other.* I can know what the other makes of me, *I cannot experience it.* More exactly, *I am* not it. I have to be it without being able to be it” (111). Thus, we find our flight into the world, our engagement, fixed by the gaze of the Other, this time in a way that fixes us only as a part of the whole in which we are involved and in which we choose our particular engagement. In choosing this engagement, there is formed a being-in-society for which we are responsible and after which we must chase. We cannot and will not ever reach it, though, so it is an impossible task of recovery for which we have responsibility.

There is yet another form of this type of being—a type of being that I will term being-within-society.³ This type of being arises and is alienated when another individual from within that social collectivity of which we are a part looks at us, fixes us with her gaze. In this case, the individual forms us as an example of the totality alienated outside of itself; that is to say, the individual who looks at us fixes us with her gaze, separating us from herself. This is not a simple separation of individuals, however, for the Other in this case realizes us as an expression

³ Sartre terms this “internal objectivity,” a term I again find somewhat confusing to our purposes here.

of the totality and is yet placed, herself, as that totality of which we are an expression. Sartre writes this: "I am *looked at* by other people who are, as members of the society in which I am, the emanation of the Totality of which I am a part and *which I am*. I find myself in the other. *But not as an individual* [emphasis mine]. Rather as an expression of the Totality" (112). Thus, the Other—who is a part of the totality in which we are—looks at us, separates us from the totality by placing the gaze, a space of nothingness, between us and the totality that looks at us.

Sartre writes of this alienation:

Hence it appears to me as this Whole wherein I am and that I have to rejoin. In other words, I *am in* the society under consideration just as *Dasein is in the world*. And, it goes without saying, because the internal gaze is interchangeable and not determined, it is perpetually the entire society—that is, me in it—that invites me to coincide with it. (112)

Thus, we find ourselves radically alienated from our being-in-totality, formed by the Other-within-totality as an object outside of it. This fashioning of our being into a being-within-society again alienates us from an engagement that we have chosen to be. This is an alienation that then invites us to rejoin that totality in which we were previously synthesized as a being-within-society and from which we now find ourselves alienated. Thus, we are again responsible, and again, we cannot take up this being-within-society that we have to be and which we are not.

Thus, the individual in relation to social totalities experiences an alienation like that alienation the for-itself experiences in relation to the in-itself in the presence of others. The alienation of the individual in relation to social totalities is a significant deviation from that of the for-itself to the in-itself in the presence of others, however, in that it comes from social totalities, human systems governed by rules and meanings; this is a deviation in that the alienation that is affected within our being is no longer affected with use of the meanings that the Other makes of our situation in the world (that is, the way she arranges us among the objects in the world, the way she posits us as an instrument of some sort or another) but is affected with use of those

certain rules and truths, those meanings, that surround us and are part of the social totality in which we are enmeshed.⁴ This means that the alienation is not affected within a simple relation of the Other to us, but is affected with use of those meanings that come out of the “unity of other people’s having done something.” Thus, while the type of alienation experienced by the for-itself-in-itself in the presence of others and being-in and being-within-society are the same in that they create the same impossibilities and the same responsibilities for us (we are again responsible for our being-in-society and our being-within-society, yet we can never fully recapture the meanings that the alienation of these structures of being assign, can never be these types of being, for they are not us) they are different in the way we must attempt to take responsibility for them, for they are made out of a different situational reality. We cannot, in other words, simply assume attitudes towards the way we are made, for we must grasp that out of which we are made in the first place if we are to conduct ourselves ethically.

Sartre, however, seems to fail to understand the distinction that must be made between the alienation of the for-itself-in-itself in the presence of the Other and the alienation of being-in or being-within-society. This failure is most readily apparent when, in a passage following the passage we have here been analyzing, he writes this:

The analysis of society I gave above seems to show that society is a phenomenon immediately deducible from ontological considerations about the detotalized totality. As soon as there is a plurality of Others, there is a society. Society is the first concretion that leads from ontology to anthropology. It is just as absurd to assume that there are *men* without society as to assume men without language. Human reality springs up among others. This is translated into anthropological terms by the statement that man exists in

⁴ I would suggest that there is actually little difference in the alienation the Other affects in us and the alienation the Other affects in us as a participant in social totalities, but Sartre does formulate this distinction. I believe there is actually this little difference, for it seems to me that the alienation that is affected by the Other is an alienation towards meanings that will always be borrowed from the social totalities surrounding the Other. In this case, then, the difference may only as a case to a type; that is, the alienation affected in us as we participate in a social totality may only be a specific case of the alienation affected by the Other at all times. If this is the case, then the distinction between the two is tenuous, for Sartre would seem to readily admit we live embedded in social totalities at all times. Thus, while we will maintain the distinction here—at least to a point—we will perhaps see how this distinction slowly breaks down.

society. And his original relationship to society is that he can neither completely ground himself on it nor can he completely surpass it. (117)

Sartre here seems to assume that the structures of being formed in the individual's relations to society are the same formed in the individual's relation to the Other ("society is a phenomenon immediately deducible from ontological considerations about the detotalized totality"). This conception seems to be in contradiction with what he has told us of the alienations formed by the individual involved in the social totality and fixed by the gaze of an-other when he claims that the structures of being formed are formed with use of those meanings of the wider social totality—meanings that escapes the detotalized totality of ontological human reality in relation to the Other as Sartre conceives of it. Thus, in overlooking the fact that these meanings are something apart from, something outside of the individual in relation to the Other, Sartre seems to overlook the difference inherent in the formation of the structures of being we are terming being-in-society and being-within-society and the structures of the for-itself-in-itself in the presence of the Other.⁵

The failure of Sartre to understand this distinction demonstrates the inability of Sartre's close focus on the human in relation to the Other to grasp the structures of being made and alienated out of the individual in relation to social totalities. It is, in fact, his failure to provide a coherent and accurate description of the operation of social totalities and their relation to the individual intertwined within them that causes his failure to fully understand the creation and alienation present in this relation. Moreover, this failure is one that creates great obstacles to *practicing* an ethics of free-commitment and self-aware action, for it provides no descriptions of

⁵ To be clear, however, the difference between the formation of these structures is one that, I would hold, is actually only a function of a failing in Sartre's conception of human reality in relation to the Other, and not a real difference. We have begun to address this in an earlier footnote, and, as then, we will still maintain Sartre's distinctions until a more radical critique of his conception of human reality in relation to others has been undertaken at another time.

the individual's relation to social totalities—descriptions that are necessary to taking responsibility for what it is to be a human in the world.

The ethical necessity of genealogy

It is at this point, where Sartre's program falls short in its descriptions yet where it becomes ethically necessary for us to begin to recover our alienated being-in and being-within-society, that we can see the necessity of Foucault's genealogical critiques. Sartre has drawn for us a description of two structures of our being, both of which are alienated from us by the gaze of the Other (one external gaze, one internal) and both of which we are responsible for. While it may be the case (as Sartre claims) that we can pursue this responsibility and affirm our guilt in the world when it is a matter of an individual relation between the for-itself-in-itself in the presence of the Other,⁶ in the case of alienated being-in-society and being-within-society, pursuit is pursuant upon knowledge of the meanings that the gaze of the Other makes of our being-in-society and our being-within-society; this is to say that we must understand the rules and truths that form and structure the totality of which we are a part in order to understand how we might take responsibility for the way we are made through those rules and truths. If for us to act ethically is for us to make free commitments through self-aware actions, then we will see that Foucault's genealogical critiques of social totalities, his recovery of the historical struggles through which social totalities and collectivities have been established as legitimate, of the way that knowledge, power and the subject interrelate, are all absolutely and unquestionably necessary to the ethical practice of freedom. Let us examine this further.

⁶ The fact of this possibility I will call into question here, for the same reasons that I call into question the distinction Sartre makes between alienated being-for-itself in the presence of the Other and alienated being-in and being-within-society (again, two of our terms, not Sartre's). If being-for-itself is alienated towards meanings that the Other makes of it, then the question of the origin of these meanings much naturally arise. If the alienation affected is simply that I am made an object in the world, then the distinction, I feel, is valid. If the alienation is a meaningful one—which I believe it can be shown so—that is, one towards subscribing a meaning to my being, then the distinction is a rather fragile one, and one, I would suggest, we might be wise to disabuse ourselves of. But, again, until this argument is made in full, I will here reluctantly maintain the distinction.

As we have demonstrated, it is ethically imperative for us to attempt to take responsibility for our alienated being-in and being-within-society. To do this implies understanding precisely what alienations take place; and to do this is a complicated affair. What we must realize, first, is that the gaze of the Other that fixes us is everywhere, plays across our bodies constantly, is forever fixing us. In the case of our alienated being-in and being-within-society, it is possible that there are alienations that take place that are affected by a gaze so well-disguised, so well-hidden, that we assume the alienation that has taken place to be part of our being-in-itself, part of the irremediable, unchanging being-in-itself that is existed as body.⁷ That is to say, because the alienations that are affected are affected by a gaze that fixes us as an organic part of a totality of which we are not the whole, yet because the same gaze fixes us in terms of the whole, it is difficult to grasp at the alienations that take place without grasping the totality through which they have taken place. The gaze of the Other is easily obscured through the rules and truths that structure the social totality; the creation of an alienated being for which we must take responsibility is often explained not as a part of our alienated being, one for which we are directly responsible because of the choice of our engagement; instead, the creation of an alienated being-in or being-within-society is obscured, the gaze that creates it covered over and explained away as an effect, simply, of the rules and truths of the totality, the alienated being-in

⁷ An example of such an alienated structure of being might be the creation of sexuality for the individual. The facticity of the individual in situation with other bodies can result in a being-in or being-within-society that is created as sexualized through the gaze of the Other. Sexuality is often assumed to be naturalized (as shown, of course, by Foucault), however, taken to be a part of the in-itself and therefore a universal, unchangeable, even sacred structure of human reality. This assumption covers over the gaze of the other that is creative of this effect, eschews the gaze by pretending it is non-existent. The fact that we do not immediately recognize the gaze that must cause the alienation of being-in or being-within-society, the alienation that in this case fixes us in the general categories female or male, is a strong case for the necessity of genealogy to ethical practice. There are other cases, as well: the assumption of "inalienable" individual rights, the existence of healthy or diseased bodies, the case of the mad or the sane, the criminal or the law-abiding (we might notice Foucault has examined all of these), the dangerous or the safe. Perhaps one of the most pervasive and deep-rooted of these is the existence of the categories of black and white. But it is of note that each of the types of alienated being that might be recovered by genealogical critique are also types against which active and vehement protest is or has taken aim.

or being-within-society explained as a product of those same rules and truths as well. Let us take up an example to explain this in a concrete manner.

We will take the example of being-within-society, the form of being-within-society that fixes us as male or female.⁸ I exist myself as a male, as a specific instance of the social totality of males. In this instance, for me to freely commit myself to a project of self-aware choice, I must realize the meanings of “maleness,” the meanings and truths, the rules and structures of the social totality of males by which this totality is formed and through which the Other makes my being-within-society. To perform ethically toward this being which I am made, I must make a self-aware choice of those structures that I choose to exist and those that I do not; I must choose to act in a way that attempts to be aware of what meanings and truths the Other will make of my action, in a way that attempts to take responsibility for these meanings and truths; to do so would be to perform ethically toward that alienation of my engagement in society that the Other makes of me. The casual statement, “I am a male,” reveals to us the very difficulty of doing so. The statement, “I am a male,” reveals to us an assumption of the equation of maleness with being-in-itself, an assumption that demonstrates the “naturalization” of sexuality that must take place in order for me to “be” male. “I am a male,” demonstrates the *obscuring* of the alienated being-within-society that is creative of my “maleness” for me. The gaze that creates my “maleness” for me, the very fact that this “maleness” is a product in itself is covered over through the binary rule of the social totality of male/female. This is an assumed truth of the social totality, one that covers over the gaze that must create “femaleness” or “maleness,” one that, in its very nature as truth, asks us to assume that somewhere within our being-in-itself we *are* either male or female. It is a truth that essentially covers up human responsibility for the creation of the categories male

⁸ This is an definitively more complicated area, but one which we will simplify to a binary here in order that we might both be clear and that we might explode this same binary.

and female. Thus, in the case of my alienated being-in-society, in the case of the creation and alienation of my “maleness,” we can see that there is a fundamental obscuring that takes place as a *function* of the social totality in which I am invested and from which I am alienated, an obscuring that is the very mechanism through which this totality functions and maintains itself as legitimate.

Thus, the necessity of a technique by which we can analyze the interplay of truth, power and the individual, by which we can perform a “rediscovery of struggles together with the rude memory of their conflict,” by which we can effectively establish what rules, meanings and truths provide those social totalities (out of which our being-in and being-within-society are made) the legitimacy and maintenance they need, should grow apparent. We need a technique that can uncover the gaze of the Other by clearing away that which obscures it, that can expose to us the alienations of which we may not be aware, the alienations of being-in and being-within society for which we are responsible. This technique is precisely that of Foucault’s genealogical critiques. In the recovery of the knowledge of buried conflicts and struggles, genealogical critiques allow us to expose those structures of being-in and being-within-society, those structures often misunderstood as structures of being-in-itself, as structures for which we are responsible for creating and maintaining. We can understand these critiques as exposing to us the gaze of the Other, of re-forming the gaze, making it obvious, and thereby making obvious the alienations of being that this gaze affects in us. To perform such an exposure, as we have suggested, is ethically imperative, for it allows for us to turn and assume free commitments toward those alienations that it reveals (or to freely commit otherwise by engaging otherwise) and to be self-aware of these commitments and of their effects on others.

We may understand the ethical use of Foucault's genealogical critiques more clearly, although in a way that may be somewhat artificial, if we view them as having as their end the assumption up the gaze of the Other and thereby the formation of knowledge of the alienation the Other makes of our being-in and being-within society.⁹ We can do so if we understand Foucault's genealogical critiques as reconstructing the gaze of the Other by first gathering and examining the body of knowledge, the meanings, rules, and truths that structure the social totality and out of which the Other can make our being-in or being-within-society. In performing this task, in exposing those sets of knowledges, those mechanisms, those struggles that establish the validity of the social totality (what Foucault might term the discipline or discourse), genealogical critiques allow us to begin to see these rules, truths and mechanisms that uphold the social totality as the products of the gaze of an-other. This is an exposure of the gaze of the Other in that it reveals to us the way in which the legitimization of a certain social totality is upheld, reveals the fact of its creation and points towards a gaze that must create it.

In revealing this gaze by showing those ways that it is obscured by legitimating techniques, genealogical critiques allow us the opportunity to partially take up the view the Other has of us. It allows for this because genealogical critiques give to us the interplay of knowledge, power and truth and their effect on the individual subject; they allow us an understanding of the different ways that being-in and being-within-society can be alienated by the gaze of others in relation to certain social totalities. This *does not* give us the specific alienation that the gaze of the Other makes of *our individual* being-in or being-within-society. It does, however, allow for us to attempt to see ourselves as the Other sees us by understanding ourselves as a specific case of a general type. Thus, because being-in and being-within-society are alienations that form us in ways that have no tie to our individuality except through our engagement in a situation with

⁹ An impossibility, yes, but one that we will deal with here and in the following paragraphs.

the meanings, rules and truths of the social totality out of which these alienations form us, an understanding of the general form of alienation that is affected by the gaze of the Other utilizing the social totality allows us to roughly sketch those alienations that are made of us in particular. This rough sketch allows us to assume attitudes and commitments towards the alienations made of us—a near impossibility without genealogical critique. And, while we do understand that it is impossible to fully take up the gaze of the Other (for doing so would obscure the very thing that makes the Other other-than-us), because of the way that being-in and being-within-society are formed with little regard to individuality, it is possible for genealogical critique to give us a chance at at least a partial attempt to take up the gaze of the Other, an attempt that exposes to us a rough sketch of our alienated being, a sketch, that, with further work, we can fill out.¹⁰ We will

¹⁰ H.D. Harootunian's work in this area is a precursor to our explanation here. We can view our work as an addition to his suggestion that Foucault is a historian of the Other. Moreover, in understanding Foucault's genealogical critiques as taking up the gaze of the Other in order to attempt a recovery of alienated being, we can address a few of the most common critiques of Foucault's philosophical work, critiques expressed in such anthologies as *Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault* and the *Cambridge Companion to Foucault*. The first of these is to ask the question of Foucault, "Isn't genealogical work simply the creation of yet another discursive form, yet another social totality with its own meanings, rules and truths?" We can address this critique with an attenuated "yes." That is, genealogical critique is not the creation of a new discursive form or social totality, but it is a *re-creation* of the rules, meanings and truths that structure such forms and totalities. Thus, it is true that genealogical critique forms its own discourses and social totalities, but this is precisely the point of them, in that they do so to give us a rough sketch of the way the gaze of the Other forms and alienates our being through those meanings, rules and truths.

The second critique addressed by our claim that we can understand Foucault's genealogical critiques as an attempt to take up the gaze of the Other is that Foucault's work is guilty of overlooking what it is to be human (see Jana Sawicki's article, "Feminism, Foucault, and 'Subjects' of Power and Freedom"). We can address this critique by countering that Foucault does not overlook all of what it is to be human, only a part. What Foucault overlooks is what it is to be a human agent, what it is to be an active subject in the world (this is an oversight that is painfully obvious in interviews with Foucault, the question of agency being one that he seems radically unprepared to answer with anything but equivocations). But, again, such an oversight is necessary if we can claim that Foucault attempts to take up the gaze of the Other within his work. The gaze of the other, as it fixes us into a world, always fixes us as an object in the world, and, as such, necessarily fixes us as a totality of which the for-itself's escape into the world is only a fixed part (i.e. our agency is only fixed within the totality of our subjectivity); thus, the gaze of the Other overlooks our agency—as does Foucault's work—as a fixed part of our being. Thus, we can respond that Foucault's genealogical critiques do overlook what it is to be an active subject in the world, the foundation of what it is for *us* to be human, but not the foundation of what it is to be human *for the Other*; in fact, Foucault's genealogical critiques are well-prepared to describe what it is for us to be human for the Other, a very necessary part of our human experience.

Moreover, in putting genealogical critiques at the service of a Sartrean ethics of free commitment and self-aware action, an ethics whose goal is primarily an affirmation of what it is to be human, we embed genealogical critique within an ethical program wherein what it is to be an active human subject is of primary importance. In doing so, we keep ourselves from falling into a devaluation of human experience; we ground those genealogical critiques that overlook individual human experience in an ethics that is motivated by the thrown condition of human

here suggest that it is the work of the care of the self that will further allow us to fill out this picture in order to practice Sartre's ethics of free commitment and self-aware action.

Care of the self as ethically necessary

If genealogical work gives us a rough sketch of those alienations made of our being-in and being-within-society, we will suggest that care of the self can be understood as an attempt to further fill in this sketch. We can understand care of the self—with the added emphasis we have shown on our equi-primordial relations with others—as the attempt to understand the different ways one is an individual in the world, the attempt to understand those power relations in which one is intermeshed and through which those alienations of our being-in and being-within-society take place. As we have seen in Chapter Two, if we understand care of the self as the process by which we gain this knowledge of ourselves in relation, we can understand it as the utilization of those genealogical critiques at the level of the individual; that is, we can understand care of the self as the attempt to expose how we are, as individuals, alienated into the world, and thus be able to take attitudes towards those alienations. Without care of the self, the knowledge garnered by genealogical critiques remains abstracted, remains only an inert body of knowledge with no practical application. And, while genealogical critique is necessary to ethical conduct within the world, it is only in its application at the individual level that this knowledge can be put into play, can be used in an ethics concerned with the condition of the human being in the world.

In applying the knowledge garnered in genealogical critique to our own individuality, we can see how care of the self allows us to further affirm our responsibility and our guilt in the face of the other. Care of the self is essentially the practice by which we can come to understand the specific alienations that we are as individuals, the specific meanings that the gaze of the Other

beings in a world with others. This grounding allows us to assuage the concern that any use of Foucault's genealogical critiques will lead us to devalue or overlook individual human experience.

makes of our individualities in and within social totalities. It is a work performed at the same level of our individual relations, with an awareness, however, of the implications of these relations in their interplay with wider social totalities. Thus, in performing this work on the self, by the self, we can begin to understand and take responsibility for the way our being affects the situation of others and the wider social body. In doing so, care of the self allows us to further affirm what it is to be human, to further affirm our guilt and our responsibility.

Care of the self, then, becomes necessary part of an ethics that attempts to take responsibility for our human condition in the world. It becomes necessary because it is essentially the work of genealogy brought to the individual level; it makes it imperative that the individual understand the work of knowledge and power as creative forces within her own individuality—a very specific form of genealogical work. In this way, care of the self motivates a close examination of human experience, an examination that allows for a better understanding of the way that the gaze of the Other affects an alienation of being-in and being-within society.¹¹

¹¹ In fact, if we take Foucault's description of the disciplinary individual to be of a subject put in relation to herself, we can see there is a need to attempt to understand the way knowledge and power work in this internal relation of the self to itself. As we have seen, Foucault conceives of the disciplinary individual as a subject who has essentially internalized the gaze of the Other; he writes,

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (*Discipline* 203)

The disciplinary individual is the individual that has been produced by a power that causes the individual to turn the outward, normalizing gaze of the other into an internal relation; this relation can thus be understood as productive of the same forms of alienation that the gaze of the Other affects on being-in and being-within-society. If the disciplinary individual is formed in such a way that she is the agent of her own subjection, the agent by which her own being is fixed as an object for observation, interrogation and judgment, then we can understand this relation between the subject/subjected as the same as the relation between the Other and the self that the other fashions from the social totality; that is to say, if the disciplinary individual is produced in such a way that a relation in which the self imitates the gaze of the other, makes an object of itself, is formed, then we can examine this relation in terms of the relation of the human in a world with others (as well as expect of it the same effects). Thus, a work of analysis on the self, by the self, becomes necessary—and care of the self is such a work.

This conception of the individual put in relation to herself, as employing the gaze of the Other on itself, is one that is, as of current, seemingly incompatible with Sartre's philosophical program. I will suggest, here, that it is not wholly incompatible with the descriptions and conclusions outlined in this program, but that a radical re-envisioning would be necessary. This re-envisioning is not our most urgent focus here (and I would suggest is the subject for an entirely different project), and thus we will leave it and the discussion of the subject put in relation to herself to another time.

And, as we have shown (and contrary, in part, to what Foucault argues), this understanding is equally accompanied by an attempt at an understanding of the way the self exists in relation to others—an understanding of which we have already shown the necessity. It is this understanding that will open up an awareness of those historical struggles with others, with wider social totalities, that is most important to the effective practice of genealogical critiques and, consequently, to the effective practice of an ethics based on the condition of the human being in a world with others. Thus, in order for us to take responsibility for our alienated being-in and being-within society, we must take up the work of the care of the self (with our added emphasis on the self's equi-primordial relations with others) along with the work of broader forms of genealogical critique that expose to us our different forms of alienated being.

We have seen that Sartre's conception of the human being in relation to social totalities necessitates the performance of broad genealogical critiques. Furthermore, genealogical critiques allow us a rough sketch of the alienations made of our being-in and being-within society, a sketch that we can further fill out through care of the self. Thus, care of the self becomes a necessary component of the practice of an ethics of free commitment and self-aware action. Thus, we have shown the necessity of the work of Michel Foucault to the formation of a *practicable* ethics based on Sartre's ontological descriptions. Let us now move to Chapter Six, where we will demonstrate the possibility of understanding Foucault's work as founded upon that of Jean-Paul Sartre—an understanding vital to the synthesis we have shown necessary here and in Chapter Two.

Chapter Six

What we have demonstrated so far in this work is two-fold. First, in Chapter Two, we showed the lack of an understanding of the ontological situation of the human being within Michel Foucault's philosophical program, a lack that needed to be filled in order that genealogical critique and care of the self become effective. Furthermore, we have shown in Chapter Five that the practice of a Sartrean ethics of free commitment and self-aware action necessitates the work of genealogical critique and care of the self. What we have, then, is somewhat of a dilemma. We have demonstrated that both the work of Sartre's ethics and the work of Foucault's genealogy and care of the self are flawed. What their flaws seem to suggest to us, however, is that in order for us to formulate a practicable ethics based upon and motivated by the human condition, we must formulate a synthesis of the two. In order to do so, we must address the issue of the compatibility of Foucault's genealogical critique and idea of care of the self with Sartre's ontological descriptions. We will address this issue here by showing that the power relations with which genealogical critique and care of the self are concerned are founded upon the relations of the for-itself to the in-itself in the presence of others, that the concrete expression of this relationship is in power relations. In doing this, we will demonstrate not only the compatibility of the work of Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault, but also the necessary, pre-existing and unrecognized connection between the projects of these two philosophers.¹ Once we have outlined this connection, we will move to our final chapter, in which we will sketch a

¹ To demonstrate that this connection does in fact exist is to write against most interpretations of both Sartre and Foucault. Perhaps the two works coming closest to suggesting anything like this connection are Mark Poster's *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism* and Peter Caws "Sartrean Structuralism?". Both of these works, however, stop short of positing a necessary connection between the two, Poster in order to critique both Sartre's version of critical theory and Foucault's program and Caws in hesitancy. Christina Howells suggests Sartre as a forerunner to the structuralists and poststructuralists, but offers no full constructive analysis of how this might be so. What we will attempt to add, then, is an understanding that is vaguely hinted at in much of the literature surrounding the thought of these two philosophers, an understanding that we will see is necessary to have.

picture of a practicable ethics based on the situation of the human being in the world, an ethics which affirms what it is to be human, which affirms what it is to be free in the world.

Ontology and Power Relations

As we have seen earlier in this work, Sartre gives us a description of the relation of the for-itself to the in-itself in the presence of others. This description is essentially the description of human reality, of what it is to be human in the world. And, we will remember, what it is to be human in the world is to be in conflict; conflict is the structure of our human reality. Sartre's conception of human reality leads us to the conclusion that in our relations to the Other we must either be fixed in the world by the Other—made an object—or fix the Other into the world—posit the Other as that which we can utilize as an instrument, that which we can make mean through our very being. The fact that our relation to the Other is always one of struggle, of conflict and activity, over the possibility of being made by or making the Other into an object is one that motivates us to take attitudes towards the Other because the for-itself, that which flees our being-in-itself into the world, must by its very nature take attitudes towards that which the Other makes us. What Sartre shows us, then, is that in our relations to others, we are always attempting to work on the freedom of the Other either in a way that persuades her to identify her freedom with ours in an attempt to cede our freedom to her or in a way that attempts to take her freedom from her, to control it and manipulate it as a freedom. Thus, the essence of the relation of the for-itself to the in-itself in the presence of others is one that is, at its very core, a struggle between the intransigence of two freedoms, a struggle that is necessary to, a direct result of, that which makes us human.

The struggle in which we must engage in our relations to others is one that we can understand as an attempt to work on the field of possible actions of the Other. In taking attitudes

towards the other, in trying to fix the other as an object or be fixed fully by the Other in a way that identifies our freedom with hers, we are essentially attempting to structure the field of possible action for the Other. In other words, in the relation of struggle in which we engage with the Other, every motion that we make toward her, every attitude that we take up towards her, is one that arranges the world in a certain way, in a way that forces her to respond to us. Our very presence in the Other's world (and the Other's presence in ours) makes the world exist in a certain way, a way to which the Other (or we) must respond. We can put this even more succinctly; our presence in the Other's world (and the Other's presence in ours) is creative of the *situation*, is creative of a field on which the Other (and we) are forced to play. The created situation is one that squeezes our freedom into possibility, one sets the terms of the relation that we will have to the Other.

With this understanding of our relation to the Other as structuring the field of possibility, we will here suggest that it is this relation that is the foundation for those power relations that Foucault believes are ethically necessary for us to understand. Foucault's conception of power relations is one that is predicated on understanding them not as relations of antagonism or transfers of a commodified power, but as a way of "structur[ing] the possible field of action of others," a way of acting on the actions of others ("Subject" 341). Foucault writes, "In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action that does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions" (340). Foucault believes that if power relations are to be conceived of in this way, there must be present to the relation partners who engage in free activity, in activity that is creative of "a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions" (340). Thus, for us to understand power relations, to understand the struggle that

takes place in trying to structure the field of possible action between the Other and ourselves, we must understand them as relations between two or more free partners, relations that are creative of situations through which we can act on the Other or be acted upon by the Other.

Sartre's ontological description of human reality as a struggle in which we engage with the Other gives just such an understanding to power relations. Through Sartre's descriptions, we can understand power relations as specific instances of those attitudes that we must take towards the Other—as, in short, concrete ways of being in the world with others. If power relations are relations of struggle between two (or more) free partners in which these partners are forced to respond to the way the field of action is structured between them, and if, as we have shown, we can understand Sartre's description of our ontological situation as human beings in the world with others in just such a way, then we can apply the implications we have drawn from Sartre's descriptions to those concrete relations of power that Foucault believes are ethically necessary to understand in order to take care of the self and perform genealogical critiques. Sartre's descriptions of our ontological relation to others form the foundation on which we can build an understanding of concrete power relations—an understanding that we have seen to be necessary in order to practice an ethics of free commitment and self-aware action.

Furthermore, if we understand Foucault's descriptions of power relations as founded upon the human reality that Sartre has described for us, we can understand them as intricately wound up with the impetus towards commitment and action that we have drawn out from Sartre's ethics—an ethics derived from the situation of the human being in the world. This is the point of synthesis, of compatibility, for which we have been looking. An understanding of power relations as founded upon the human reality that Sartre describes for us allows us to add to Foucault's genealogical critiques and care of the self the understanding of ontological relations

that we have shown necessary; furthermore, it allows us to form a methodology for the practice of a Sartrean ethics of free commitment and self-aware action. What we might say is that both Sartre and Foucault are philosophers of the human situation, and that, given this, both of them conceive of the situation in a way that is not only compatible, but also fundamentally connected and co-extensive—a way that understands the situation as the product of the struggle between two or more free partners, albeit in a way that is arrived at from different points of view (Sartre from an individual ontological description, Foucault from the description of social totalities). In understanding this point of compatibility, we can posit the possibility of an ethics motivated from the condition of the human and practicable within the world. This is the possibility for which we have been looking, and it is the possibility of such an ethics that we will now sketch in our final chapter.

Conclusion

We have now reached the final chapter in our attempts at formulating a practicable ethics motivated from the condition of the human being in the world with others. We have demonstrated in Chapters One and Two a motion in the later work of Michel Foucault toward a study of the individual, toward a work of care of the self; moreover, we have demonstrated the necessity of a description of the ontological condition of the human being in relation to others to Foucault's work, a description that is sorely lacking within it. We have then, in Chapters Three and Four, given a selective overview of just such a description of the ontological condition of the human being in a world with others, one that is derived from the phenomenological work of Jean-Paul Sartre. In this overview, we demonstrated how such a description can motivate an ethics of free commitment and self-aware action, and, in Chapter Five, we demonstrated how gaps within Sartre's descriptions and within his ethics needed to be and could be bridged by Foucault's work on genealogical critiques and care of the self. In Chapter Six, we then showed how we could fulfill this necessity in the work of both philosophers by understanding Foucault's conception of power relations to be founded upon Sartre's descriptions of the ontological condition of the human in relation to others, thus allowing us to provide an ethical motivation to the practice of care of the self and the work of genealogical critiques—a practice that helps us to carry out an ethics of free commitment and self-aware action. Now, we can briefly trace a picture of the entire ethical program that we have been discussing in order to begin to both stimulate further inquiry into such an ethics and to suggest how we might begin to practice this ethics. That is, we can now answer the question: how can we move toward a theory of the practice of an ethics of free commitment and self-aware action through the work of genealogical critique and care of the self?

The practice of an ethics of free commitment and self-aware action in the world, the practice of an ethics motivated by our condition within the world, begins with formulating an understanding of just this condition in the world. This means that, first and foremost, we must embark upon a genuine questioning of ourselves, of our reality; it implies, in part, a project that is philosophical in nature in the true sense of the word. We must ask ourselves what it is to exist, to be thrown into a world with others and left with only the answers that we can formulate from our own questions.

In doing so, as we have seen, we will find the motivation to take responsibility for the way we exist in the world, the motivation to confront, affirm, and take attitudes towards what it means for us to be in a world with others. Particularly for us, this means that if we take this motivation, we will attempt to affirm what it is to be human in all the truth, ugliness and difficulty of that reality. We will, however, fail in trying to do so—this, too, is part of what it is for us to exist in the world with others. This failure is an intricate portion of our existence in the world, one that makes us fully human, one that is the very motivating force to choose ourselves as creative, responsible and caring individuals. Thus, this failure might be best understood not as a falling *short*—though it is that—but as a fall *into* what makes us human, a descent, or perhaps a flight into our necessary condition. In affirming it, in affirming our failure, our difficulty, our responsibility and our choices of ourselves, we take up the motivation to form an awareness of ourselves and in doing so assume free commitments towards ourselves and towards the ways we exist in the world.

As we have suggested, we understand the importance of genealogical critique in the formation of such an awareness and the assumption of such free commitments. As we said in the introduction to this work, we begin with the unhesitating admission of the complexity of human

experience in relation to others and in relation to social totalities; genealogical critique is perhaps the most practical, most accurate, most effective way to begin to realize how we exist in the world with regards to social totalities. In the recovery of the buried struggles, buried conflicts, buried knowledges, genealogical critiques allow us to expose those structures of being-in and being-within-society for which we are responsible (I use we, here, in reference to the social body of individuals participating within any given social totality). Thus, genealogy allows us to expose those structures of being that are often understood as structures of being-in-itself, often considered inalienable fact, as structures that we are responsible for creating and maintaining.

More importantly, we have seen how the work of care of the self can be understood as the application of genealogical method to the level of the individual. Care of the self (with our added emphasis on care for others) is the practice by which we can begin to apply that knowledge we garner from broader genealogical critiques to our individual existences. Without care of the self, genealogical critiques only provide a basis of knowledge without the ability to take attitudes towards those structures of being that this basis of knowledge reveals to us; care of the self allows us to uncover the history of the work of power relations, the work of relations of struggle, on our individual being, to expose these relations as creative of many of our structures of being and as alienating of those same structures. In uncovering such a history, care of the self provides us with a method for drawing out and explaining the complex relations of power in which we are intertwined, a method that allows us to begin to practice self-aware action within the world, action that allows us to freely commit to those projects of being that we choose, to take responsibility for those alienations that occur in our relations to others and to social totalities. Thus, care of the self, motivated from our condition as human beings within a world with others and informed by those wider genealogical critiques that we might perform, allows us to best

practice an ethics in the world, allows us to best choose ourselves in the world as self-aware and freely committed existences, as human and humane beings.

We have now come to the near end of our project, of our search for the beginnings of an ethical practice that is based on and motivated from the condition of the human and yet uncompromisingly practicable within the world. I would like to conclude with one final suggestion. In describing care of the self, Foucault suggests that its practice might be understood as allowing us to build an *ethōs*, a way of being in the world that is established upon ethical considerations. This suggestion, of course, is not readily compatible with our description of the ontological condition of the human being in the world; however (in an effort to be bolder on this point than Sartre, who allows the possibility of such a suggestion only in one brief footnote buried within the pages of *Being and Nothingness*¹) I will here suggest the possibility of the construction of such an *ethōs*, such a way of ethically being-in-the-world. This suggestion is not an attempt to contradict or to alleviate the necessity of choosing at all times our being-in-the-world; we must. It is, instead, the suggestion of a possibility that here escapes us, but towards which we might move in the practice of ethics, in the practice of living, in the practice of freedom. It is possible, perhaps even likely, that this suggestion is an impossible one, one that of necessity can never be fulfilled. But to fly after it, to fly after such an *ethōs*, after the creation of just such an ethical way of being-in-the-world—perhaps such flight is what most affirms what it is to be human, perhaps the pursuit of such an impossibility is the best guarantee of our success in the conduct of an ethical life. So, given that, I will here end with the provision of a small hope, a simple suggestion, a *human* possibility.

¹ In “Concrete Relations with Others,” Sartre writes of his conclusion that every attitude we can take towards our being is a failure, this: “These considerations do not exclude the possibility of an ethics of deliverance and salvation. But this can be achieved only after a radical conversion which we can not discuss here” (*Being* 534).

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