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SARTRE AND FOUCAULT ON KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICAL COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

SARTRE AND FOUCAULT ON KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICAL COMMITMENT

By

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In this dissertation I argue that the critical social theories of Sartre and Foucault leave us with an unfinished philosophical project. I show that Sartre and Foucault each effectively criticize the claim to value-neutrality made in both the epistemological and positivist traditions. I then show that their different reconstructions of knowledge demonstrate its necessarily value-laden nature. I then argue that Sartre and Foucault, like Marx, each conclude that for social theory to be critical it must assume a practical standpoint. Finally, I conclude that the nature of this practical standpoint is left ill-defined by both Sartre and Foucault and suggest that the work of Habermas might offer the basis for an adequate theorization of the practical commitment necessary for critical social theory.

Dedicated to the memory of

Bernard J. Mulvey, Sr., my father,

and

Judith Shulimson, my colleague.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A. General purpose of the dissertation.

Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault can be justifiably characterized as two of the most important and influential social critics of the century. What makes them important models for us is the fact that they both theorize their critical methods and their role as critics. In part this is achieved by each thinker developing his critical social theory through a sustained engagement with the Marxian tradition of critical social theory; at times implicitly, at others quite explicitly.

For Sartre, this engagement with Marxist theory resulted, so he claimed, in a revised Marxian critical social theory, reinvigorated by a more adequate account of the role of subjectivity. For Foucault, it resulted in a radical reconceptualization of power, allowing, he claimed, for more fruitful analyses of the relationship between knowledge and domination. In different ways, each thought he had achieved a more adequate model for critical social theory. Furthermore, their differences with the Marxian tradition resulted in what they each claimed to be more adequate characterizations of the nature and role of the critical intellectual. It is my aim in this dissertation to

develop these claims and to asses the extent to which each of these thinkers has achieved his stated aims.

A word on why one would choose to explore the work of these specific theorists might be in order. One could simply rely on the evident fact that the work of Sartre and Foucault has been quite influential in this century. Therefore, anything they might have to contribute to the clarification of a perennial philosophical problem might be worthy of discussion. In the case of Sartre, however, his influence seems largely confined to his early ontological work as opposed to his later work in social theory. In fact, Sartre's later social theory is little understood, indeed it is rarely read at all. This is due in part, I believe, to the simplistic view that Sartre's later social theory amounts to nothing more than a simple application of the concepts he developed in his early well known works to social issues with which he later became concerned. More interestingly, it might also have to do with the kinds of criticisms made of Sartre's later social theory by the next generation of social critics, the post-structuralists, among whom Foucault has been not the least influential. Therefore, when thinkers apparently at such odds to one another as Sartre and Foucault are commonly conceived to be, are placed next to each other in order to explore common themes, those themes are more dramatically exposed and given added weight. Furthermore, when those themes have been of central concern to a tradition of thought, the Frankfurt

School, with which the names of Sartre and Foucault are seldom associated, then the importance of the themes, again, might be taken more seriously by contemporary thinkers.

Broadly speaking, what is at issue here is the general problem of characterizing the nature of the relationship between theory and practice. As critical social theorists Sartre and Foucault each must face the question of the basis on which or the perspective from which their criticism is made. This will be the issue we will be working toward as the discussion of this dissertation unfolds. Framing the issue in this way will also force us to confront a more specific aspect of the theory-practice problem as it appears in the work of Sartre and Foucault, and one of the most enduring issues in the philosophy of the social sciences, the question of the role of values in our critical investigations. Sartre and Foucault each reject the notion that social criticism must be based on value-neutral theoretical premises, claiming instead that it is an inherently partisan affair. Moreover, as values are defined in terms of the aspirations, goals, and desires, of particular persons or practices, the question as to the nature and role of a theorist's value choices must also be faced.

B. The Historical Context.

The claim that critical social theory is inherently value-laden is not new. One of the oldest formulations, and

perhaps one of the best introductions to the issue of the relationship between knowledge and values can be found in the work of Plato. *The Republic*, for example, begins with a discussion of the nature of justice but quickly turns to questions of the role of knowledge when once Socrates and his interlocuters recognize the intimate relationship between ways of knowing and conceptions of the good. One also gets a sense of importance in the theorist's role from Plato. For Plato claims that the true and the good ultimately converge in the mind of the philosopher after years of rigorous training. And such training requires the support of a social structure built on the assumption that the search for the good is politically paramount.

The theme of the relevance of philosophy for society reappeared in a new form in modern thought under the rubric of the link between theory and practice. Kant takes up the question in an ambiguous manner, but the strand of thought he is perhaps most famous for is his insistence that practice never surpasses theory, which is completely adequate to solve ethical problems.

> Hitherto the concept of philosophy has been a merely scholastic concept--a concept of a system of knowledge which is sought solely in its character as a science, and which has therefore in view only the systematic unity appropriate to science, and consequently no more than the *logical* perfection of knowledge. But there is likewise another concept of philosophy, ...which has always formed the real basis of the term 'philosophy', especially when it has been as it were personified and its archetype represented in the ideal *philosopher*. On this view, philosophy is the science of the relation of all knowledge to the essential ends of human reason..., and the philosopher is not an artificer in the field of

> reason, but himself the lawgiver of human reason. In this sense of the term it would be very vainglorious to entitle oneself a philosopher, and to pretend to have equalled the pattern which exists in the idea alone.[1]

Thus, Kant believed that philosophy, or philosophical reason, was instrinsically useful. From this perspective he maintains that philosophy is not simply an abstract enterprise of no practical import.

Furthermore, Kant is not silent with respect to a central concern of this dissertation, the role of values in the process of knowing. Consider the following comment.

> Between theory and practice, no matter how complete the theory may be, a middle term that provides a connection and transition is necessary. For to the concept of the understanding that contains the rule must be added an act of judgment by means of which the practitioner decides whether or not something is an instance of the rule.[2]

Here, I suggest, Kant alludes to the notion of values in knowledge, though he chooses to refer to it in terms of "judgment." For both judgment and value presuppose the notion of choice or decision.

Hegel presents a more difficult case when trying to understand his exact position on the issue of the relationship of philosophy to practice. For, on the one hand he claims that the Idea, through philosophical concepts, puts itself inexorably into practice; while on the other hand he claims that philosophy cannot change the world since it only arrives after the fact. In any case, I only wish to demonstrate here that the issue of the relation of theory to practice was felt as a pressing concern in the modern history of philosophy.

It was perhaps Marx more than any other thinker who sought to resolve the antinomies of the influential thought of his day on the side of practice. Marx rejects Kant's claim that practical questions can be resolved on the theoretical level in favor of practice as a test for theory.

> The question of whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question. Man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question.[3]

Here Marx addresses Kant's query in "On the Proverb: That May Be True in Theory, But Is Of No Practical Use" with the claim that unless theory has a direct impact on practice it remains merely idle speculation. Thus, he conceives the search for truth as an inherently political question.

He says, moreover that, "criticism...does not remain within its own sphere, but leads on to *tasks* which can only be solved by *means of practical activity*."[4] In fact, concern for truth, according to Marx, is more than merely a political issue; it is revolutionary.

> The materialist doctrine that men are the products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are the products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men who change circumstances and that it is essential to educate the educator himself.... The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionizing practice.[5]

Measuring truth in practical terms is one aspect of the larger issue concerning the role that values play in

knowledge. When Marx says, "Theory is only realized in a people in so far as it fulfills the needs of the people," and that "It is not enough that thought should seek to realize itself; reality must strive towards thought," he is not only indicating a practical role for theory, but more specifically that social criticism depends upon specific practical or value orientations.[6]

The notion that philosophy or theory has a practical *application* is one thing; the notion that theory is *informed* by a practical or value orientation is quite another. It is this latter conception, that embraced by Marx, for example, that was called into question by another strand of thought in the Western philosophical tradition also beginning with the modern period. That strand developed the specific idea that human subjects were separate from their practical environments and that the goal of theory is accurate "representation" of that external reality. For example, Francis Bacon warned of the dangers of mixing one's "subjective" characteristics with one's representations of reality.

> And the human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolours the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it.[7]

What Bacon is alluding to here is, in part, that particular value commitments must be avoided, i.e. that theory must be value-neutral, if it is to be of any use to us. We will develop this history at some length in our first chapter.

For now we might simply consider an influential examination of the assumptions of this conception of theory as opposed to the assumptions of critical theory that was developed by Horkheimer.

C. Horkheimer's model of critical theory.

In a well known essay Horkheimer opposed "traditional" and "critical" forms of theory. The former is exemplified in the kind of thought just beginning to develop with Bacon, but coming to fruition in Descartes's "Discourse on Method." The latter would be exemplified by Marx's critique of political economy.

For Horkheimer, traditional theory exhibits a concern with universal, systematic science, and a tendency towards mathematicization. According to Horkheimer, the goal of such theory

> is a universal systematic science, not limited to any particular subject matter but embracing all possible objects. The division of the sciences is being broken down by deriving the principles for special areas from the same basic premises. The same conceptual apparatus which was elaborated for the analysis of inanimate nature is serving to classify animate nature as well, and anyone who has once mastered the use of it, that is, the rules of derivation, the symbols, the process of comparing derived propositions with observable fact, can use it at any time.[8]

This is the model used by modern scientific, including social scientific, theories. They aspire to a universal system of mathematical principles, from which one can derive particular causal laws and develop factual explanations. This model of scientific explanation also satisfies another

Cartesian requirement--that of verifying the law (and the theory from which it is derived) with respect to observations possessing an objective, that is universal and indubitable, certainty.[9]

There are a two features of it worth noting in order to highlight the contrast with critical social theory; namely, that critical social theory (and the theorist) is historically situated and that the object of such theory is a social formation ultimately intelligible in terms of the human beings constitutive of it.

The first thing to note about Horkheimer's characterization is that traditional theory aspires, as he says, to be "a universal systematic science" which "anyone...can use...at any time." In contrast, critical social theory analyzes social situations in terms of those features of it which can be altered in order to eliminate at least some of the felt frustrations of its members. Given this as the aim of critical social theory, its analyses are necessarily bound by a specific historical horizon. In Marx's case, for example, that horizon was the mode of production. Therefore, critical theories cannot be universal in any absolute sense and will therefore not, contrary to the claim of traditional theory as Horkheimer sees it, be relevant for anyone to use at any time.[10] What is relevant is the particular social situation, the discernible frustrations of those involved with that situation and the specific relation between these two

factors. These considerations lead to the other feature of Horkheimer's characterization of traditional theory worth noting.

The second feature in Horkheimer's characterization of traditional theory is the assumption that the "conceptual apparatus" used for analyzing "inanimate nature" is appropriate for "animate nature" as well. That is, from a metatheoretical point of view, there need be no distinction between the method of the so-called natural sciences and that of the social sciences. The obvious underlying assumption here is that as the object of theory, there is no relevant difference between human beings and "inanimate nature." To accomplish its aim critical social theory self-consciously integrates theory and practice. That is, critical theory is "validated" to the degree that it informs practice in the desired ways. This means that what is desired and who is doing the desiring is relevant; that what sort of frustration is felt and who feels it is relevant to the theory and theorist. This is its "hermeneutical dimension." In critical theory that which is theorized are the intentions of agents. It is teleological in the sense that it attempts to "explain" action and in the sense that it attempts to contribute to the achievement of actors' aims. According to this view, theoretical claims are confirmed to the extent that they succeed in these attempts.

Measuring knowledge claims in terms of the satisfaction of human purposes and desires and limiting the range of

these claims to a specific historical domain, i.e. to specific human purposes in a particular social situation, means that there must be a certain rapport between theorist and social actors. The claims of the critical social theorist and the self-understandings of actors must cohere and be reciprocally enlightening. Horkheimer says,

> It is the task of the critical theoretician to reduce the tension between his own insight and oppressed humanity in whose service he thinks.[11]

Horkheimer implies that there ought to be an "organic" relationship between theorist and the actors theorized. This means that the subject of critical thinking is "a definite individual in his real relation to other individuals and groups."[12]

Furthermore this relationship implies a commitment on the part of the theorist and actors to explicit value assumptions. The aim of critical theory it will be recalled is to contribute to the elimination of the felt frustrations of specific human beings in specific situations. That is, there is an explicit connection between theory and practice. Horkheimer says that the critical theorist's

> presentation of societal contradictions is not merely an expression of the concrete historical situation but also a force within it to stimulate change.[13]

Indeed, according to Horkheimer, this is the critical theorist's "real function."[14] Situated in concrete social experience, critical social theory, then, not only eschews any pretense to value-neutrality, but explicitly embraces specific value assumptions.

The rejection of value-neutrality sets critical social theory apart from the dominant Western epistemological tradition. Beginning with Descartes, "subject and object are sundered" and explanation "signifies merely a logical process" whereas explanation in critical theory is "historical" as well.[15] "Historical" explanation of social reality with a view toward changing that reality is a conception of explanation that is explicitly "value-laden." On the other hand, embracing the notion of "merely logical explanation" as a methodological principle is an attempt to purge theory of value commitments. Such a methodological approach has been dominant in the West since Descartes and it is this methodological approach that is rejected, as we will see, by both Sartre and Foucault.

Simply put, for Horkheimer the major problem with traditional theory rests with its "objectivism." That is, such theory assumes that the validity and truth of its knowledge consists in passively mirroring a reality, whose form and content is given independently of the subject's activity. Above all, it falsely assumes that its perception of the facts is purified of all extraneous, subjective values and concepts as we suggested Bacon recommends.

Appealing to the tradition of Kant, Hegel, and Marx, Horkheimer remarks that the "detached" perspective of the scientist is belied by the fact that

> the facts which our senses present to us are socially preformed in two ways: through the historical character of the object perceived and through the historical

> character of the perceiving organ. Both are not simply natural; they are shaped by human activity.... The perceived fact is therefore co-determined by human ideas and concepts, even before its conscious theoretical elaboration by the knowing individual.... The so-called purity of the objective event to be achieved by experimental procedure is, of course, obviously connected with technological conditions, and the connection of these in turn with the material process of production is evident.... Man's physiological apparatus for sensation itself largely anticipates the order followed in physical experiment.... This process is just as much a result of the modern mode of production, as the perception of a man in a tribe of primitive hunters and fishers is the result of the conditions of his existence (as well, of course, as the object of perception).[16]

Traditional theory becomes "ideological", Horkheimer claims, by failing to acknowledge that its knowledge represents but one particular interpretation of reality which conditions, and is conditioned by, the historical world. The conception of knowledge as a function of passive and value-neutral observation tacitly legitimates the status quo, by claiming for it natural necessity and universality. Furthermore, it provides causal knowledge that can be used by the powers that be to predict and control social as well as natural processes.[17]

In contrast to traditional theory, according to Horkheimer, critical theory reflects on ideas in order to reveal their ideological function in maintaining the system. In unmasking ideology, critical theory dissolves the constraints imposed by false consciousness. It explicitly aims at emancipation. By making transparent the hidden social context of specific types of knowledge, critical theory dissolves the false notions of universality and

necessity inherent in all forms of objectivism. Thus, claims Horkheimer, it thereby enables the subject of knowledge and action to project new possibilities of knowing and acting that transcend those prescribed by tradition.

Sartre and Foucault each have specific differences with the critical theory of the so-called Frankfurt School that would preclude including them in their number. However, there are general themes exhibited in Horkheimer's model that Sartre and Foucault each embrace and develop. They each agree with the most general aim of critical theory, that it should contribute to emancipation. But more specifically, they agree with its critique of objectivism and representationalism, and its rejection of value-neutrality.

D. Preview of the chapters.

Having now offered some context for the discussion to follow, let me now develop a brief overview of each of the chapters of the dissertation proper.

Chapter two rehearses the several arguments used by Sartre and Foucault to reject what I will call the thesis of value-neutrality. We will begin the discussion by tracing the development of the thesis of value-neutrality in the epistemological and positivist traditions that was anticipated above in the discussion of Horkheimer's distinction between traditional and critical theory. The important point to glean from this historical account for

our purposes is that the epistemological and positivist traditions considered a neutral starting place essential for nonideological theory, upon which one could base any possible critical judgments of society.

The next section of the discussion will focus specifically on Sartre's arguments against the thesis of value-neutrality. First, the thesis of value-neutrality adopted by what Sartre calls analytical reason, the type of reason exemplified in the methodological works of Descartes and embraced by positivism, suggests that once one has a sufficient grasp of the "facts", nothing remains for the theorist to do but to adopt an attitude that "conforms" to them such that rational deliberation of what attitude to adopt would be inappropriate. The notion that there is one right way of describing and explaining reality, the notion that defines "truth" for the positivist, is for Sartre, just the notion of having a way of describing and explaining imposed on us as if it were a material reality, disguising what Sartre thinks it crucial to recognize, the role of choice on the part of the theorist.

Second, Sartre argues that analytical reason's presupposition of value-neutrality leads to an essentialistic understanding of human nature, asserting that there is a common, abstract human nature. This position, claims Sartre, abstracts individuals away from their specific social situations, preventing them from clearly understanding those situations, and thereby precludes the

sort of social and political analysis that would motivate a critical social theory.

In the next section of the second chapter we will see that Foucault arrives at a conclusion similar to Sartre's, that claims to value-neutrality in the human sciences amount to nothing more than myths that mystify real networks of domination. This is easily seen in a human science like psychiatry, the focus of Foucault's early work, where, in spite of his or her claim to be a neutral investigator of the phenomena of madness, the scientist/psychiatrist's real power derived from the values of bourgeois society.

We will then move to a discussion of Foucault's claim that the positivistic human sciences do not actually yield "truth" at all in the traditional value-neutral sense. The traditional view is that value-neutral truth, i.e., truth that is free of ideological commitments, is liberating. But Foucault's later investigation of the social practices of the human sciences reveals that they play the role of "regimes of truth" which impose normalizing standards that "subjectify" human beings, i.e., make them subjects in more than one sense of that term.

Finally, the chapter will close with a discussion of the concerns that both Sartre and Foucault have concerning orthodox Marxism. Both of them believe that it is the very claim to value-neutrality as used in orthodox Marxism that has led more than once to the terroristic imposition on human beings of policies that were formulated in self-

proclaimed value-neutral methodologies. It is important to clarify their relation to the Marxist tradition since both Sartre and Foucault rely on some fundamental insights of Marx in order to develop their own critical theories.

Chapter three will trace and develop Sartre's and Foucault's reconstructions of knowledge that reveal the necessarily value-laden nature of knowledge. Beginning once again with a discussion of Sartre's views, we will see that for him both knowledge and subjectivity are moments of praxis. Because praxis is an intentional engagement with the world and value is described by Sartre as a lack in the world that I want to overcome, human activity can be understood as goal-oriented, or value-laden. For Sartre, then, knowledge is based on the fact that nothing is given to me by the world, and everything must be grasped by me.

Furthermore, we will see that subjectivity, too, for Sartre, is an active construct, not a passive and neutral foundation for knowledge. Subjectivity amounts to an active engagement with the world. It consists, for Sartre, in an irreducible intentionality, but an intentionality made possible only by material circumstances; it is a practical relation to the world and to others. Subjectivity, or in Sartre's terms praxis, is oriented through one's project. That is, every one of our actions is governed by our (freely chosen) original projection of a general goal or manner of life. This practical appropriation of material circumstances is what Sartre means by *totalization* and is

what gives shape to and limits our historical understandings by determining both cognitive and practical norms.

The next section of this chapter will then show that Foucault, like Sartre, rejects the Cartesian epistemological approach that presupposes a correspondence between a passive subject and a given reality. We will see that he ultimately arrived at conceptions of knowledge and subjectivity which were understood as constructions of power, undermining the thesis of value-neutrality and offering his own reconstruction of knowledge as interested or value-laden. Foucault is interested in describing the historical conditions that made it possible for certain representations, objectifications, and classifications of reality to dictate which kinds of statements come up as candidates for truth and falsity. Thus, he locates what he calls "regimes of truth" that are the result of the constitutive effects of power.

Furthermore, Foucault's innovative understanding of power in terms of "productivity" as opposed to the traditional understanding of power in terms of "repression" allows him to elaborate the process by which subjects are constituted through the play of power. Subjectivity is a construct that results from the exigencies of power. It is not a passive, neutral mirror upon which given reality is reflected. On the contrary, it is an active construct that is however constrained and directed by the epistemic and practical norms generated by power's disciplinary

techniques. Even though power is intentional, according to Foucault, it is also nonsubjective. That is, it is the result of a network of relations, not the intention of an originary domineering subject. Thus, like Sartre, Foucault offers a reconstruction of knowledge that is opposed to the understandings of knowledge developed in the Cartesian epistemological or later positivist traditions.

This chapter will close by addressing the possible relativistic implications that emerge from the reconstructions developed by Sartre and Foucault. Namely, if, as both Sartre and Foucault understand it to be, knowledge is historical and local, not certain and universal; and if the knowing subject is an active construct, then Sartre and Foucault seemed compelled to conclude that there is no way out of an epistemological relativism. But I will claim that the charge of epistemological relativism only makes sense based on the presuppositions of Cartesian epistemology or positivism. Since both Sartre and Foucault reject these presuppositions, they do not consider this charge to be serious.

The fourth chapter develops an implication derived from the general aim of both Sartre and Foucault to articulate critical theories; that is, such theories must be elaborated from particular value commitments. This requires Sartre and Foucault to specify the situated, practical standpoint that gives content to the necessary commitment of their critical theories. The first section of this chapter will elaborate

Marx's innovation of the practical standpoint as the fundamental insight of his critical theoretical activity. This discussion is important for our purposes because it is this insight that is appropriated into the work of both Sartre and Foucault. The discussion will show that, according to Marx, because the proletariat was the "universal class", its practical standpoint illuminated the relations of domination that exist under capitalism. The struggle of this class identified specific points of resistance, thus making possible specific strategies of liberation.

The next section of chapter four will discuss the extent to which Sartre embraces Marx's claim that critical social theory must situate itself in relation to the standpoint of the proletariat. We will see that when one looks at his career as a whole one can discern an ambivalence in Sartre's work toward Marx's idea that the proletariat represented universal interests. That is, early in his career he rejected such a notion on ontological grounds, and ultimately, in spite of the explicit aim of his major work of social theory, the *Critique*, to place historical materialism on a firm foundation, Sartre was forced to reject the idea of the proletariat as the universal class. Our discussion will show that Sartre came to the conclusion that there simply was no unitary body such as the proletariat that could play the role, as for Marx, of the representative of universal interests. According to

Sartre, Marxism had consistently failed to account for individual subjectivity and thereby failed to illuminate modes of alienation specific to individuals that could not be accounted for through class analysis.

The next section of the chapter will show that Foucault agrees with Sartre that the contemporary social terrain has changed since the time of Marx such that the social field is now populated by a variety of historical agents, rendering the concept of the proletariat as the universal class obsolete. Furthermore, for Foucault, criticism can and ought no longer be couched in universal terms at all. Foucault's method of genealogy, as opposed to developing criticism from the point of view of "impartial truths" in the mode of a Kantian transcendentalism, articulates claims of excluded or subjugated knowledges against present forms of hegemonic knowledge. Similarly to Marx, then, Foucault believes that a practical standpoint will reveal current hegemonic social configurations as contingent rather than necessary, thus illuminating possible points of transgression.

But we will show that Foucault's position is at odds with his own intentions insofar as it represents a critique of power in order to overcome its effects while at the same time holding that such emancipatory goals are illusory. Foucault argues that any knowledge, critical knowledge included, is not external to power and therefore it must reproduce the very sort of power relations it is developed

to overcome. So Foucault claims that any thought that can separate itself from hegemonic forms of knowledge is the space for freedom. Yet this claim means that freedom is detached from the particular practical standpoints that can give it substance and thus remains abstract, or on the level of thought alone.

We will conclude this chapter by identifying two issues raised by Sartre's and Foucault's rejection of the proletariat as a unified body that can provide the practical standpoint necessary for criticism. The first has to do with the nature of the role of critical intellectuals which we will pursue in the concluding chapter, and the second has to do with what Sartre and Foucault each understand by the concept of freedom.

Sartre understands practical freedom to be measured in terms of what resists it. But his conception of the "human condition" remains abstract, thus freedom itself must be understood, for Sartre, as the abstract aspirations of "anyone." Thus, Sartre has not resolved the tension between the universal aspirations of his critical theory and the need for a practical standpoint. Foucault, like Sartre, is forced to embrace an abstract sense of freedom as well, because he does not account for the specific social arrangements that may be more or less dominating or free, as Marx suggests. Marx's positive freedom depends on envisioning a certain kind of community where relations of domination are eliminated, or at least mitigated. Such a

vision is offered neither by Sartre or Foucault. This result indicates that Sartre and Foucault leave us with an unfinished philosophical project because they never resolve the tension between their abstract conceptions of freedom and the practical standpoints they claim are necessary for a social theory that aims to be critical.

In chapter five, the concluding chapter, we will summarize our discussion and indicate where we are led by the examination of this aspect of the work of Sartre and Foucault. As we will have seen by this time, because Sartre and Foucault each seem to be at a loss to articulate a concrete form of freedom that can be legitimately applied across the social field to the plurality of social agents, the role of the critical intellectual remains problematic. We will see that Sartre and Foucault are each at pains to elaborate a satisfactory model of the critical intellectual, one that avoids the imposition of interpretations, and thus values, on those groups seeking emancipation from domination, the very problem we saw encountered in those theories embracing the thesis of value-neutrality. Having abandoned the Marxian notion of the proletariat as the universal, yet practical, ground for critical theory's normative commitments, Sartre and Foucault each seemed to be forced into historicist positions which imply political spontaneism when it comes to liberatory social movements.

This is an issue that requires further theoretical exploration. That is, what is required is an explicit

theorization of the normative dimensions of rationality that manages to take account of the practical standpoint necessary for criticism while avoiding the historicist reduction of the interests of that standpoint. The work of Habermas, who attempts to ground normative claims in the use of language, or Bakhtin, who might offer insight into the theorization of a "dialogical" conception of rationality, come to mind as two examples of such an approach, though the work of the former is significantly more developed than that of the latter.

E. A note on the choice of texts.

As with many influential and prolific thinkers, their written work is often categorized by scholars into "periods" that represent important shifts in those thinkers' thought. Thinkers like Marx, Heidegger, Wittgenstein come to mind as some whose work has been treated in this manner. The work of Sartre and Foucault, too, have each been grouped into early, middle, and later periods, with the result that many scholars consider their later periods to be at odds with their earlier ones. Thus a word on which periods, which texts, from each thinker will be focussed on here and why might seem in order.

Our thesis concerns the relationship between knowledge and practical commitments within the larger context of critical social theory. Sartre and Foucault each seemed to have dealt more explicitly with the question of knowledge

and the epistemological tradition in their earlier works, while dealing with more explicitly social theoretical matters in their later works.

In the case of Sartre, his major work of social theory was the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* with the *Search for a Method* as its prefatory work. But often, it seems as though Sartre's most explicit discussions regarding knowledge are to be found in his early *Being and Nothingness*, a work devoted to phenomenological ontology. So even though our main concern will be with the *Critique* and the *Search* we will have occasion to call on some of Sartre's discussion in *Being and Nothingness* and other works of that period where it is clear that his views did not change form the earlier to the later period. Thus the issue among Sartre scholars as to whether Sartre's work in his later periods is at odds with that of his earlier periods or whether his work represents a continuous development across periods, is one on which I fall squarely in the middle. That is, some Sartrean concepts change over time, some are abandoned, some are added, and some do not change at all.

I regard the situation with Foucault in a similar fashion. We will be concerned mainly with the work of what might be called his middle period where social and political issues are paramount. Thus works like *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* will be central in regard to our thesis. But Foucault, too, addressed some relevant epistemological issues in his

earlier *Madness and Civilization* and *The Order of Things* that he seemed to have taken for granted in his later works, and thus we will recount them in the following discussions.

NOTES

[1] Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1965), pp.657-658.

[2] Immanuel Kant, "On the Proverb: That May be True in Theory, But Is of No Practical Use," in Perpetual Peace and Other Essays, trans. Ted Humphrey, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), p.273.

[3] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert C. Tucker, second edition, (NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), p.144.

[4] Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," in The Marx-Engels Reader, p.60.

[5] Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," p.144.

[6] Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," pp.61, 65.

[7] Francis Bacon, in Main Currents of Western Thought, ed. Franklin Le Van Baumer, fourth edition, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p.282.

[8] Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," in Critical Theory: Selected Essays, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell et al. (NY: Continuum, 1982), pp.188-89.

[9] Ibid., p.193.

[10] Marx himself at times spoke the language of universal science in characterizing his work; Engels, perhaps, more so. See, for example, Friedrich Engels, "Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx," in The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert C. Tucker, second edition, (NY: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), pp.681-682. These characterizations notwithstanding, there is a clear thread in the logic of Marx's overall argument that commits him to the kind of critical theory advocated by Horkheimer. For a discussion of the "positivistic" versus the "critical" Marx see Albrecht Wellmer, Critical Theory of Society, (NY: The Seabury Press), 1974.

[11] Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," p.221.

[12] Ibid., p.211.

[13] Ibid., p.215.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., p.211.

[16] Ibid., pp.200-201.

[17] Ibid., pp.194, 203.

CHAPTER TWO

AGAINST VALUE-NEUTRALITY

This chapter will rehearse the several arguments used by Sartre and Foucault to reject the thesis of value-neutrality. As we have discussed, the thesis of value-neutrality states that an adequate social theory requires its knowledge claims to be neutral regarding ideological or value commitments. Sartre and Foucault are each eager to reject the understandings of the nature and role of knowledge as developed in the Cartesian epistemological program and the positivistic approach to scientific methodology. The latter methodology has been influential in the orthodox Marxist tradition to which Sartre belongs. For both Sartre and Foucault, as the following discussion of value-neutrality makes clear, social scientists are actually involved with knowledge claims that express unacknowledged value commitments that express distorted views of the nature of human beings and their social reality and impose "partisan" truths in the name of objective and value-free knowledge.

The chapter is layed out as follows. First, the basis of the value-neutrality thesis will be explored, with regard to the Cartesian epistemological and the positivistic methodological. Second, Sartre's arguments against

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The chapter is layed out as follows. First, the role of the value-neutrality thesis will be traced through both the Cartesian epistemological and the positivist traditions. Second, Sartre's arguments against the thesis of value-

neutrality will be discussed. Third, we will discuss Foucault's arguments against the value-neutrality thesis. Finally, we will discuss the concerns that both Sartre and Foucault have about the use of the value-neutrality thesis in orthodox Marxism.

A. Value-neutrality in the epistemological and positivist traditions.

The "received view" in the history of philosophy situates Descartes at the origin of the program of modern philosophy. A brief investigation of Descartes' program, therefore, may help illuminate the motivating assumptions of traditional theory and its conception of value-neutrality.

Stephen Toulmin offers an account of the young Descartes developing a conception of a programmatic philosophy in response to the religious disputes that erupted into the turmoil of the Thirty Years' War.

> By 1630, at the midpoint of the Thirty Years' War, the traditional consensus that had underlain Europe was apparently stripped away. There was no unanimity in ethics, in politics, in religion, or even in physics. Faced with this collapse, philosophers looked for an alternative starting point for human thought and practice: an alternative set of "grounds" or "data" that was available in the shared experience of reflective thinkers. If such a universal starting point was found, it might be a "scratch line" from which the scientists and philosophers of any age or culture would be able to make a start.[1]

Toulmin's contextualized account of Descartes' program reveals Descartes' assumption that in the absence of foundational truths and values, fragmentation and perpetual conflict was inevitable. The *Meditations* is the source in

modern philosophy of the metaphor of the "foundation" and for the conviction that the philosopher's quest is to search for an "Archimedean point" on which we can ground our knowledge.[2]

Toulmin suggests that Descartes was specifically reacting to the popular views of Montaigne whose tolerance "of ambiguity, unclarity, lack of certainty, or the diversity of contrary human opinions" he could not share.[3] It was the skeptical line of Montaigne, the position that we can be certain about nothing and the perhaps more audacious claim that we need be certain about nothing, that Descartes saw as the underlying cause of political and ethical chaos. Montaigne's approach to understanding humanity proceeded from the standpoint of "experience" with all its prejudices of varied value commitments and emotion.[4] Descartes' well known response to such skepticism was to define a neutral starting place for knowledge. The unprejudiced "scratch line," the foundation, the one thing of which we could be certain, was the *cogito*. Thus, Descartes inaugerated what might be called the "objectivist" program. Bernstein understands objectivism to mean

> the basic conviction that there is or must be some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, goodness, or rightness.[5]

What is permanent is Reason, and the *locus* of Reason is the subject. What is in flux is all that is external to this *locus* of Reason. Such a distinction has been a familiar

theme in the history of Western philosophy, perhaps finding its earliest formulation in Plato's arguments against Parmenidean skepticism. In every case, what this distinction between what is permanent and what is in flux amounts to is the distinction between subject and object.

Such a dualism--the distinction between subject and object--was a basic presupposition in the development of the natural sciences. Consider the central presuppositions of this Cartesian dualism with its emphasis on human beings as essentially rational beings. First, Descartes emphasizes the mental to the exclusion of the physical. That is, rationality is understood to be "disembodied," or to be only contingently related to the body or to the physical world in general. The assumption here is that there could be such a thing as "pure" rationality, a capacity untainted by the fluctuations and contingencies of the physical world.

Second, rationality is assumed to be the property of individuals rather than groups. This view may be the result of Cartesian "atomism" whereby things are considered to be the sum of their parts, no more and no less. Thus individuals are the parts that combine to make up social groupings. As such they are ontologically prior to those groupings. The essential characteristics of human beings can exist, in principle at least, independently of the social groups in which they happen to find themselves.

Third, the capacity for rationality is found in approximately equal measure in all human beings. Descartes claims at one point that

> the power of judging well and of distinguishing between the true from the false, which, properly speaking is what is called good sense, or reason, is by nature equal in all men...[6]

Recall that Horkheimer alluded to the universal quality of traditional theory in understanding it as a procedure that, once mastered, could be used by anyone at anytime.

The Cartesian epistemological tradition was an attempt to formulate rules and procedures for attaining knowledge. Descartes himself understood the procedure to consist in part in building knowledge out of the inferences from indubitable first premises. The empiricist tendency views knowledge as achieved by inference from basic sense experiences. The empiricist tendency in the Cartesian epistemological tradition developed into the positivist theory of knowledge and understanding of science.

Feigl accepts the positivist self-understanding of science as the "orthodox" view. According to this view, the formulation of theories involves several levels of conceptual differentiation. At the highest level, are abstract postulates which cannot be given a precise definition in terms of their empirical content, but only in terms of their logical relations with other postulates. The concepts contained in empirical generalizations are distinct from the terms of the observation language, which refer to

the sensory "soil" of observation as given in experience. There must, then, be correspondence rules which specify the relations that pertain between the language of observation and the language of theory. According to this view, the data of experience force upon us definite modes of description and classification of external reality.[7] This view assumes the Cartesian sort of dualism discussed above and presupposes a passive relation between subject and object. Furthermore, it implies that the foundations of scientific knowledge must be located in some area of our experience which can be described in a language that is theoretically neutral.

According to the positivist self-understanding of science, the adequacy of a theory is judged according to the theory's "objectivity." Again, as Horkheimer has suggested of traditional theory, once the process of verification is understood, it ought to be able in principle to be put to use by anyone. Understanding the subject as passive means in part that as long as everyone is following the same rules, the external world would impose on them the same conclusions. Thus, objectivity in this sense means intersubjective verification made possible by value-neutrality. Scientists, according to the positivist view, should be sure to purge their theories of their own "subjective" or partisan values, interests and emotions. These, it is claimed, would bias or distort the results of scientific inquiry. For the positivist view, scientists

must be "detached" observers, following strict methodological rules that allow them to separate themselves from their field of study and the particular values, interests and emotions generated by their specific situation.

Pushed to the limit it is clear that the logic of the positivist conception of science would exclude explicitly normative moral or political philosophy. Such an extreme conclusion has been associated with the logical positivists of the mid-twentieth century. More recently, attempts have been made to reject the extreme conclusion while still maintaining the positivist criterion of objectivity in moral and political theory. In this sense, objectivity would not mean to be free of value judgments, but to be free of the value judgments of any particular person or group, to be "unbiased." Consider these representative remarks by John Rawls:

> In order to find an Archimedean point it is not necessary to appeal to a priori or perfectionist principles. By assuming certain general desires, such as the desire for primary social goods, and by taking as a basis the agreements that would be made in a suitably defined initial situation, we can achieve the requisite independence from existing circumstances.[8]

Objective value judgments in this sense would be those made by an individual who was impartial in the sense of giving no special weight to his or her own or to any other special interests. Again, the positivist political philosopher is one who is "detached" from the contingencies of his or her situation.

The assumption behind this sort of political philosophy is that in order to engage in political philosophy theoretically adequately, one must first possess a set of values which are either generally accepted or can be defended by recourse to generally accepted values. Then, one must construct one's political philosophy using those values as foundations. Finally, one should compare the present political situation with the constructed one in order to help understand the deficiencies of the present and possible routes to remedy those situations. That is, objectivism of the sort mentioned above, assumes that without a neutral standpoint that is somehow detached from the present, it is impossible to make sense out of our own historical situation.

Let me make explicit the connection between the self-understanding of a positivist conception of science that I have been talking about thus far and the particular conception of politics that it implies. Consider once again Horkheimer's claim that traditional theory, or science positivistically understood, argues that the methods used in the so called natural sciences are the appropriate methods to use in the study of human beings. The argument is that "non-scientific" attempts at understanding society are inadequate because they mingle observation with mere opinion, because they express subjective preferences, and because they use as a standard of measurement vague notions of human wants and needs; i.e. they are not value-neutral.

It is only by adopting a stance of value-neutrality in relation to one's social and historical situation, this argument continues, that can one grasp the laws underlying social phenomena and thereby be in a position to control those aspects of it which pose problems in terms of achieving social goals. By adopting such a stance social theory could then establish public standards of ascertainable truth and therefore the possibility of a universally acceptable solution to a given problem.

The crucial positivist claim, for the purposes of this study, is that an adequate study of society requires the theorist to be an impartial observer, neutral with respect to the values of the particular historical situation in which his or her theorizing takes place. Only then can such theorizing be considered rational. We have seen that critical social theory rejects this stance and argues that the theorist must embrace his or her historical situation as a necessary aspect of his or her theorizing. It is into this controversy that I want to introduce the insights of Sartre and Foucault.

B: Sartre's arguments against value-neutrality.

In the *Critique* Sartre draws a distinction between what he calls analytic and synthetic, or dialectical, reasoning that plays a crucial role in his work. The distinction is not a new one for Sartre. It appears at first implicitly in his early *Being and Nothingness* and soon after in the more

explicit discussions contained in his *Anti-Semite and Jew* and "Materialism and Revolution." Sartre identifies analytic reason with the positivistic method of the natural sciences and furthermore makes the political point that this sort of reason characterizes what he calls "bourgeois thinking." Science, claims Sartre, "expresses the bourgeois point of view, which is an analytic one."[9]

According to Sartre, analytical reason juxtaposes human beings to matter, while dialectical reason recognizes human interaction with the world, which shapes that world as it in turn shapes human beings. Sartre sees analytical reason as an expression of the "Cartesian era."

> Cartesianism illuminates the period and *situates* Descartes within the totalitarian development of analytical reason....[10]

But this era is over and analytical reason is no longer an an adequate expression of our own, according to Sartre. That is, at one time it served the bourgeoisie as a critical instrument in its revolt against the old feudal order. But it later attempted to preserve the gains it had made, to maintain the *status quo*, serving liberalism by "providing a doctrine for procedures that attempted to realize the 'atomization' of the proletariat."[11] We will return to this issue below.

Our immediate task here is to show that from his early to his later work one of Sartre's central concerns is to demonstrate the limitations of analytic reason for reasons that fundamentally have to do with the notion of its claim

to value-neutrality. Before turning directly to this issue, it would be worthwhile to be clear about what Sartre means by *value*. Throughout his work Sartre seemed to adhere to the notion that what was essential to the concept of value is the desire to bring about a certain personal or political state of affairs. "What is a value if not the call of something which does not yet exist?"[12] It is this desire, this call, which is absent from analytic reason, according to Sartre. It is to the evolution of Sartre's reflection on this issue that we will now turn.

Richard Rorty has pointed out that "...we can...take from Heidegger the idea that the desire for an 'epistemology' is simply the most recent product of the dialectical development of an originally chosen set of metaphors."[13] Sartre would agree with the idea that what we call knowledge, for Heidegger a particular metaphor, is a specific choice bound up with our more fundamental choice of our way of being, our project. Marcuse, a student of Heidegger, offers the following clear explanation of the use of the Sartrean idea of the project in this context.

> The term "project"...seems to accentuate most clearly the specific character of historical practice. It results from a determinate choice, siezure of one among other ways of comprehending, organizing, and transforming reality. The initial choice defines the range of possibilities open on this way, and precludes alternative possibilities incompatible with it.... [Objects] appear to the scientist *a priori* as value-free elements or complexes of relations, susceptible to organization in an effective mathematico-logical system.... The object world is thus the world of a specific historical project, and is never accessible outside the historical project which organizes matter,

> and the organization of matter is at one and the same time a theoretical and practical enterprise.[14]

Sartre sees the attempt to gain an "objective" knowledge of the world and oneself in the manner of positivism as an attempt to avoid the responsibility for choosing one's project.

> Man pursues being blindly by hiding from himself the free project which is this pursuit. He makes himself such that he is *waited for* by all the tasks placed along his way. Objects are mute demands, and he is nothing in himself but the passive obedience to these demands.[15]

The thesis of value-neutrality suggests, according to Sartre, both that there is a strict distinction to be made between "facts" and "values", and that once one has a sufficient grasp of the so called facts, nothing remains for the theorist to do but to adopt an attitude that "conforms" to them such that rational discussion of what attitude to adopt would be inappropriate. Such a conception troubles Sartre because it masks the role of choice. It disguises the fact that to use one set of true sentences to describe ourselves is already to choose an attitude toward ourselves, whereas to use another set of true sentences is to adopt a contrary attitude. The notion that there is one right way of describing and explaining reality, the notion that defines "truth" for the positivist, is for Sartre, just the notion of having a way of describing and explaining *imposed* on us in that brute way in which stones impinge on our feet. For example, in his "Materialism and Revolution" Sartre argues that the naive metaphysical materialism embraced by

orthodox Marxists unjustifiably reduces the concept of mind to the concept of matter when many other descriptions of the relationship of mind to matter are possible.

> Experience is confined to displaying the close conection between the physiological and psychological, and this conection is subject to a thousand different kinds of interpretation.[16]

Just as Rorty explores the tradition that conceives knowing in terms of the metaphor of visual perception, Sartre claims as "primitive" the identification of the symbol of sight with knowing. "To know is to devour with the eyes."[17] For Sartre, knowing is not that simple and one-sided. If knowledge consists simply in being shoved about by an external object, then we should no longer have the responsibility for choice among competing ideas and words, theories and vocabularies. This attempt to deny our responsibility is what Sartre describes as the attempt to turn oneself into a thing--into an *etre-en-soi*. This is the attitude of the "serious man," says Sartre, who

> has given to himself the type of existence of the rock, the consistency, the inertia, the opacity of being-in-the-midst-of-the-world. It is obvious that the serious man at bottom is hiding from himself the consciousness of his freedom; he is in *bad faith* and his bad faith aims at presenting himself in his own eyes as a consequence.... Marx proposed the original dogma of the serious when he asserted the priority of object over subject. Man is serious when he takes himself for an object.[18]

From Sartre's point of view, conceiving of knowledge as the one appropriate description assumes universality as an appropriate criterion of that knowledge. Universality in this sense, it will be recalled from our first chapter, is

one way of conceiving of value-neutrality. For a universal description in this sense implies that it is appropriate for "anyone," and the idea of an "anyone" is one that is an abstraction from real circumstances that define real persons. To look for a way of reducing all *possible* descriptions to one is to attempt to escape from humanity. It is to see human beings as objects rather than subjects, as existing *en-soi* rather than as both *pour-soi* and *en-soi*, as both described objects and as describing subjects. To find a single universal descriptive vocabulary would allow us to identify human-beings-under-a-given-description with the human "essence." And this conclusion is, of course, the sort of position to which Sartre's entire project of existentialism is a critical response.

Sartre further develops these insights in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, one of his first major pieces of political analysis after *Being and Nothingness*. There Sartre connects the epistemology that characterized what he earlier called "the spirit of seriousness" with the political outlook of liberalism. Specifically, he discusses the inadequacy of the "analytic spirit" of the sort of individual whom Sartre calls "the democrat"--the rational, well-intentioned liberal, who insists that there really is no Jewish question and that the solution to whatever problems may be posed by anti-Semitism is the full, enforced assimilation of the Jews into the mainstream of society.

> The democrat, like the scientist, fails to see the particular case; to him the individual is only an ensemble of universal traits. It follows that his defense of the Jews saves the latter as man and annihilates him as a Jew. In contrast to the anti-Semite, the democrat is not afraid of himself; what he fears is the great collective forms in which he is in danger of being disintegrated. Thus he has chosen to throw in his lot with the analytic spirit because it does not see these synthetic realities.[19]

Here Sartre alludes to the sort of reasoning that he thinks appropriate to capture social reality, that which he calls synthetic reason. Exactly what Sartre means by this will be further explored in the next chapter. For now it is important to see that as in the discussion of his remarks in *Being and Nothingness* above, here Sartre also reaffirms his aversion to the idea of a human nature.

> We do not believe in "human nature"; we cannot conceive of society as a sum of isolated molecules."[20]

The analytic spirit of traditional liberalism, then, cuts up the objects of his or her reflections, i.e. human society, into small pieces, thus hopelessly distorting them.

Sartre clarifies what he means by the spirit of analysis in his *Introduction to Le Temp Modernes*. Again focusing his analysis on political matters, he claims the analytic spirit interprets "equality", for example, in an essentialist way; asserting that there is a common, abstract human nature.

> In society as conceived by the analytic cast of mind, the individual, a solid and indivisible participle [*sic*], the vehicle of human nature, resides like a pea in a can of peas.... All men are *equal*, by which it should be understood that they all participate equally in the essence of man.[21]

As I have already pointed out, Sartre is well known for his claim that the universal concept "man" is a myth and does not exist; there is no human nature, only a human condition, and therefore we must form what we will become instead of finding a human nature ready made, as the spirit of analysis would have us believe we can do.

This mode of thought that distorts the picture of what human beings are, according to Sartre, has a direct political consequence as well. It prevents human beings from clearly understanding their own social situation.

> Those who value above all dignity of the human being, his freedom, his inalienable rights, are as a result inclined to think in accordance with the analytic cast of mind, which conceives of individuals outside their actual conditions of existence, which endows them with an unchanging, abstract nature, and which isolates them and blinds itself to their solidarity.[22]

Abstracting individuals away from their specific social situations as does the "analytic cast of mind," as well as obscuring from view their solidarity with others in a like situation, precludes the sort of social and political analysis that motivates critical social theory.

Moreover, it pulls the rug out from under those who are considering changing their social circumstances by suggesting that those circumstances are simply given. The spirit of analysis embraced by science, claims Sartre, is really a "philosophy of oppression" because it

> tries to conceal its pragmatic character; as it is aimed not at changing the world, but at maintaining it, it claims to *contemplate* the world as it *is*. It regards society and nature from the viewpoint of pure knowledge, without admitting to itself that this

> attitude tends to perpetuate the present state of the universe by implying that the universe can be known rather than changed and that if one actually does want to change it, one must first know it.[23]

The theory of the primacy of knowledge, Sartre continues,

> contains within itself a negation of the action it involves, since it affirms the primacy of knowledge and rejects all pragmatic conceptions of truth.[24]

Sartre is here alluding to one of the well rehearsed criticisms of positivism. That is, positivist methodologies necessarily have a value orientation, even while claiming value-neutrality, and thus cannot account for that very value orientation.

> Materialism is a metaphysics hiding positivism; but it is a self-destructive metaphysics, for by undermining metaphysics out of principle, it deprives its own statements of any foundation.[25]

In order for positivists to inquire whether the universe *in itself* supported and guaranteed the scientific rationalism of the analytic spirit, claims Sartre, they would have had to "depart from themselves and from mankind" in order to compare the universe as it *is* with the picture we get of it from science, and to assume God's point of view on man and the world.[26]

This problem of the ultimate justification of reason is the very problem Sartre takes up in the *Critique*. Analytic reason, as we have seen, according to Sartre could not justify itself. The major task of the first part of the *Critique* according to Sartre is the elaboration of a justification for dialectical reason. Throughout this work Sartre juxtaposes dialectical to analytical reason and

continues the criticism begun in his earlier work of methods that incorporate the latter type of reason.

In developing a critique of dialectical reason Sartre wants to avoid what he sees as the pitfalls of both idealism and naive realism. The tradition of idealism, according to Sartre, is right to accept the task of reason's justifying itself. Naive realism or scientific realism pretends to mold itself according to the object studied. Such realism accepts a correspondence theory of truth that conceives of the mind as a blank slate within whose neutral passivity the object unfolds with the identical characteristics it has outside the mind. Truth in this case is nothing more than the reflective recognition of this conformity.

> This amounts to saying that the human mind will accept *everything* presented to it by investigation and will subordinate its conception of logic and intelligibility to the actual data revealed by its investigations.[27]

Again we see Sartre's emphasis on the idea that positivism masks the activity of the subject, an activity that he interprets in terms of choice.

The idealism of Kant and Hegel, however, has correctly emphasized the mind's activism in this process. But this idealism has lost sight of the material context of knowledge, according to Sartre. That is, the idealist has lost what was correct in the realist attitude, that matter is not produced by knowledge and that its intelligibility cannot be reduced to the activity of an intellect. Historical materialism, the "truth" of which, it has been

pointed out, has already been assumed by Sartre, insists both on the active role of consciousness and on the irreducible materiality of its objects. Thus dialectical reason must develop a conception of truth that describes a monism in which the two distinct materialities of knowledge and object operate. This again amounts to Sartre's claim that there is an intimate (dialectical) relation between the knower and the known, an issue we will take up in the next chapter.

What is of overriding concern for Sartre is that the naive materialist, one who assumes the analytic cast of mind, tries to eliminate subjectivity, by which we could interpret him to mean that they try to assume a value-neutral stance because the role of choice would then also be eliminated. Thus the materialist declares that he or she is an *object*, that is, the subject matter of science. Furthermore, he or she claims to have an objective standpoint for observation.

> But once he has eliminated subjectivity in favor of the object, instead of seeing himself as a thing among other things, buffeted about by the physical universe, he makes of himself an *objective beholder* and claims to contemplate nature as it is, in the absolute.[28]

This particular aspect of Sartre's examination of the analytic spirit leads, then, to another familiar theme in Sartre's early work. That is, that human beings aspire to be God. We will see that this issue comes upon again in his later political work, but in the guise of the issue of the role of the intellectual *vis-a-vis* the social reality about

which he or she is theorizing. Hence, either because it subscribes to a concept of a fixed human nature or because it considers itself to have achieved the privileged position of an absolute arbiter, the value-neutral approach of the analytic spirit masks its own normative status and often parades as a justification for exploitation and domination, especially, as Sartre's later political essays attest, of a domination over native populations in colonial conquests.

In the *Search*, Sartre explores some particular examples of "American sociology" which he claimed embraced the analytic methods we have been discussing thus far. In some ways, according to Sartre, the analytical thought of American sociology did not have the capacity to illuminate living individuals who made certain choices in a given context and rejected others. This is the sort of objectivism that posits "traits" in criminals. These reified attributes of criminals would then play the role of thing-like essences for the sociologist, allowing the explanation of crime without reference to the tensions of the totality, thereby averting any critical assessment of that totality. In this way American sociology can contribute to legitimizing the *status quo*, and, according to Sartre, could very well become a "class weapon in the hands of the capitalists."[29] This sort of "objective sociology", according to Sartre, endeavors to treat the observer as if he or she were external to the "experimental field" in the sense that he or she does not acknowledge his or her

engagement in a project which necessarily implies the choice of an interpretation of that field. To the extent that "the sociologist himself remains external" he "maintains the attitude of *positivism*", claims Sartre.[30]

Let us conclude this section by noting once again the close relationship that exists between Sartre's epistemological position and his political positions. Analytic reason, for Sartre, distorts the lived reality of human beings making choices in a situation and can easily contribute to the legitimization of the *status quo*, and all the while it masks its own value-commitments. Thus Sartre rejects as a misleading myth the idea of a foundationalism that would provide the neutral ground upon which one could base his or her social criticism, as misleading as the notion of a value-neutral representation with which it is intimately bound up. As early as *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre claimed, "...*representation*, as a psychic event, is a pure invention of philosophers."[31]

C. Foucault's arguments against value-neutrality.

Much about Foucault's work has changed over the years. But one thing that has remained constant throughout is his rejection of the thesis of value-neutrality in the various sciences. In fact, one way to read Foucault I believe is to see his work as an elaboration and development in terms of ever greater specificity of just this theme. The terms of his argument have changed, but the basic conviction remains.

Thus, for example, the notion of the *episteme* found in the early *The Order of Things* gives way in his later works to the notion of *power/knowledge*; both concepts representing an attempt to capture the "unconscious" of science, or the non-epistemic determinants of knowledge. That is, for Foucault "[a]ll knowledge is rooted in a life, and a language that have a history..."[32]

Throughout his career Foucault has been concerned to uncover in the various human sciences the play of power that hid behind the mask of value-neutrality. Thus, not only does Foucault, like Sartre, argue against the associated notions of representation and foundationalism, but more importantly, Foucault believes with Sartre that claims to value-neutrality in the sciences amount to nothing more than myths, mystifying real networks of domination within which people are caught up.[33] But moving beyond Sartre in a more radical way, Foucault suggests that more than simply masking plays of power, the discourse of value-neutrality itself can be a significant mode of operation of power.

One way power operates through the discourse of value-neutrality is the focus of much of Foucault's early work on madness and the psychiatric/medical profession. In an interview Foucault explains that his concern regarding the relationship between power and knowledge was provoked as early on as the 1950s in reaction to the revelations of the Lysenko affair. He was concerned with the "political status of science and the ideological functions which it could

serve."[34] He chose to pursue this relation through a study of psychiatry as opposed to one of the natural sciences, like physics, because he thought the questions would be easier to resolve there, "since the epistemological profile of psychiatry is a low one and psychiatric practice is linked with a whole range of institutions, economic requirements and political issues of social regulation."[35]

In *Madness and Civilization* Foucault explains how the medical profession entered into and took over the asylum. The interesting part of this history for our purposes is Foucault's argument that the intervention of the doctor, contrary to the standard view, was not based on the possession of any special medical skill, or upon any developed objective knowledge. Rather the authority of the psychiatrist derived from the social status ascribed to him as a wise man of science. Thus, in spite of the psychiatrist's own claims to be a man of *science*, that is in spite of his claim to be a neutral investigator of the phenomena of madness, his powers lacked a *scientific* foundation. His power derived from the values of bourgeois society. The nature and source of the physician's powers have been obscured by the articulation of medical knowledge in terms of the norms of positivism. Consequently,

> to analyze the profound structures of objectivity in the knowledge and practices of nineteenth-century psychiatry from Pinel to Freud, we should have to show in fact that such objectivity was from the start a reification of magical nature, which could only be accomplished with the complicity of the patient himself, and beginning from a transparent and clear

> moral practice, gradually forgotten as positivism imposed its myths of scientific objectivity; a practice forgotten in its origins and its meaning, but always used and always present. What we call psychiatric practice is a certain moral tactic contemporary with the end of the eighteenth century, preserved in the rites of asylum life, and overlaid by the myths of positivism.[36]

As we have discussed, positivism holds that value-neutral "representations" of reality are legitimately offered to the passive observer. But Foucault rejects this claim and points out that such a view masks the way that the observer or theoretician is actually an interpreter. Furthermore, it masks the way these interpretations are *imposed*. The lesson that the claim of objectivity masks subjective motivations is one Foucault learns from Nietzsche. We will return to some of Foucault's Nietzschean themes later. For now we should simply note that Foucault believes scientific objectivity and subjective intentions emerge together in a space set up not by individuals but by social practices. The investigation of this process is the focus of much of Foucault's later work, especially his studies of sexuality. For there, Foucault's early concerns with the medical profession's imposed interpretations re-emerge in the context of a more developed view of the relationship between power and knowledge.

In his *History of Sexuality* Foucault explores how authorities play a normalizing (i.e. value-imposing) role while they claim to be scientific, objective, and value-neutral. Foucault argues against what he calls the "repressive hypothesis." This is the widely-held view that

truth is intrinsically opposed to power and therefore inevitably plays a liberating role. In regard to this view Foucault investigates, among others, these important questions:

> Do the workings of power, and in particular those mechanisms that are brought into play in societies such as ours, really belong primarily to the category of repression?[37]

And, furthermore,

> Did the critical discourse that addresses itself to repression come to act as a roadblock to a power mechanism that had operated unchallenged up to that point, or is it not in fact part of the same historical network as the thing it denounces (and doubtless misrepresents) by calling it "repression"?[38]

The latter, says Foucault, is an "historico-political" question. Thus, one can see Foucault's early concern in regard to psychiatrists' imposition of their "bourgeois values" on their patients develops into a rather elaborate investigation of social practices. Foucault, contrary to the view associated with the repressive hypothesis that claims talk surrounding sexuality was "repressed" in the Victorian age such that a liberation of the discourse of sexuality would in turn mean a liberation of our true sexual selves, claims that sexual talk actually proliferated during that era. Here, then, is a specific example, according to Foucault, where power masks itself by producing a discourse, seemingly opposed to it but really part of a larger deployment of modern power. "Power as a pure limit set on freedom is, at least in our society, the general form of its acceptability."[39]

According to Foucault, the human sciences do not actually yield "truth" in the traditional value-neutral sense. The traditional view is that value-neutral truth, i.e., truth that is free of ideological commitments, is liberating, that once one is confronted by an accurate representation of reality, as it were, an individual or group will be freed from psychological or social delusions. But Foucault's investigation of the social practices of the human sciences reveals that they establish "regimes of truth" which impose normalizing standards. Such standards have the effect of "subjectifying" human beings. That is, for Foucault, the human sciences actually make subjects out of us both in the sense of creating our identities and in the sense that we then become engaged in the creation of our own subjection.[40] This issue will be pursued in more detail in the next chapter.

To return to the specific issue of the imposition of values, as we have seen, part of the power of an interpretive science, like psychoanalysis, is that through our "confessions" it claims to reveal the truth about ourselves and our society. But, for Foucault, aside from the issue that these "truths" constitute a normalizing subjectivity, they must be interpreted by the experts trained in such matters, thus revealing the specific role that individual theoreticians play in the process. Consider this early reflection of Foucault on the figure of Freud.

> [H]e exploited the structure that enveloped the medical personage.... He focused upon this single presence--concealed behind the patient and above him, in an absence that is also a total presence--all the powers that had been distributed in the collective existence of the asylum; he transformed this into an absolute Observation, a pure and circumspect Silence, a Judge who punishes and rewards in a judgment that does not even condescend to language; he made it the Mirror in which madness, in an almost motionless movement, clings to and casts off itself.... The doctor, as an alienating figure, remains the key to psychoanalysis. It is perhaps because it did not suppress this ultimate structure, and because it referred all the others to it, that psychoanalysis has not been able, will not be able, to hear the voices of unreason, nor to decipher in themselves the signs of the madman.[41]

Here some of the basic components of a value-neutral stance are evident, such as the metaphor of the analyst as mirror in which is reflected the "true" images of the phenomena under investigation and the notion of the analyst as a "pure" and silent observer, detached from the object of investigation. According to Foucault, as long as such interpretive sciences proceed on the assumption that it is the expert who has privileged access to meaning, while insisting that the "truths" they uncover lie outside the sphere of power, these sciences seem fated to contribute to the strategies of power. They claim a privileged externality, but they are actually part of the deployment of power. We will see later how Foucault develops these insights into a critique of the privileged position of what he calls the universal intellectual.

There is another similarity that emerges when one compares Foucault and Sartre on the idea of a human nature or essence. A value-neutral stance presupposes a fixed

object of study, such that one's observations can be used as the basis of the universal claims of one's science. This in turn presupposes that there is something fixed in human nature that can be the basis of the deep "truth" about human beings. Foucault suggests that psychoanalysis, for example, in its claim to "reveal" the "truth" about ourselves, implicitly relies on a distorted view that there is an essence to reveal, an essence that can be reflected in the psychoanalytic mirror. This distorted view suggests that human subjects are "preformed," that those subjects are often repressed by various ideological layers, and the expert is the one who can dispel these ideological clouds and liberate the real or true subject. But, although there are significant points of disagreement between them on the notion of subjectivity that we will explore in the next chapter, like Sartre, Foucault rejects the notion of a fixed human essence and understands subjectivity to involve a certain amount of creative activity.

> I think that from the theoretical point of view, Sartre avoids the idea of the self as something which is given to us.... I think that the only practical consequence of what Sartre has said is to link his theoretical insight to the practice of creativity....[42]

But as a result of his analysis of the practices of the human sciences, this creative activity, according to Foucault, as much as it is spontaneously generated by individuals, it is also shaped and channeled by the practices of the human sciences themselves.

As I mentioned earlier, Foucault appropriates some important insights from Nietzsche. The notion of interpretation and its importance in the sciences is an example. For Nietzsche there are no facts, only interpretations of the world; no objective truths, only the constructs of various individuals or groups. Since the world has no single meaning, but rather countless meanings, a theorist *qua* "perspectivist" seeks multiple interpretations of phenomena and insists there is "no limit to the ways in which the world can be interpreted."[43] This amounts to a critique of representationalism, the belief that our theories mirror reality. The perspectivist position that Foucault comes to embrace holds that theories at best provide partial perspectives on their objects, and that all cognitive representations of the world are historically and linguistically mediated.

Foucault rejects the philosophical pretension to grasp systematically all of reality within one philosophical system or from one central vantage point. This, of course, is another way of conceiving of the search for the elusive "Archimedean point" from which reality could be assessed and criticized and which, as we saw, was at the heart of positivism's objectivist program.

D. Sartre and Foucault on Orthodox Marxism.

I think Sartre's and Foucault's rejection of orthodox Marxism is important to pursue because it problematizes

their relationship to one of the most developed strands of critical social theory. One of the issues that has come to define our "post-modern" condition is the claim that Marxism has not only run its course, but that it in fact has contributed to the repression of millions of people. The degree and scope of one's rejection of Marxism, it seems to me, will have a significant impact on the formulation of an adequate alternative critical social theory, if indeed this is possible at all, which in turn will ultimately influence political practice. I think the cases of Sartre and Foucault illustrate just this point as much of the remainder of this dissertation will attempt to demonstrate.

Sartre and Foucault, each for reasons of his own, rejects the thesis of value-neutrality. Interestingly their rejections of this thesis imply certain positions with regard to what has been so far referred to as "orthodox Marxism" that are quite similar. This might be surprising given the large amount of literature that emphasizes the differences between their overall views. We will have occasion to examine some of these important differences in some detail later on. For the present it is sufficient to see how the rejection of the thesis of value-neutrality is bound up with a rejection of the fundamental tenets of orthodox Marxism.

It is important to point out that neither Sartre nor Foucault reject Marx entirely. For Foucault, Marx recognized the existence of a relationship between forms of

power and knowledge. For Marx this took the form of a relation between forms of thought, ideas, and economic power. Foucault admitted that it "is not possible at the present time to write a history without using a whole range of concepts directly or indirectly linked with Marx's thought."[44] As for Sartre, his project in the *Search* and *Critique*, far from abandoning Marxism, was an attempt to put it on a more defensible footing. The major target for both Sartre and Foucault is the "Stalinized" version of Marxism that came to play the role of orthodoxy for the communist parties current at the time they were writing.

> ...I should like to point out that my criticisms are not directed against [Marx], but against the Marxist scholasticism of 1949. Or, if you prefer, against Marx *through* Neo-Stalinist Marxism.[45]

1. Sartre's criticisms.

According to Sartre, the advances made by Marx in developing historical materialism were not matched in epistemology. "The totalizing thought of historical materialism," Sartre claims, "has established everything but its own existence."[46] It is the absence of epistemological clarity in Marx's own work that has led to the continual lapse by his followers into positivism, according to Sartre.

> Marx's originality lies in the fact that...he demonstrated that History *is in development*, that *Being is irreducible to Knowledge*, and, also, that he preserved the dialectical movement *both in* Being *and in* Knowledge. He was correct, *practically*. But having failed *to re-think the dialectic*, Marxists have played the Positivist game.[47]

In the orthodox tradition the effort to supply epistemological grounds for dialectical reason has often led to a reliance on a "dialectic of nature." In this case dialectic is understood as the law of the universe and hence cannot be challenged. Sartre rejected such a tactic since a dialectic of nature implied that the certainty of dialectical knowledge was to be demonstrated through a procedure in which knowledge was autonomous and outside being. This is the approach of positivism which required a desituated knower who was ontologically distanced from the object, the very approach, according to Sartre, denied to dialectical reason.

In relying on this positivistic approach, orthodox Marxism, according to Sartre, tangles itself in the inconsistency of claiming that every ideology is merely an expression of an economic situation while at the same time claiming that its own position is independent of and can explain history, i.e. that it is value-neutral.

> How can a man who is lost in the world, permeated by an absolute movement coming from everything, *also* be this consciousness sure both of itself and of the Truth?[48]

Even Lenin's modification of this epistemology in his claim that human consciousness is nothing but a reflection of being that is at best only approximately correct did not avoid the inconsistency. "[A]t a single stroke," says Sartre, "he removes from himself the right to write what he is writing."[49] That is, a reflection that is approximately

correct, or which is simply a passive impression, will not allow one to make infallible pronouncements, as orthodox Marxists would have it, about the laws of History. This line of criticism seems to parallel Foucault's in regard to the role of the expert authority, who masks his or her value commitments in order to make pronouncements on how his or her client ought to behave.

It is not the place here to go into the details of how Sartre "justifies" dialectical reason in the *Critique*. It is sufficient for our purposes in this chapter to point out how Sartre understands the implicit reliance on the thesis of value-neutrality in positivist conceptions of Marxism to lead to inconsistency.

> But, say the Marxists, if you teach man that he *is* free, you betray him; for he no longer needs to *become* free; can you conceive of a man free from birth who demands to be liberated? To this I reply that if man is not originally free, but determined once and for all, we cannot even conceive what his liberation might be. Some may say, "We will release human nature from its determining constraints." These people are fools.[50]

Once having distinguished knowledge and being, or subject and object, and understanding the former to be a simple passive reflection of the latter, the revolutionary impulse becomes unintelligible. But it is exactly the conditions underlying such an impulse, or lack of it, that motivates critical social theory, especially Sartre's version of it.

2. Foucault's criticisms.

The positivist approach of the natural sciences also has its counterpart in the study of history. Historians, like Marx perhaps, have purported to uncover the "laws of history," or the logic that explains the inevitable unfolding of the past to its culmination in the present, and predicts the course the future will take. Just as the psychoanalyst uncovers the deep "truth" of the patient, the historian uncovers the truth about history and can use this "truth" to organize strategies and behavior in the present. This is the totalitarian nightmare that Foucault (and others who have taken up "post-modern" political positions) identifies with the logic of Marxism.

Foucault learns from Nietzsche that the historian "who collects facts and carefully accounts for them" produces nothing more than the "official papers of the scribe and the pleading of the lawyer...in their apparently disinterested attention, in their 'pure' devotion to objectivity."[51] That is, the historian, in his or her claim to value-neutrality, masks his or her underlying value commitments.

> In appearance, or rather because of the mask it bears, historical consciousness is neutral, devoid of passions, and committed solely to truth. But if it examines itself and if, more generally, it interrogates the various forms of scientific consciousness in its history, it finds that all these forms and transformations are aspects of the will to knowledge: instinct, passion, the inquisitor's devotion, cruel subtlety, and malice.[52]

The interpretations of the expert, psychoanalyst or historian, are not, for Foucault "the slow exposure of the meaning hidden in an origin," but the "violent or

surreptitious appropriation of a set of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a different game...."[53] This is the point we saw Sartre make earlier when he claimed that various interpretations are possible of any given phenomenon. But the positivist, hiding behind the mask of value-neutrality, imposes one interpretation and claims it has the authority of scientific objectivity. What Sartre says of the materialist, can also, I think, apply equally as well to the positivist historian.

> He leaves behind him science and subjectivity and the human and substitutes himself for God, Whom he denies, in order to contemplate the spectacle of the universe.[54]

Foucault makes the point this way.

> The historian's history finds its support outside of time and pretends to base its judgments on apocalyptic objectivity.[55]

The orthodox Marxist, as historian, claims to have uncovered the truth about history, a claim that could only be justified from a perspective outside of history or time, a perspective not influenced by the everyday impingements of the world. For Foucault, as for Sartre, this is clearly absurd and tends to be politically totalitarian.

Foucault also follows the Nietzschean position that dismisses the Enlightenment ideology of historical progress.

> Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity

> installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination.[56]

I mention this last conviction of Foucault's in order to bring to light one last comparison to the work of Sartre. For he, too, wishes to deny historical inevitability understood in terms of progress. For both, such a conviction has totalitarian implications, as we will see later. But the epistemological assumption underlying this conviction is the notion of the theorist as an ideal observer who is detached from the movement of history, who is privileged in his or her vantage point. Such pronouncements about the movement of history, then, presuppose the thesis of value-neutrality in their claims to having established neutral "representations" of the movement of history.

Foucault, then, thinks of the type of history constructed by orthodox Marxists in the same way as he thinks of the Cartesian epistemological program. That is, he thinks that the "progressive" histories of the type encountered in Hegel and in orthodox Marxism amount to a self-deceptive continuation of the original Cartesian project. What these two traditions have in common, according to Foucault, is the way they rise above the present and view it in relation to inquiry in general. The Cartesian does this by discovering the ahistorical nature of rational inquiry. The orthodox Marxist historian does it historically by contrasting the present state of inquiry with the convergence towards what he or she purports to be

the true and the real. The Cartesian purports to construct neutral representations or correspondence. The orthodox Marxist purports to have views about progress and synthesis. To question the role of power in the construction of truth, the "will-to-truth", is to reject the common motive of Cartesian epistemology and orthodox Marxist-Hegelian eschatological historiography. Foucault wants to *abandon* both the striving for objectivity and the presupposition that "Truth is One", not to redescribe or to ground these aspirations.

Having now offered various reasons to reject the thesis of value-neutrality as it is understood in the epistemological and positivist traditions, we will be concerned in the next chapter to elaborate Sartre's and Foucault's reconstructions of knowledge that reveal the necessarily value-laden nature of knowledge.

NOTES

[1] Stephen Toulmin, Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity, (NY: The Free Press, 1990), p.177.

[2] See Richard Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), p.16.

[3] Toulmin, Cosmopolis, p.62.

[4] See Michel de Montaigne, "Of Experience," in The Essays of Montaigne, trans. E.J. Trechman, (NY: The Modern Library, 1946), pp.938-988.

[5] Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p.8.

[6] Rene Descartes. Discourse on Method, in Descartes: Philosophical Writings, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, (NY: The Modern Library, 1958), p.93.

[7] Herbert Feigl, "The 'Orthodox' View of Theories: Some Remarks in Defence As Well As Critique," in Radner, M. and S. Winkour, Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, volume 4, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1970). See also Feigl, "The Scientific Outlook," in Klemke, E.D. et al, Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science, revised edition, (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1988), pp.427-437.

[8] John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p.263. Another prominant example of this approach would be Robert Nozick's Anarchy, State, and Utopia, (NY: Basic Books, Inc.), 1974.

[9] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Materialism and Revolution," in Literary and Philosophical Essays, trans. Annette Michelson. (NY: Collier Books, 1962), p.209.

[10] Jean-Paul Sartre, Search For A Method, trans. Hazel Barnes. (NY: Vintage Books, 1968), p.4n.

[11] Ibid., p.5.

[12] Sartre, "Materialism and Revolution," p.235.

[13] Richard Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p.163.

[14] Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), pp.210, 219. Marcuse explicitly attributes this notion to Sartre in a footnote on p.xvi.

[15] Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology, trans. Hazel Barnes, (NY: Philosophical Library, 1956), p.626.

[16] Sartre, "Materialism and Revolution," p.201.

[17] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p.578.

[18] Ibid., p.580.

[19] Jean-Paul Sartre, Anti-Semite and Jew, trans. George J. Becker. (NY: Schocken Books, 1965), p.56.

[20] Ibid., p.59.

[21] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Introduction to *Le Temps Modernes*," in "What Is Literature?" and Other Essays, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p.256.

[22] Ibid., p.262.

[23] Sartre, "Materialism and Revolution," pp.227-228.

[24] Ibid., p.228.

[25] Ibid., p.201.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Jean-Paul Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason. Volume I: Theory of Practical Ensembles, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith, (London: Verso/New Left Books, 1982), pp.19-20.

[28] Sartre, "Materialism and Revolution," p.202.

[29] Sartre, Search For A Method, p.68.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p.217.

[32] Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, (NY: Vintage Books, 1973), pp.372-373.

[33] Throughout his career Foucault seems to waver on the issue of whether or not there is a telling methodolgical distinction to be made between the so called natural and

social sciences. But this point is not important for our purposes here.

[34] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977, trans. Colin Gordon et al, (NY: Pantheon Books, 1980), p.109.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization: A History of Madness in the Age of Reason, trans. Richard Howard, (NY: Vintage Books, 1973), p.276.

[37] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley, (NY: Pantheon Books, 1978), p.10.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., p.86.

[40] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan, (NY: Vintage Books, 1979), pp.27-28, 192-194, 217.

[41] Foucault, Madness and Civilization, pp.277-278.

[42] Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, second edition, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p.237.

[43] Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, trans. Walter Kauffman, (NY: Vintage Books, 1968), p.326.

[44] Michel Foucault, "Prison Talk," in Power/Knowledge, p.53.

[45] Sartre, "Materialism and Revolution," p.198.

[46] Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason, p.19.

[47] Ibid., p.29.

[48] Ibid., p.30.

[49] Sartre, Search for a Method, p.32.

[50] Sartre, "Materialism and Revolution," p.244.

[51] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History," in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and

Interviews, trans. D. Bouchard and S. Simon, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p.147.

[52] Ibid., p.162.

[53] Ibid., pp.151-152.

[54] Sartre, "Materialism and Revolution," p.201.

[55] Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History," p.152.

[56] Ibid., p.151.

CHAPTER THREE

KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

We have seen in the last chapter that Sartre and Foucault each reject the thesis of value-neutrality. Value-neutrality was an important core assumption of both Cartesian style epistemology and positivist conceptions of social theory. But in their rejection of this key idea, neither Sartre nor Foucault intend to offer an alternative epistemology. What they each offer are ontological (in the case of Sartre) and historical (in the case of Foucault) reconstructions of the practices associated with the formation of knowledge. Although approaching this issue from very different perspectives, the conclusion of both Sartre and Foucault is that knowledge must be understood in the contexts of the practices with which it is bound up and thus that it is necessarily "interested" or "value-laden."

Concomitant with their alternative accounts of knowledge, Sartre and Foucault develop alternative accounts of some of the important constituent elements of the traditional view of value-neutral knowledge that will be examined in this chapter. Specifically, Sarte and Foucault each develop positions that understand knowledge to be historical and local, not certain and universal (in the Cartesian sense of this term). Also, each develops an

account of the knowing subject as active and constructed, which differs from the traditional account of the subject as passive and given that we discussed in our first chapter.

In the last section of the chapter we will examine the possibility that the above implications seem to commit Sartre and Foucault to an untenable epistemological relativism. But it will be shown that epistemological relativism is a problem only from the perspective of the presuppositions of the Cartesian epistemological or postivist traditions. Thus, we will conclude, the "problem of relativism" does not present an obstacle to the construction of a critical theory of society.

A. Sartre: knowledge and subjectivity as moments of *praxis*.

For the traditional (or Cartesian) conception of epistemology knowledge amounts to a correspondence between a passive subject and an external reality; or, in other words, what is external to the subject is reflected internally. Sartre rejects this notion. For him, knowledge and subjectivity are each the result of an active engagement with the world, or to use Sartre's terminology, they are "moments of praxis."[1] As such, knowledge, theory, investigation, or science cannot be value-neutral; on the contrary, as practices they are by definition goal-oriented. Keeping in mind Sartre's definition of value as "the call of something that does not yet exist," goal-oriented practices, then, can be considered to be value-laden.[2]

In much of his philosphical work throughout his career, Sartre's goal in understanding human reality has been to transform concepts depicting apparent passivity into those depicting activity, or, in other words, states into acts. In a sense Sartre's later work in social theory can be seen as his attempt to work out the implications of the ideas contained in the following well-known passage by Marx.

> The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism--that of Feuerbach included--is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object of *contemplation*, but not as *human sensuous activity, practice*, not subjectively. Hence it happened that the *active* side, in contradistinction to materialism, was developed by idealism--but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as *objective* activity.[3]

Recalling the elements of Sartre's notion of the project, it is evident that knowledge, too, is itself bound up with practice. Sartre says that the project

> retains and unveils the surpassed reality which is refused by the very movement which surpassed it. Thus knowing is a moment of *praxis*, even its most fundamental one...[4]

What Sartre seems to be saying here is that knowledge is praxis that comprehends itself. That is, it is only by positing certain ends (i.e., choosing certain values) that the world will be invesitgated by us at all, and the nature of that world will be revealed to us according to the kind of investigation taking place and the tasks undertaken.

The concept of totalization developed in the *Search* and the *Critique* can be seen as a development of Sartre's

concept of the project in *Being and Nothingness*. In the earlier work Sartre talks of the notion of the *project* and the activity of *transcendence* in order to make human reality intelligible, but from the point of view, as Sartre states in the subtitle of that book, of "phenomenological ontology." In the *Search* Sartre explicitly relies on and develops the notion of the project.

> The most rudimentary behavior must be determined both in relation to the real and present factors which condition it and in relation to a certain object, still to come, which it is trying to bring into being. This is what we call the *project*.[5]

The concept of the project, in the earlier Sartre, is an attempt to conceptualize the notion of agency, i.e., intentional action. We will return to this understanding of agency in the latter part of this section. For now, it is worth noting that the idea of the project, for Sartre, suggests that human reality is the active pursuit of an end. The substantive use of the term *project* refers specifically to the set of fundamental choices necessary for this process, whereas his earlier notion of transcendence refers to the process itself, i.e., the surpassing of the given toward the end chosen.

> It is by transcending the given toward the field of possibles and by realizing one possibility from among all others that the individual objectifies himself and contributes to making History.[6]

It is important to note how Sartre is using a "dialectical" conception of the relation of human reality to its situation. That is, there is no notion of a static, passive

subject being buffeted around by external, conditioning or determining forces. Rather there is an active relationship between a goal-oriented subject and its environment. We will return to this issue later.

Totalizations are the synthetic efforts of an individual or group in working over their environment in the light of a projected end. Sartre says,

> ...it is a *developing* activity, which cannot cease without the multiplicity referring to its original statute. This act delineates a practical field which, as the undifferentiated correlative of praxis, is the formal unity of the ensembles which are to be integrated; within this practical field, the activity attempts the most rigorous synthesis of the most differentiated multiplicity.[7]

For Sartre, human action or, in his terms, *praxis*, can only be grasped in terms of its totalizations. Sartre, like Marx, understands human reality fundamentally in terms of practical activity. "Only the project...," says Sartre, "can account for History; that is, for human *creativity*." Sartre's aim in the *Search* and *Critique* is to

> ...restore to the individual man his power to go beyond his situation by means of work and action. This solution alone enables us to base the movement of totalization *upon the real*.[8]

Sartre has developed in the above concepts the means by which to understand human beings in terms of their intentions. Thus, he develops the necessary tools that address the hermeneutic dimension of critical social theory. The "real" referred to above is the lived reality of the individuals in a particular situation as they internalize the field of possibles and act on the particular objectives

chosen by them. According to Sartre, this reality is revealed in their action. The synthetic activity of totalization is, says Sartre,

> ...at the very heart of the particular action, the presence of the future as *that which is lacking* and that which, by its very absence, reveals reality.[9]

Once again, we can see that essential to the notion of totalization is the idea of a value-orientation. That is, for Sartre, action is a call to a future that does not yet exist, which, again, is his definition of value.

There are two ways that one can understand Sartre's concept of totalization. In one sense it means the totalizing movement of praxis that produces a practical field on the basis of the material circumstances at one's disposal. In another sense it means the intuitive, discursive grasp of the practical field in the light of one's ongoing totalization of it. What is crucial for understanding Sartre's conception of knowledge, though, is that other people totalize, too. We all totalize in a field of others' totalizations. From this perspective Sartre explains the appearance of necessity.

> ...necessity manifests itself neither in the action of the isolated organism, nor in the succession of physico-chemical facts: the reign of necessity is the domain--the real, but still abstract domain of History--in which inorganic materiality envelops human multiplicity and transforms the producers into its product. Necessity, as a limit within freedom, as blinding obviousness and as the moment of the inversion of *praxis* into practico-inert activity, becomes, once man has swung back into serial sociality, the very structure of all processes of seriality, that is to say the *modality* of their absence in presence and their empty obviousness.[10]

Of the several important claims Sartre makes in this long quotation, the one thing to take notice of here relevant to the issue of knowledge is the role of the *practico-inert*. Praxis, or totalizing activity, leaves behind material exigencies in its wake, thus adding to the field of things totalized by others' activity such that their free acts, their praxes, might well have the result of "forging our chains."[11] That is, praxis, or free intentional activity, can become hardened into a materiality that must be taken account of in our totalizations.

In totalizing the field from the perspective of our own project we internalize the goals and values of others, depending on their position in relation to us and the relative strength of whatever rhetorical force is afforded by that relation. Sartre is interpreting Marx's famous claim that "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life."[12] Because of the way history is made (praxis) it can also escape our control. That is, the multiple actions of people acting (praxes) combine to produce material effects not intended by anyone. Thus the practical field can be transformed from an instrumental field in the service of praxis into a field of inert processes to which praxis is subjected. For example, a factory can designate the mode and rate of work in accordance to the requirements of the machines and market. This is what Sartre means by the term *seriality*. That is, one submits to these "anonymous exigencies" as they are

maintained by virtue of everyone's practical separation from everyone else. Thus the practico-inert is a network of power relations governing the conduct of individuals. There is a striking similarity here to Foucault's conception of power as both intentional and non-subjective as we shall see shortly.

The claim that knowledge is a moment of praxis, then, means in part that it depends on "nonepistemic" social factors. The practico-inert's exigencies are internalized as norms of both an ethical and epistemic sort, claims Sartre. Thus, normative obligations emerge as the result of the practico-inert determinations of our practical appropriation of material circumstances (totalization). At one point Sartre suggests

> It would be easy to show how so-called 'scientific necessity'--that is to say, the modality of certain chains of exact propositions--comes to science through *practice*....[13]

Sartre chooses not to pursue this suggestive line of thought in the *Critique*. But he does not remain entirely silent on the issue in his later work.

The relationship that Sartre sees as existing between value and the practical conception of knowledge comes to light in Sartre's suggestion in the *Search* that the investigations of critical social theory ought to be modeled on those found in microphysics with its emphasis on the investigator being part of the field investigated. In microphysics, as Sartre understands it, the observer is

intimately bound up with the act of observation. Thus Sartre emphasizes that

> ...knowing is inevitably practical; it changes the known. Not in the sense of classical rationalism. But in the way an experiment in microphysics necessarily transforms its object.[14]

Sartre suggests that the kinds of questions posed by the investigator determine the sorts of answers that will count as plausible.

We must rely on Sartre's earlier work for any sustained dicussion of knowledge. In the early work Sartre makes clear that the point of view of pure knowledge is contradictory; there is only the point of view of *engaged* knowledge. This amounts to saying that knowledge and action are only two abstract aspects of an original, concrete relation.[15] Knowledge is based on the fact that nothing is given to me by the world, and everything must be grasped by me.

As indicated in *Being and Nothingness*, action aims at what is *not yet*, whether it is a future state of being or whether it is "what I would want it to be."[16] To know, for Sartre, is "to realize" in the twofold sense that through knowledge I realize that there is being (am aware of being), and also I realize being in the sense that I make that which appears.[17] Sartre would say that through my knowledge I make that "there is" being.

> The knower is...nothing other than that which brings it about that there is a *being-there* on the part of the known....[18]

According to Sartre's discussion in *Truth and Existence*, in the mode of anticipation, I can organize the in-itself in relation to my view: "I create what is."[19] It is important not to take the "what is" in an idealist sense like that which Marx warned about in the previously cited passage, because at stake is an independent in-itself that is always given as already being, as merely being revealed by the upsurge of the for-itself.

For Sartre, then, knowledge of the world does not create the being of the world but only makes the world "appear." Our knowledge makes the world appear, organizes the world, divides, specifies, and categorizes things. To know is a form of appropriation for Sartre. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre supports this position by analyzing several terms indicating modes of appropriation: knowledge is a denudation, a hunting, an eating, an assimilation.[20]

Returning to the issue of values, according to Sartre, every one of our actions is influenced and governed by our original projection of a general goal or manner of life. Following most classical analyses of choice, Sartre insists that our daily decisions are to a great extent directed by more basic decisions. Things can be said to have value only insofar as they surpass what they are toward what they are not. A book has value only as related to some end or purpose. The world has value only as viewed in relation to an end or totality. In fact, all transcendings, according

to Sartre, are conditioned by value. In the *Critique* Sartre says,

> ...*no idea*, *no value*, and *no system* would be conceivable if they were not already contained, at every level of the experience and in various forms, in all the moments of activity and of alienation, not only as signs, as exigencies in the tool, but also as a revelation of the world through this tool by labour, etc.[21]

As we can see from the passage above, Sartre's position on the relationship between knowledge and values did not change from *Being and Nothingness* to the *Critique* and after. Specifically in reference to the notion of value, for example, in the *Critique* Sartre says,

> Value...is in a double movement: both the revealing of *my praxis* in its free development in so far as it posits itself as other within immanence, and the revealing of a future signification as an inertia which necessarily refers back to my freedom.[22]

Here also Sartre calls our attention to the element of freedom in valuation. A value implies, for Sartre, the choice of a movement toward a goal, which will in turn color our knowledge. It was this very notion of choice, or freedom, that we saw positivists deny in the construction of knowledge, according to our discussion of Sartre's position in the last chapter. Let us turn now to another point of disagreement between Sartre and those in the epistemological and positivist traditions, the subject of knowledge.

It will be recalled that for traditional epistemology in the Cartesian tradition the subject was conceived of as a passive receiver of the input of external reality upon which that reality was "reflected." This traditional

understanding of the subject, furthermore, implied for it a "neutral" stance, i.e., a detached, disinterested perspective which allowed for the possibility of "objective" knowledge claims. Understanding human reality in terms of praxis, in the manner of Sartre, renders this traditional notion of the subject suspect, perhaps even untenable.

Sartre is deeply situated within the Hegelian "dialectical" tradition. One of Hegel's important preoccupations was the reconciliation between subject and object. That is, the world is not to be understood apart from the mind, or the knower from the known. Thus each element in these oppositions is relative to the other in a relational structure. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre presupposed such an internal relation between human reality and the world, or of the *for-itself* to the *in-itself*. To avoid misunderstanding Sartre it is worth emphasizing that these terms are thoroughly relational. To reduce one to the other would result in an untenable idealism on the one side and a metaphysical materialism on the other.

The idea of a relational subject is used in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. There *nihilation* constitutes both our fundamental freedom and the process by which things are distinguished and have meaning. Also, for Sartre, consciousness is the body as human. This means that consciousness is a transcending and negating materiality and not simply a mind constructing or reflecting objects. The *for-itself* "knows" through negation, that is, it knows an

object in the very act of "negating" what it is not. Thus, in this dialectic between consciousness and its object, the object appears as what it is. Sartre wants to preserve a distinction between knowing and Being, even as he claims their necessary correlativity.

We have already seen that Sartre understands human reality fundamentally in terms of production or action. Furthermore, we saw that humans act by making projects. These consist in taking within oneself perceptions of the situation, choosing to interpret those perceptions according to sets of criteria or values, and then acting, bringing out into the world those choices. For Sartre, the dialectic of the subjective and the objective consists in the "joint necessity of the internalization of the external and the externalization of the internal." Praxis, says Sartre, "is a passage from objective to objective through internalization."[23] This means that human beings are set in specific situations (objectivity), which they interpret in certain ways and act within and upon (subjectivity or internalization), which in turn places them in new and specific situations (objectivity).

> The project, as the subjective surpassing of objectivity toward objectivity, and stretched between the objective conditions of the environment and the objective structures of the field of possibles, represents *in itself* the moving unity of subjectivity and objectivity, those cardinal determinants of activity. The subjective appears then as a necessary moment in the objective process.[24]

For Sartre, then, the subject can be seen as a "construct" of material circumstances. But to leave it at that would be one-sided. The subject cannot simply be reduced to its material circumstances. Sartre's position on this issue has essentially not changed since *Being and Nothingness*. That is, subjectivity consists of an irreducible intentionality, but an intentionality made possible only by material circumstances. Therefore, living through material circumstances cannot be construed as either subjective or objective; it is a practical relation to the world, to others and to itself.

Developing the hermeneutical dimension of critical social theory in this way allows Sartre, in a non-reductionistic way, to elucidate features of social reality from the point of view of particular actors in particular circumstances. For example, speaking of the resentment exhibited by certain workers, Sartre says,

> The diminution of buying power would never provoke the workers to make economic demands if they did not feel the diminution in their flesh in the form of a need or of a fear based on bitter experiences.[25]

Sartre is here arguing that "objective" circumstances alone will not make for worker resentment, let alone revolution. "All this objectivity," says Sartre, "refers ultimately to a lived reality."[26] Resentment will be based on a lived experience, that is, a *relation* that presupposes the worker's idea of going beyond and transforming the given situation. Sartre is clearly arguing against the one-

sidedness of causal, specifically orthodox Marxist, explanations of behavior that depend on a delineation of the material circumstances to the exclusion of the lived reality of the workers themselves. Their resentment, their resulting behavior, whatever it might be, will be intelligible, according to Sartre, only if one understands subjectivity in the relational and active way developed here, that is, from the point of view of praxis and totalization. Before returning to a discussion of some of the important implications of these views of Sartre on knowledge and subjectivity, we must first elaborate Foucault's views regarding the same issues.

B. Foucault: The relationship between power and knowledge.

In our discussion of Sartre in this chapter, we saw that he rejected the traditional or Cartesian conception of epistemology that understood knowledge to rely on the correspondence between a passive subject and an external reality. In his early work Foucault was concerned to reject this notion. Later in his career he arrived at conceptions of knowledge and subjectivity that understood these concepts as the result of the play of power. It will be my contention in this section, then, that Foucault's reconceptions of these notions entails a rejection of the thesis of value-neutrality in favor of a view that conceives of the generation of knowledge in terms of practices that are explicitly bound up with power or, in other words,

particular value orientations.

Since the sciences have, according to the claims of the positivist tradition, provided us with a paradigm understanding of knowledge, Foucault turns his attention to those practices in order to begin his historical reconstruction. He limits himself to comments on the so-called social or human sciences because he thinks his thesis that knowledge is bound up with power will be more easily supported with the evidence revealed in those disciplines.

> If, concerning a science like theoretical physics or organic chemistry, one poses the problem of its relations with political and economic structures of the society, isn't one posing an excessively complicated question? Doesn't this set the threshold of possible explanations impossibly high? But on the other hand, if one takes a form of knowledge (*savoir*) like psychiatry, won't the question be much easier to resolve, since the epistemological profile of psychiatry is a low one and psychiatric practice is linked with a whole range of institutions, economic requirements and political issues of social regulation? Couldn't the interweaving of effects of power and knowledge be grasped with greater certainty in the case of a science as 'dubious' as psychiatry?[27]

In this section we will likewise limit our comments to the human sciences.

Much of Foucault's early work was an attempt to capture the "unconscious" of science, or the non-epistemic determinants involved in the construction knowledge in the human sciences. Foucault explains his method of historical analysis in *The Order of Things* in this way.

> What I would like to do...is to reveal a *positive unconscious* of knowledge: a level that eludes the consciousness of the scientist and yet is part of scientific discourse...[28]

Also, in his early *Madness and Civilization* Foucault reflects on the possibility of scientists' "neutral" observation. In this work, his "history of insanity," Foucault at one point comments on the evolution of scientists' conceptualization of melancholia and mania. After noting some of the differences over time in various theorists' reports on these afflictions, Foucault concludes with the following thoughts:

> The essential thing is that the enterprise did not proceed from observation to the construction of explanatory images; that on the contrary, the images assured the initial role of synthesis, that their organizing force made possible a structure of perception, in which at last the symptoms could attain their significant value and be organized as the visible presence of the truth.[29]

Far from conceiving of the scientist as simply a passive observer of an "objective" field, Foucault suggests, that the subject/scientist plays an active role in perception. Indeed, recalling the emphasis that Sartre placed on the active subject, Foucault speaks of "synthesis" in the passage cited above. For Foucault, however, as we will see, the synthetic activity referred to is not, as it is for Sartre, the activity of a single subject.

Mania and melancholia were grouped together in the Classical period, according to Foucault, not on the basis of similar observable symptoms but because both could be explained by the same "scientific" constructs. As these explanatory theories changed, so too did the definitions of mania and melancholia. Such changes cannot be credited to a

progressive refinement of scientific knowledge, according to Foucault; instead, they merely indicate a series of shifts in the perception of madness.

> If mania, if melancholia henceforth assumed the aspects our science knows them by, it is not because in the course of centuries we have learned to "open our eyes" to real symptoms; it is not because we have purified our perception to the point of transparency; it is because in the experience of madness, these concepts were organized around certain qualitative themes that lent them their unity, gave them their significant coherence, made them finally perceptible.[30]

The notion of a conceptual scheme or framework that gives content and meaning to one's concepts suggests not only the impossibility of the theorist playing a neutral role in observation, but it calls into question the "objectivist" program previously discussed. Contrary to positivism's objectivist program wherein it is claimed that the data of experience force upon us definite modes of description and classification of external reality, for Foucault it is quite the other way around. Scientists impose an interpretation on the data of experience, "schematizing" that data according to the favored conceptual framework of a particular scientific community.

Foucault reveals his "anti-realist" position concerning theoretical terms by claiming that the "object" that a system of knowledge posits is not some piece of reality, and he suggests his examination of the history of mental illness shows this.

> But I soon realized that the unity of the "object" of madness does not enable one to individualize a group of statements....It would certainly be a mistake to try to

> discover what could have been said of madness at a particular time by interrogating the being of madness itself...; the object presented as their correlative by medical statements of the seventeenth or eighteenth century is not identical with the object that emerges in legal sentences or police action...; we are not dealing with the same madmen.[31]

Thus, according to Foucault, the object of theory is constructed. It is not a simple reflection of reality represented in a theoretical statement. Rather, it is a result of the organizing activity of scientific practice, a human activity whose social organization affects both its goals and the criteria of its success.

For Foucault, not only "objective" observation, but the faithful transcription of reality as well is impossible because of a radical discontinuity between the modes of existence of language and human reality. Language interposes itself between human beings and "external reality" and even between human beings in their alternating roles as subjects and objects. Thus to discern the inadequacy of any verbal formulation, ideological or scientific, as a transcription of "reality," would be in a sense irrelevant, since in their own mode of being, statements are not true or false, adequate or inadequate, but simply exist in relation to other statements constituting what Foucault called in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, *discursive formations*. These are themselves then subject to *rules of formation*, or what in this context may be called "extra-linguistic" conditions.[32]

> Thus the statement circulates, is used, disappears, allows or prevents the realization of a desire, serves

> or resists various interests, participates in a challenge and struggle, and becomes a theme of appropriation or rivalry.[33]

Statements, for Foucault, are not value-neutral transcriptions of reality or vehicles of representation. Statements are things "that have value."[34] To analyze a discursive formation, according to Foucault, is in part

> to weigh the 'value' of statements. A value is not defined by their truth, that is not gauged by the presence of a secret content; but which characterizes their place, their capacity for circulation and exchange, their possibility of transformation, not only in the economy of discourse, but, more generally, in the administration of scarce resources.[35]

Thus, statements are the material results and bearers of what amount to political struggles. Just as the "value" of a thing in a system of commodity exchange is determined by many factors having nothing to do with the thing itself, the "value" of a statement is determined by many practical factors that might be called non-epistemic, i.e., having nothing at all to do with its truth.

Anticipating the future emphasis of his work, Foucault claims that discourse is

> ...an asset that consequently, from the moment of its existence...poses the question of power; an asset that is, by nature, the object of a struggle, a political struggle.[36]

Foucault is suggesting that discourse cannot be reduced to a more primitive level. This position questions epistemological foundationalism and positivist objectivism. That is, philosophical arguments about what is or is not a "bare particular," "given," "datum," "ultimate simple," etc., that might play the role of Archimedean point, are

always made within theoretical or metaphysical assumptions embedded in particular historical contexts. The acquisition of knowledge itself, then, is understood by Foucault to be a certain kind of historical activity or practice. In his later work Foucault comes to understand the "unconscious" of science in terms of the "will to knowledge," or power.

Foucault's major claim in reference to knowledge is that every form of knowledge as a social practice is bound up with its own power relations.

> We should admit...that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.[37]

Unlike traditional Marxist ideology critique, Foucault does not relegate all knowledge claims conditioned by power to the domain of false consciousness. Foucault does not question the truth of the knowledge claims of the disciplines as much as the particular ways in which they established the division between truth and falsity.

> These programmings of behavior, these regimes of jurisdiction and veridiction...are fragments of reality that induce such particular effects in the real as the distinction between true and false implicit in the ways men "direct," "govern," and "conduct" themselves and others. To grasp these effects as historical events...this is more or less my theme.[38]

Foucault is interested in describing the historical conditions that made it possible for certain representations, objectifications, and classifications of

reality to dictate which kinds of statements come up as candidates for truth and falsity, or which sorts of answers were taken seriously within particular practices.

Unlike the positivist conception of knowledge as embodying a claim to truth precisely because it is conceived of in terms of value-neutrality, Foucault suggests that any truth claim at all must embody a claim to power.

> 'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth.[39]

Thus, for Foucault, a society's "regime of truth" implies a "general politics of truth" wherein exist struggles concerning the status of truth claims and their role in the political, economic and social order. The disqualification or "subjagation" of certain local forms of knowledge has been achieved, claims Foucault, not through overt prohibitive force or censorship, but principally by the "ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true."[40]

I have been claiming that it is Foucault's position that we cannot separate the existence of an object of knowledge from the various practices through which we encounter and deal with it. This is especially true in the case of the forms of constraint through which the object of knowledge is simultaneously enabled and compelled to show itself in specific ways. Consider Foucault's reflections on

how spatial distributions function as power relations both physically and conceptually (by constructing the classifications and hierarchies they distribute).

> In organizing 'cells', 'places' and 'ranks', the disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical. It is spaces that provide fixed positions and permit circulation; they carve out individual segments and establish operational links; they mark places and indicate values; they guarantee the obedience of individuals, but also a better economy of time and gesture. They are mixed spaces: real because they govern the disposition of buildings, rooms, furniture, but also ideal, because they are projected over this arrangement of characterizations, assessments, hierarchies.[41]

The classifications we use to describe ourselves are used as the basis for a variety of "real" differences in our dealings with one another. The imposition of these classifications provide formulations of possible kinds of action and constrains people in significant ways and even "produces" different kinds of people. According to Foucault the above examples of administration reveal its crucial feature of "normalization." Administration reconstructs individuals and their behavior by small impositions, and not primarily through repression. Established norms are brought to bear on perceived deviances from behavior. It is these norms and deviances which simultaneously determine a complex field of knowledge and constraint.

As the quotation from Foucault above indicates, the classificatory schema of the various scientific practices indicate certain values embraced by the classifiers. Thus Foucault, like Sartre, rejects the understanding of

scientific knowledge as value-neutral. The acquisition and practice of knowledge is bound up with power, i.e., with various strategies, goals and intentions, even if the latter cannot, for Foucault, be identified with any subjects.

> Power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective. If in fact they are intelligible, this is not because they are the effect of another instance that "explains" them, but rather because they are imbued, through and through, with calculation: there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives.[42]

One may question the idea of intentional but nonsubjective power relations, but the crucial point to note for our purposes here is that Foucault understands power relations in terms of intentionality and strategies. These are the terms in which the notion of value is understood by Sartre as well, though it should be clear from our discussion in the first section of the chapter that Sartre conceives of intentionality as fundamentally subject-centered. In any case, my contention is that Foucault's talk of the non-epistemic determinants of knowledge can be understood in terms of the idea of *value*. Thus, it should by now be clear that Foucault's development of the early conceptions of discursive formations, regimes of truth, and his later conception of power amount to a complex reconstruction of knowledge as fundamentally value-laden.

Indeed, the subject of knowledge itself, is the result of these same power relations. Thus Foucault, like Sartre, rejects the traditional understanding of the subject's role in knowledge as the passive and neutral observer upon which

is reflected the representations of an external reality. Let us turn our attention to Foucault's conception of the formation of subjects.

Much of Foucault's historical work consists in chronicling changing modes of behavior that are produced by different strategies of power. For Foucault, at a particular point in history the techniques for the management of human beings shifted from the sovereign's power over his subjects to technologies of control and administration.

According to Foucault, the "disciplines" of the human sciences began as a response to the need for those technologies of control and administration.

> These methods, which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility, might be called 'disciplines'...[In] the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the disciplines became general formulas of domination.[43]

The development of those apparatuses mark a qualitative transformation in the relations between the state and its citizens. Madness, poverty and unemployment become a "social problem" for the state. But interestingly, claims Foucault, the resulting forms of provision and welfare are inseparable from ever tighter forms of social and psychological control. Foucault suggests that such practices are even more oppressive than simple incarceration since they operate on the mind rather than merely the body. Practices of surveillance and documentation, for example,

provide the rudimentary parts of new branches of knowledge. These practices, claims Foucault, in turn produced the modern "individual" simultaneously as an object of knowledge and of power. Knowledge and subjectivity are both, then according to Foucault, the result of practices or, more specifically, the strategic uses of power.

The modern individual became both an object and subject of knowledge; not repressed but positively produced and shaped by power within the various disciplines of the human sciences, being, as Foucault says, "carefully fabricated...according to a whole technique of forces and bodies."[44] The term 'subject' has a double meaning for Foucault. One is subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to one's own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Since the subject "is not the vis-a-vis of power [but] one of its prime effects,"[45] the constitution of the subjectivity of the individual is simultaneously the constitution of his or her subjection.[46] The disciplinary system developed in the hospital and the asylum is generalized in the panoptic system (Foucault's metaphor for the situation of modernity perhaps), wherein the unidirectional gaze of an anonymous observer watches over a multiplicity of the observed, which has the effect of generating morally self-monitoring subjects. Again, Foucault seeks to establish a direct relation between "subjectification", the constitution of subjects and "subjection", or, in other words, domination.

Foucault seems concerned here to reject the Enlightenment ideal that links knowledge and liberation. He claims that self-knowledge is an effect of power whereby one internalizes social control (although we will see later that he seems at the same time implicitly committed to just this view). This ideal is held over in both the Marxian and Freudian traditions, but Foucault denies that there remains any progressive political potential in the ideal of an autonomous subject. The traditional Marxist political critique, for example, functions by confronting the limitations of existing democratic sovereignty with a more adequate conception of self-determination which is supposed to promote the elimination of these discrepancies. Foucault's argument is that any theory of sovereignty or self-determination must be abandoned, since the "free subject" upon which such theories rely is in fact already constituted by power, i.e., it cannot be conceived in terms of autonomy.

> The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself.[47]

Obviously, this position raises questions about the whole notion of a critical theory of society as we will see in the next chapter.

The important point that Foucault makes about power is that we must understand it not only in terms of arbitrary and repressive employment of the mechanisms of coercion, but as a slowly spreading net of normalization that invades our

language, our institutions, and especially even our consciousness of ourselves as subjects.

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.[48]

This power does not so much repress, in the purely negative sense, as it constrains in the sense that it channels our activities in particular ways. That is, one is not so much stopped from engaging in some activity as one is given directions for how it is normally carried out, with these directions typically being accorded some sort of scientific status, according to Foucault. Thus, power becomes productive of actions, not just prohibitive.[49] Conceiving of power in this way shifts analyses of social domination away from individuals, groups or institutions that forcibly repress to practices that produce particular modes of behavior.

Foucault, like Sartre, has rejected the thesis of value-neutrality as well as the Cartesian conception of the passive subject of knowledge associated with it in the epistemological and positivist traditions. We will now turn to a discussion of some of the implications such alternative accounts raise.

C. Implications.

Two implications that emerge with the positions of Sartre and Foucault seem to commit each of them to a form of relativism that, from the point of view of positivism presents a profound problem. The first has to do with the fact that both Sartre and Foucault develop positions that understand knowledge to be bounded by specific local and historical horizons. The second has to do with the constructed nature of the knowing subject. Neither thinker seems to respond directly to the issue of relativism in his work. But I believe that the charge of epistemological relativism only makes sense on the basis of the presuppositions of Cartesian epistemology. Since both Sartre and Foucault, as we have seen, reject these presuppositions, they likely do not consider the charge a serious one. The discussion of this issue will be the concern of this section.

We have seen that Sartre and Foucault embrace notions of knowledge that conceive of it as correlative with certain practices. Thus, they reject traditional epistemological claims that knowledge must be value-neutral. Rather, they see the construction of knowledge as an "interested," or goal-oriented activity. As opposed to the so-called model of "disinterested" knowledge, value-laden knowledge is the very thing that positivists sought to avoid. Value-ladenness implies partisanship, whereas value-neutrality implies universality.

As we saw in the first chapter, the "objectivist" program of positivism "maintains that unless we can ground philosophy, knowledge, or language in a rigorous manner we cannot avoid radical skepticism."[50] Both Sartre and Foucault, as we have seen, not only reject the notion of value-neutral knowledge, but they reject the notion of a preformed neutral subject as well, thus rejecting two traditional components of the objectivist program. But Sartre and Foucault each would admit that their epistemological alternatives commit them to "partisan" conceptions of knowledge. Thus, Sartre and Foucault seem to be confronted with the problem of relativism that positivists claim is the necessary alternative to objectivism. It is worth quoting Bernstein at length in order to understand what the charge of relativism amounts to.

> In its strongest form, relativism is the basic conviction that when we turn to the examination of those concepts that philosophers have taken to be the most fundamental--whether it is the concept of rationality, truth, reality, right, the good, or norms--we are forced to recognize that in the final analysis all such concepts must be understood as relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society, or culture.... Thus, for example, [i]t is an illusion to think that there is something that might properly be labeled "*the* standards of rationality," standards that are genuinely universal and that are not subject to historical change.[51]

We will address the question of "standards" more fully in the next chapter where we will examine the critical methods of both Sartre and Foucault. Here I wish only to show that Sartre and Foucault each seem committed to the form of

relativism just described by Bernstein. This form of relativism seems inevitable once given the views that Sartre and Foucault hold on the concepts of totality and the subject.

1. The concept of totality.

In our discussion of Sartre's and Foucault's criticisms of orthodox Marxism in the last chapter, we saw that they each reject its reliance on positivist methods of the study of history. What underlies this inadequate understanding of history for both Foucault and Sartre is an unacceptable metaphysical notion of the *totality*. The views that Sartre and Foucault each hold on the relationship of knowledge and practice is tantamount to a rejection of this use of the concept of totality. As they see it, this use of the concept of totality is an attempt to establish a view of the whole, or to get outside of history, such that a particular "rationality, truth, reality, right, the good, or norms" might be justified. The concept of totality, then, is an attempt to provide, in Bernstein's words, a ground for "standards that are genuinely universal and that are not subject to historical change."

Sartre claims that though knowing is a moment of praxis,

> ...this knowing does not partake of an absolute Knowledge. Defined by the negation of the refused reality in the name of the reality to be produced, it remains the captive of the action which it clarifies, and disappears along with it.[52]

Sartre's ontological reconstruction of the practices of knowledge move in the direction of radically "historicizing" knowledge. This claim seems further supported by comments like these:

> If a totalization is developing in a given region of reality, it must be a unique process occurring in unique conditions and, from the epistemological point of view, it will produce the universals which explain it and individualize them by interiorizing them. (Indeed, all the concepts forged by history, including that of man, are similarly individualized universals and have no meaning apart from *this* individual process.) The critical investigation can only be a moment of this process, or, in other words, the totalizing process produces itself as the critical investigation of itself at a particular moment of its development.[53]

Here Sartre clearly rejects the claim of traditional theory that it must be universal in the absolutely nonpartisan sense. But according to Sartre, any discourse on Being (like positivism) that tries to abstract from the speaker and to grasp Being beyond the cognitive situation (i.e. the practical, value-laden, relations) of the speaker, according to Sartre, is implicitly a metaphysical discourse.

Similarly, Foucault, as we have seen in his criticisms of orthodox Marxism, explicitly rejects the concept of totality understood as continuous history. Foucault embraces Nietzsche's criticism of a conception of history

> that reintroduces (and always assumes) a suprahistorical perspective: a history whose function it is to compose the finally reduced diversity of time into a totality fully closed upon itself...a history whose perspective on all that precedes it implies the end of time, a completed development.[54]

Traditional theorists of history, according to Foucault, seek to disclose the truth of the present by uncovering its origins in the past; they assume that history is the unfolding of some of the essential attributes of a subject which anticipates a future non-antagonistic society. This anticipated future plays the role of the elusive "Archimedean point" outside the flux of events (i.e. value-neutral), that positivist historians and social theorists believe necessary. Foucault claims that such histories tend to legitimate rather than to criticize present practices. That is, a theory which believes itself to have deciphered the movement of history will tend to encourage an authoritarian political practice by means of an appeal to the inevitability of progress, a view that orthodox Marxism shares with the liberal legacy of the Enlightenment.

It is my impression that most commentators on Foucault believe that Foucault's criticism of the use of the concept of totality are directed against Sartre. Because of this mistaken view, I believe, Sartre's later work is often hastily dismissed, along with whatever insights for social theory that it might contain. I believe, as Sartre himself points out, Foucault's real target here is orthodox Marxism.[55] It is not the place here to defend Sartre against possible criticisms. It is sufficient for our purposes in this chapter to simply point out that Sartre and Foucault have similar views on the concept of totality which

commit them to the kind of relativism that Bernstein describes above.

Sartre's theoretical project might be susceptible to Foucault's criticisms of the privileged access to the truth exhibited by Sartre's situated totalizing perspective if one interpreted Sartre as holding to a strict "dialectical determinism" but, as we discussed above, this is exactly what he criticized orthodox Marxism for holding. Similar to Foucault's own project, Sartre didn't claim certain, objective knowledge of the totality. The theorist was limited to a specific, situated historical perspective.

> For us, truth is something which becomes, it *has* and *will have* become. It is a totalization which is forever being totalized. Particular facts do not signify anything; they are neither true nor false so long as they are not related, through the mediation of various partial totalities, to the totalization in process.[58]

That is, truth and falsity, for Sartre, have as much to do with the point of view of the theorist as with anything else. For Sartre, subjectivity simply was totalizing the field, necessarily taking a view of the whole. Because consciousness was free, one could accept any sort of commitment based on one's totalization. Because the theorist was situated in a specific history, the theorist's totalizations were not perfect, objective or certain. Others could choose to accept or reject the theorist's perspectival conclusions.

In relation to the issue of the totality, then, the problem of relativism that must be faced by Sartre and

Foucault is this. If social theorists are proscribed from theorizing the totality, and instead are bounded by local institutions, then political protest, it would appear, must also remain confined to individual issues, local affairs, and interest-group pressures. If there are no general Truths and no general Politics, then all particular truth and all particular politics seem sanctioned. We will see how Sartre and Foucault each addresses this problem in the next chapter.

2. The nature of subjectivity.

Another development in the work of Sartre and Foucault might be seen as exacerbating the problem of relativism, i.e., their notion that the subject of knowledge itself is not neutral, but is a construct. As we have discussed, for traditional epistemology in the Cartesian tradition the role of the subject was crucial and its essential nature was clearly defined. For Descartes the subject was a thinking thing and *qua* thinking thing was the neutral, detached and passive center of knowledge. The essential qualities of this subject mirrored the essential qualities of the knowledge it attained. The subject was disembodied, transcendent, and knowledge claims were measured against the criteria of universality and necessity.

But the insights of both Sartre and Foucault reveal that knowledge is intimately bound up with practice. Knowledge cannot be centered in a transcendent subjectivity.

Knowing and the known cannot be completely separated. Knowledge is goal oriented, value-laden, and practical. In signalling the "the death of man" Foucault is really signalling the "death of the subject" as an autonomous rational ego. Thus he believes the notion of an active, centered subject should be abandoned altogether as a fiction or myth. Foucault claims, "[o]ne has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself..."[56]

Sartre also sees an identity between his conception of *praxis* and the activity of the subject. In an interesting footnote regarding this issue, Sartre says,

> *subjective* and *objective* are two opposed and complementary characteristics of man *as an object of knowledge*. In fact, the question concerns action itself, *qua action*...[57]

For Sartre, totalization is the dialectical movement of praxis, of internalizing and externalizing, of conserving and surpassing. As we saw above, the "project" is identified with this subjective moment. It is "the subjective surpassing of objectivity toward objectivity," says Sartre. He concludes that "[t]he subjective appears then as a necessary moment in the objective process."[58]

The positions of both Sartre and Foucault, then, regarding the constructed subject raises the following sorts of questions regarding the issue of relativism. If the subject of knowledge is constructed according to the imperatives of an historically specific, limited situation, then how does one gain an awareness of those limits? How is

it that one can be aware that one is bounded by a specific "conceptual scheme?" How does one develop an awareness that there might be *alternative* conceptual schemes? A situated, constructed subject seems trapped in its own paradigm, thus apparently rendering political criticism problematic for Sartre and Foucault.

The traditions of epistemology and positivism that embrace the ideal of a value-neutral objectivity do so out of the conventional belief that without such value-neutral objectivity one cannot separate justified belief from mere opinion. From the perspective of such "objectivism" it appears that if one gives up this concept, the only alternative is an epistemological relativism that denies the possibility of any reasonable standards for adjudicating between competing claims, that all knowledge claims must then be deemed equally valid. But the choice between value-neutral objectivity and epistemological relativism is a false choice. Bernstein explains this false dichotomy:

> I view this dichotomy as misleading and distortive. It is itself parasitic upon the acceptance of the Cartesian persuasion that needs to be questioned, exposed, and overcome. We need to *exorcize* the Cartesian anxiety [the supposed need for an epistemological Archimedean point] and liberate ourselves from its seductive appeal. Only if we implicitly accept some version of Cartesianism does the exclusive disjunction of objectivism or relativism become intelligible. But if we question, expose, and exorcize Cartesianism, then the very opposition between objectivism and relativism loses its plausibility.[59]

As we have seen, the view of both Sartre and Foucault is that all beliefs are socially situated. What is required

of a critical social theory is an account of the relationships between historically located belief and more inclusive or "objective" belief. And a truly "objective" belief is not achieved without accepting the task of critically evaluating all the historical social desires, interests and values that have shaped the agendas, contents and results of the practices generating knowledge. As we have seen from the discussions of the positions of Sartre and Foucault the conception of value-free, impartial, dispassionate research is supposed to detect social values and direct their elimination from the results of research, yet this model has instead been used to identify and eliminate only those values that differ among the researchers and critics who are regarded by the scientific community as competent to make such judgments.

Sartre and Foucault are not the first to point out that political and social interests are not "external" to an otherwise transcendental social science that is inherently indifferent to the interests of a particular human society. Social scientific beliefs, practices, institutions, histories and problematics are constituted in and through contemporary political and social projects, and always have been. Sartre's and Foucault's positions on the impossibility of value-neutral representations and on the active, constructed nature of the knowing subject support this claim. Thus, there seems to be little ground from which to defend the claim that the objectivity of research

is advanced by the elimination of all political values and interests from the research process.

What objectivism cannot conceptualize is the need for critical examination of the idea that nature as the object-of-human-knowledge never comes to us immediately; it comes to us as mediated, as already constituted in social thought and practices. The notion of value-neutral objectivity offers hope that scientists or other theorists, historically located, can produce claims that will be regarded as objectively valid without their having to examine critically their own historical commitments, from which they actively construct their research. It permits research to be unconcerned with the origins or consequences of its own problematics and practices, or with the social values and interests that these problematics and practices support. To insist that no judgments at all of cognitive adequacy can legitimately be made amounts to the same thing as to insist that knowledge can be produced only from "no place at all": that is, by someone who can be every place at once.

Instead values of historically particular groups can be a resource for those who think that our understanding and explanations are improved by increasing the number of perspectives from which we approach an understanding of the social field. To acknowledge the role of values in knowledge is not to commit one to the epistemological claim that there are therefore no rational grounds for making judgments between various patterns of belief and their

originating social practices, values, and consequences. This is precisely the position that Sartre and Foucault are committed to in their critical social theories as we will see in the next chapter.

What this chapter has attempted to show was the development by both Sartre and Foucault of alternatives to the traditional notions of knowledge and the subject of knowledge. These alternatives are not themselves without problems, but they point in directions that may be fruitfully developed within critical social theory. We have seen that for both Sartre and Foucault knowledge is a kind of practice and as such is bound up with the intentions and values of those making knowledge claims and those to whom these claims apply. What we have yet to do is examine how Sartre and Foucault, with this practical conception of knowledge, each claim to be able to achieve "critical distance" from the social field that they criticize. We will take up this issue in the next chapter.

NOTES

[1] Jean-Paul Sartre, Search for a Method, trans. Hazel Barnes, (NY: Vintage Books, 1968), p.92.

[2] Jean-Paul Sartre "Materialism and Revolution," in Literary and Philosophical Essays, trans. Annette Michelson, (NY: Collier Books, 1962), p.235.

[3] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert Tucker, (NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), p.143.

[4] Sartre, Search for a Method, p.92.

[5] Ibid., p.91.

[6] Ibid., p.93.

[7] Jean-Paul Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume I: Theory of Practical Ensembles, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith, (London: Verso/New Left Books, 1982), p.46.

[8] Sartre, Search for a Method, p.99.

[9] Ibid., p.94.

[10] Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason, p.339.

[11] Ibid., p.52.

[12] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The German Ideology, ed. C.J. Arthur, (NY: International Publishers, 1970, p.47). Sartre also cites a similar passage from Engels in Search for a Method, p.31.

[13] Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason, p.340.

[14] Sartre, Search for a Method, p.168.

[15] Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness: An Essay On Phenomenological Ontology, trans. Hazel Barnes, (NY: Philosophical Library, 1956), p.308.

[16] Jean-Paul Sartre, Truth and Existence, trans. Adrian van den Hoven, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p.20.

[17] Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p.179.

[18] Ibid., p.177.

[19] Sartre, Truth and Existence, p.22.

[20] See Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp.577-580.

[21] Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason, pp.249-250.

[22] Ibid., p.248.

[23] Sartre, Search for a Method, p.97.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977, trans. Colin Gordon, ed. Colin Gordon, (NY: Pantheon Books, 1980), p.109.

[28] Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, (NY: Vintage Books, 1973), p.xi.

[29] Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization: A History of Madness in the Age of Reason, trans. Richard Howard, (NY: Vintage Books, 1973), p.135.

[30] Foucault, Madness and Civilization, p.130.

31 Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith, (NY: Pantheon Books, 1972), p.32.

[32] Ibid., pp.31ff.

[33] Ibid., p.105.

[34] Ibid., p.120.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan, (NY: Vintage Books, 1979), p.27.

[38] Michel Foucault, "Questions of Method: An Interview With Michel Foucault," in After Philosophy: End or Transformation? ed. Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman and Thomas McCarthy, (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1987), pp.111.

[39] Foucault, "Truth and Power," p.133.

[40] Ibid., p.132.

[41] Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p.148.

[42] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (NY: Pantheon Books, 1978), pp.94-95.

[43] Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p.137.

[44] Ibid., p.217.

[45] Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in Power/Knowledge. p.98.

[46] Foucault, Discipline and Punish, pp.27-8; 192-4.

[47] Ibid., p.30.

[48] Ibid., p.194.

[49] See ibid., pp.79-81, 136-138, 208-209.

[50] Richard J. Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylania Press, 1983), p.8.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Sartre, Search for a Method, p.92.

[53] Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason, p.49.

[54] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p.152.

[55] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Replies to Structuralism: An Interview," trans. Robert D'Amico, Telos, number 9, Fall 1971, p.110.

[56] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in Power/Knowledge, p.117.

[57] Sartre, Search for a Method, p.173.

[58] Ibid., p.97.

[59] Bernstein, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, p.19.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORY AND PRACTICE

A. Introduction: Marx and the Practical Standpoint.

In the last chapter we saw that Sartre and Foucault each developed conceptions of knowledge as bound to social practice in various ways. In so doing they rejected traditional notions of theory as value-neutral. We also saw that the standpoint of neutrality was, according to positivist social theory, necessary for developing a perspective, or ground, from which one could criticize existing social formations and practices. Given that Sartre and Foucault each reject this approach it remains to be seen how they develop and maintain a critical perspective. We have seen that for both Sartre and Foucault knowledge is always already "interested." It must be developed from particular standpoints or perspectives. Thus, it is claimed that critical theory can only perform its task of being critical from particular value orientations. It is the nature of this practical standpoint as Sartre and Foucault each understand it that is at issue in this chapter.

The first section will elaborate Marx's innovation of the practical standpoint as the fundamental insight of his critical theoretical activity. The second section will elaborate on Sartre's ambivalent relationship to Marx's

claim that critical social theory must situate itself in relation to the standpoint of the proletariat. Foucault clearly rejects this device and the third section will discuss his own development of the notion that critical theory must assume a practical standpoint. In the third section, we will suggest that Sartre and Foucault each fail to articulate concrete standpoints required by their own theoretical claims. Each suggests that his own critical social theory will contribute to the overcoming of domination, placing them along with Marx and Lukacs squarely in the tradition of those who embrace the Enlightenment ideal that critical knowledge is necessarily tied to a commitment to the value of freedom. Yet their notions of freedom remain abstract, thus violating their own commitment to the notion of a concrete or practical standpoint in which one's value orientation is rooted and from which one can develop a critical standpoint. In the final section we will summarize the content of the chapter.

From a metatheoretical perspective it becomes clear that different social theories have their own conceptions of theoretical adequacy and so justify themselves in their own terms. For example, positivist or liberal political philosophy assumes that its view reflects the impartial perspective of the rational, detached observer and consequently constitutes the most unbiased and objective theory.

But as we have seen, the very notion of objectivity that positivists take as a primary condition of theoretical adequacy has been challenged by Sartre and Foucault. They challenge the positivist assumption of a sharp fact/value distinction, instead holding that all knowledge is "interested" in some sense, and attacking the claim that there is any such standpoint as that of the neutral observer.

Earlier we saw that Sartre and Foucault were each quite critical of several aspects of Stalinized "orthodox" Marxism, not the least important of which had to do with the neutral, transcendent perspective taken by orthodox Marxist philosophers and historians. However, Sartre and Foucault each considered himself to be working quite comfortably within a more general "marxian" problematic understood as still being theoretically fruitful. This is quite evident in the case of Sartre who says in the *Critique*,

> Everything we established in *The Problem of Method* follows from our fundamental agreement with historical materialism.[1]

Although his debt to Marx is perhaps less obvious than in the case of Sartre, Foucault nonetheless acknowledges the problematic within which he is working as well.

> It is impossible at the present time to write history without using a whole range of concepts directly or indirectly linked to Marx's thought and situating oneself within a horizon of thought which has been defined and described by Marx.[2]

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, it is Marx's rejection of social theory's neutral perspective and

the develpment of critical theory's practical standpoint that attracts both Sartre and Foucault. In opposition to Hegel and the philosophical tradition which viewed reason as an impartial faculty and theory as a transcendent, value-neutral mode of representing an extra-theoretical world, Marx interpreted theory in general as an expression of living social practices and his own in particular as an adequate self-consciousness of the proletariat, of the practical needs and necessities of its material situation. Pure thought, according to Marx, lacked a practical force able to initiate real social change. For Marx genuinely "critical" theory was interpreted as the theoretical clarification of the self-understanding and real needs of an immanent objective historical force which, for him, was the proletariat. Marx's reformulation of the theory/practice relation involved viewing the proletariat not just as a "practical force" but as a dynamic ensemble of expanding human needs. Thus, the proletariat replaces Hegel's spirit as a real, concrete, historical subject.

For Marx the success of critical social theory is measured broadly in terms of how effectively theory contributes to undermining the capitalist system and to strengthening the power of the working class as a whole. In an early letter Marx describes his own theoretical contributions to a journal in this way:

> ...we shall simply show the world why it is struggling, and consciousness of this is a thing it *must* acquire whether it wishes or not...The reform of consciousness

> consists *entirely* in making the world aware of its own consciousness...in *explaining* its own actions to it.... We are therefore in a position to sum up the credo of our journal in a *single word*: the self-clarification (critical philosophy) of the struggles and wishes of the age.[3]

Rather than viewing knowledge as the purely intellectual construct of a detached spectator, Marx sees knowledge as emerging through practical human involvement in changing the world, an involvement which also changes human beings themselves. Moreover, as human productive activity always takes a definite historical form, all knowledge must be seen as growing out of a specific "mode of production."

The category "mode of production" consists of the fundamental relationships between individuals that characterize productive activity in a given epoch, which, according to Marx, shapes the character, or in Hegel's terms, "spirit," of all activity and social interaction in that epoch. This category allows Marx to argue that the "dehumanization" imposed by the commodification of labor will shape social interaction as a whole, rather than just the immediate relation between worker and capitalist.

Capital attempts to prove that the very relationship that gives capitalist production its distinctive character, the free sale and consumption of labor power, turns the forces created by our social interaction into "alien" powers that "employ its producers." One might say that *Capital* explains our subjection to "heteronomous powers," our "dehumanization." Marx demonstrates that the structure of production peculiar to capitalism is also the obstacle to

overcoming dehumanization. Advancing beyond the capitalist mode of production, then, would be to realize the Hegelian philosophy of freedom. Understanding *Capital* in this way places Marx squarely in the Enlightenment tradition of considering individual autonomy as a primary value and philosophy as the theroretical expression of this value as well as a guide to its practical instantiation.

Since knowledge is one aspect of human productive activity and since this activity is necessarily purposive, the basic categories of knowledge will always be shaped by human purposes and the values on which they are based. For this reason, even perceptual knowledge in never entirely value-free. The conceptual framework by which we make sense of ourselves and our world is shaped and limited by the interests and values of the society that we inhabit. Marx expressed this by saying that all forms of knowledge are historically determined by the prevailing mode of production.

Class-divided societies have not been characterized by a single set of interests and values. That is, societies have been composed of classes whose interests have been in opposition to one another and whose values have conflicted with each another. In such a situation, one cannot say that the prevailing world view or system of knowledge reflects the interests and values of society as a whole. Instead, one must specify which class's interests and values are reflected. Marx's response to this concern is that the

system of knowledge that is generally accepted within a society reflects the interests of the dominant class. Marx and Engels wrote:

> The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.[4]

In class societies, the prevailing world view supports the interests of the ruling class by obscuring or by justifying the reality of domination. In this sense, Marx views all existing claims to knowledge as "ideological," that is, as distorted representations of reality. Only in a classless society will it be possible to produce an undistorted and genuinely "scientific" representation of reality.

All systems of knowledge bear the marks of their social origin within a particular mode of production. This is true even of knowledge about knowledge. In class society, not only is there an ultimately ideological element, according to Marx, in the concepts and categories through which we constitute our reality; there is also an ideological bias in the standards for determining what is to be accepted as knowledge or science and what is to be rejected as myth or superstition.

Philosophers and historians of science have pointed out that the notion of objectivity developed in sixteenth and

seventeenth century Europe was formulated for a specific purpose, the purpose of defining an area for free scientific inquiry, unhampered by the restrictive interference of Church and State. The claim that science was value-free was made for the conscious political purpose of defending the scientists from the charge of subverting existing social values. As a political tactic, this claim served its purpose in the seventeenth century, but some philosophers of science argue that the prevailing notion of objectivity now serves a reactionary purpose, for it obscures the political assumptions embedded within science and even within apparently common sense observations of social events. Thus it obscures the reality of domination. As Sohn-Rethel puts it:

> The objectivity of science demands its neutrality with respect to social issues, and this acceptance of social neutrality is part of the training that every scientist undergoes. Scientific truths are held to be valid regardless of the time and conditions of their genesis and their application. In his professional life the scientist blinkers himself from all the rest of existence. But is this neutrality really intrinsic to science and conditional to its objectivity? Is it not perhaps a more profound blinkering to the role played by the scientist and science in the interests of capital? In that case, the very objectivity of science would be an expression of its alienation, denying the scientist an awareness of the significance of separating intellectual from manual labor.[5]

Investigations in the sociology of knowledge reveal that reality is perceived very differently by different groups and that these different perceptions depend not only on the social order that the groups inhabit but also on their position within that order. Different social

positions provide different vantage points from which some aspects of reality come into prominence and from which other aspects are obscured. For instance, if we look at capitalist society from the standpoint of the owners of capital, Marx writes ironically that society appears to be

> a very Eden of the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, say of labor-power, are constrained only by their own free will. They contract as free agents and the agreement they come to is but the form in which they give legal expression to their common will. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property because each disposes only what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to himself. The only force that brings them together and puts them in relation with each other is the selfishness, the gain and the private interest of each. Each looks to himself only, and no one troubles himself about the rest, and just because they do so, do they all, in accordance with the pre-established harmony of things, or under the auspices of an all-shrewd providence, work together to their mutual advantage, for the common weal and in the interest of all.[6]

If we look at capitalist society from the point of view of the producers of commodities, however, Eden is transformed into Hell. From this perspective, we can see that

> within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productiveness of labor are brought about at the cost of the individual laborers; all means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers; they mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage to a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange him from the intellectual potentialities of the labor-process in the same proportion as science is incorporated into it as an independent power; they distort the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labor process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his lifetime into working-time, and drag his

> wife and child beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut of capital.... Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital.[7]

Once we look at the real conditions in which knowledge is produced, some Marxists believe that we will see that the ways in which we conceptualize the world are always shaped by our interactions with that world. Moreover, we will see that it is inevitable that all systems of thought should be constructed from some standpoint within the social world. There is no Archimedean point outside the world where we may stand to gain a perspective on realty that is neutral between the interests and values of existing social groups. Consequently, no knowledge can be objective in the liberal or positivist sense.

But this very recognition raises an epistemological problem for Marx. The "totalistic" Marxism of Lukacs argues that we should prefer the standpoint of that class whose interests, at a particular historical juncture, most closely approximate to those of the totality of humankind. According to the young Lukacs, classes whose interest lies in perpetuating the existing social order have an interest in perpetuating the myths that justify their own domination. By contrast, classes whose interests most closely approximates universal interests will be afforded insight into, and have an interest in, overthrowing the established order. And, as for Hegel, the articulation of the totality

is a condition of truth. For, as Hegel puts it, "the True is the whole."[8] Thus the "universal" standpoint of the proletariat is what lends it its truth. Consequently, it is more likely to construct conceptual frameworks that will reveal accepted views as myths and provide a more reliable understanding of the world.

Marxist political economy analyzes contemporary society into two fundamentally opposed classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Lukacsian epistemology accepts this analysis and concludes that these two class positions provide the two major epistemological standpoints from which contemporary society may be viewed. As we have seen already, these two standpoints yield very different pictures of capitalist society: to the capitalist, Eden; to the worker, Hell. Of course, the workers' standpoint does not automatically provide them with a full, comprehensive and coherent alternative to the ruling ideology; they cannot help being influenced by the dominant world view. But the workers' position in society forces them to take as problematic what the capitalist class takes as given, for instance, "the quantification of object, their subordination to abstract mental categories."[9] According to Lukacs, the standpoint of the proletariat is epistemologically preferable to that of the bourgeoisie, because it allows the working class to demystify the myths of bourgeois society and to develop a new world view that will reveal more clearly the real regularities of social life and the

underlying causes of those realities, including the causes of its own domination.

On the traditional Marxist view, of course, Marxist theory itself constitutes the most comprehensive picture of the world from the standpoint of the proletariat. Precisely because it reflects the interests and values of the working class, which are thought to be those of the totality of humankind, Marxist theory provides the most unbiased and objective available representation of social reality, as well as the most useful method of investigating the non-human world. For this reason, Marxists sometimes describe their theory, perhaps in positivist terms, as the science of the proletariat. Proletarian science ultimately will defeat bourgeois science but the struggle will not be simply an intellectual one. The superiority of proletarian science will be demonstrated ultimately by the fact that it will enable the working class to abolish the class relations that have given rise to the forms of bourgeois consciousness.

> Those manifestations [of bourgeois consciousness] are by no means merely modes of thought, they are the forms in which contemporary bourgeois society is objectified. Their abolition, if it is to be a true abolition, cannot be simply the result of thought alone, it must also amount to their *practical* abolition as the *actual forms of social life*.[10]

In *The German Ideology* Marx argues that the proletariat is capable of comprehending the totality of bourgeois society only because it stands completely outside this society thereby engendering a transcendent, revoutionary historical perspective. One of the difficulties of this

postion is the question of how an immanent historical force, one constituted by the economic relations of bourgeois society can achieve a transcendent perspective.

Marx addresses this question by claiming that out of the critical science of history focused on existing empirical conditions emerges a "negative" concept of totality. Marx treats the interlocking ensemble of bourgeois socio-economic relations as a whole in process to be comprehended only fully in the perspective of its own immanent negation. For Marx, this negation was not to be the result of a "higher" speculative view of a disinterested observer who thereby has privileged access, but a consequence of the immanent future presently manifest in contemporary structural dysfunctions and social contradictions within bourgeois society.

Marx denies that the proletariat is merely one more class seeking to dominate. But Marx himself warns us to reject such denials; every ideologist makes such claims. His theory of ideology suggests that his own portrayal of proletarian revolution as the liberation of humanity is just another example of the self-delusion typical of ideologists.

> Each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to present its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and present them as the only rational, universally valid ones. The class making a revolution comes forward from the very start, if only because it is opposed to a *class*, not as a class but as the representative of the whole of society, as the

> whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class.[11]

A question remains for Marx if one considers that the need for total revolution does not arise necessarily out of the social experience of workers; workers must view their experience from a particular philosophic perspective, they must have a particular understanding of man's humanity and the obstacles to its realization before they will even long for a total revolution in the mode of production, let alone actually revolt. Such an admission would suggest that there is a disjunction between the worker's and the critical philosopher's perspective that must be closed before Marx's proletarian revolution can take place. Questions arise, then, concerning Marx's claim that "when reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of knowledge loses its medium of existence."[12] There may be a specific role for philosophy that is different than simply clarifying the expressions of the working class.

Whether one thinks his treatment of this problem succesful or not, Lukacs, at least, faced it directly. For him, the working class may not understand the political and cultural inhumanity that capitalism imposes on it, but

> the unique element in its situation is that its surpassing of immediacy represents an *aspiration towards society in its totality*, regardless of whether this aspiration remains conscious or unconscious for the moment.[13]

It is this position that has led Lukacs and other Marxists, according to many commentators, to what both Sartre and Foucault had come to see as the obnoxious Leninist option of

a "class-conscious" Party imposing this consciousness on the supposedly revolutionary class. We will return to this issue in the concluding section of this chapter.

There are, of course, other pertinent objections to traditional Marxist class analysis. It purports to provide the only possible standard for measuring who is conservative, reformist, revolutionary, etc. It is class analysis itself that has come under considerable scrutiny and criticisms from the point of view of people of color, women, native peoples, homosexuals, etc. for not being able to illuminate all forms of domination even in capitalist or state socialist societies. If class analysis is inadequate than what becomes of the proletarian science? Do any of these other groups provide the appropriate epistemological standpoint of the totality? Or must one abandon this whole epistemological approach altogether? Can the standpoint of the proletariat be replaced by the more inclusive concept of the standpoint of "the oppressed"? We will return to these questions as well later in this chapter. For now, we must introduce Sartre into this developing marxian tradition.

B. Sartre's Relation to Marxism and Class Analysis.

Ultimately Sartre's position on the role of the proletariat is an ambivalent one. Accordingly this raises

questions about the situatedness of his own intellectual activity. Sartre's explicit purpose in the *Critique* was to place Marxism, i.e. historical materialism, on a firm foundation. In so doing, however, the logic of the concepts developed therein forces him to abandon the heuristic value of class analysis, in spite of lip service to the contrary, and thus to disagree with Marx concerning the status of the proletariat as the "universal class." His relationship to this aspect of the Marxian tradition can be traced from both an ontological and a more straightforwardly political-theoretical perspective. We will move back and forth between both perspectives since they are intimately related in his work, as we shall see.

In a commentary on Sartre, Martin Jay refers to the argument of Lucien Goldmann that claims that Heidegger's concept of *Being* and Lukacs's concept of *totality* were employed "to express approximate, at times nearly identical, ideas."[14] Sartre criticizes both of these concepts as Heidegger and Lukacs understand them. Let us begin tracing Sartre's contributions to this issue by introducing concepts that he developed in his early *Being and Nothingness*.

Being and Nothingness is in part an argument against both Heidegger and Hegel, as well as Lukacs. Differing from Heidegger, Sartre shifted the emphasis away from *Sein* to *Dasein* (from Being to human reality).

> The characteristic of Heidegger's philosophy is to describe Dasein by using positive terms which hide the implicit negations.[15]

Sartre's ontology, then, was dualistic. He explicitly rejected any dialectical overcoming of Descartes' opposition between consciousness and the world. "Hegel's failure," said Sartre, "has shown us that the only point of departure possible is the Cartesian *cogito*."[16] Unlike Descartes, though, Sartre understood the subjective pole of the dualism to be negative rather than positive, as an absence that felt itself to be a lack. Although both the source of human freedom and human frustration, this lacking could never be overcome because there was no meta-Being, no overarching totality, prior to the split between the for-itself and in-itself, as Heidegger posited in his notion of Being. Nor was there a way to create a totality in the future through a Hegelian or Marxist resolution of contradictions, as Lukacs would have it.

> While the For-itself lacks the In-itself, the In-itself does not lack the For-itself. There is then no reciprocity in the opposition. In a word, the For-itself remains the non-essential and contingent in relation to the In-itself.... In addition, the synthesis or value would indeed be a return to the thesis, then a return upon itself; but as this is an unrealizable totality, the For-itself is not a moment which can be surpassed.[17]

If human beings ever experienced anything like a sense of community, according to Sartre, it was at once both temporary and the result of the objectifying gaze of an external observer, who create an "us-object." But because there was no meta-observer outside of the human race as a whole (*Being and Nothingness* argues against the existence of God), humanity must remain forever fragmented and in

conflict. There was no totalizing dialectic of reciprocity that might create meaningful wholes beyond the isolated self. Because human existence was future-oriented, a project whose outcome was undetermined, the very attempt to reconcile essence and existence was a betrayal of human freedom.

But Sartre began to feel uneasy with the radically individualist implications of *Being and Nothingness*. A transforming insight that Sartre had during his "political coming out" of the post-*Being and Nothingness* period, concerned the universalistic implications of existentialism. The anguish of which existentialists spoke was, in part, a function of the profound implications of the choices that human beings make in their capacity as active beings. Rather than merely deciding for him or herself, the individual was "at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole of mankind."[18] Thus, Sartre began to see existentialism in a universalistic, rather than simply radically subjectivist light.

It was during this period that Sartre wrote *The Communists and Peace* wherein he accepts the conception of the role of the proletariat as the universal class and the place of reconciliation of subject and object, and he accepted the role of the Party as the unifying consciousness of the class. Thus he comes to embrace the position of Lukacs in *History and Class Consciousness*. As several commentators have pointed out, he probably does so for

strategic, rather than for ontological reasons, but to trace his thoughts concerning this particular move is beyond the scope of this section.

In the *The Communists and Peace* Sartre claims that a social group became a class only when the individuals interiorized a common project and captured their individual identity in the common destiny of the group.

> It is movement which holds together the separated elements; the class is a system in motion: if it stopped, the individuals would revert to their inertia and to their isolation. This movement, directed, intentional and practical, requires an organization... a class organizes itself.[19]

Thus Sartre promotes the role of the Communist Party as the unifier of the working class. Under the leadership of the Party, the individual worker acted for humanity, Sartre proclaimed, returning to the theme of the universality of the individual project first encountered in the lecture *Existentialism is a Humanism* mentioned above:

> That the proletariat is the carrier of human values is not to be doubted, what it demands *for itself* it must necessarily claim *for all*.[20]

On the political level, then, Sartre came around to accept the Marxian-Lukacsian view of the proletariat as the carrier of the universal, and the Lukascian view of the Party as the true representative of proletarian class-consciousness. Unfortunately, his view precluded criticism of the Party for whatever it did, because it must be presumed to be acting in the interests of humanity. Furthermore, Sartre denied Marx's proposition that

capitalism unified the workers in the process of production through the division of labor. He asserted instead that unity in the work-place was not sufficient to mold the workers into a class.

In spite of what turned out to be a relatively short lived agreement with Lukacs regarding the proletariat, Sartre always harbored a reservation about Marxism. He was always suspicious of the links between a certain kind of holism, one based on the juxtaposition of reified entities whose human action was forgotten, and totalitarianism. We will see Foucault express a similar fear later. Nor was Sartre willing to accept the Hegelian identification of subject and object that had underlain the argument of *History and Class Consciousness*. In fact, when he wrote the *Search* he included a specific critique of Lukacs' use of totality as an instrument of terror, although, by this time Lukacs had moved from his position in the early *History and Class Consciousness* to a more "orthodox Marxist" position:

> The totalizing investigation has given way to a scholasticism of the totality. The heuristic principle--"to search for the whole in its parts"--has become the terroristic practice of "liquidating the particularity." It is not by chance that Lukacs--Lukacs who so often violates history--has found in 1956 the best definition of this frozen marxism. Twenty years of practice give him all the authority necessary to call this pseudo-philosophy *a voluntarist idealism*.[21]

The danger here, according to Sartre, is that the dialectic becomes a deterministic, indeed terroristic, mechanism, or it reverts to a Hegelian idealism in which the object is

lost and the dialectic is reduced to pure subjectivity. This latter tendency was indeed the more characteristic one of the Lukacs of *History and Class Consciousness*. The problematic of locating a class in and for itself led Lukacs to posit the proletariat as a pure agent of history. History had become nothing other than the telos of an identical subject-object. Lukacs's mistake was his collapsing the tension in the dialectic in favor of subjectivity.

Arguing against this sort of Hegelianism, Sartre thought existentialism offered a sense of the primary and irreducible concreteness of the individual who resists collective hypostatization. Remaining as critical of the concept of totality as he had been in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre insisted that the concept of totality is a category of undialectical hypostatization.

> A totality is defined as a being which while, radically distinct from the sum of its parts, is present in its entirety, in one form or another, in each of these parts, and which relates to itself either through its relation to one or more of its parts or through its relation to the relations between all or some of them. If this reality is *created* (a painting or a symphony are examples, if one takes integration to an extreme), it can exist only in the imaginary..., that is to say, as the correlative of an act of imagination. The ontological status to which it lays claim by its very definition is that of the in-itself, the inert. The synthetic unity which produced its appearance of totality is not an activity, but only the vesitge of past action.[22]

This sort of totality presents an obstacle to human spontaneity, it confronts human beings as an irreducible

other, in spite of their hand in creating it. It is, in Sartre's terminology, practico-inert.

By the time he came to write the *Critique* Sartre's hold on the claim that the proletariat was "the universal class" had loosened considerably. Sartre now claimed that Marxism cannot adequately account for class consciousness or subjectivity. For Marx, individuals in a class could become aware of the way their class position (their relation to the means of production) limited and oppressed them. If they find and if they acted on that awareness politically, they were class conscious.

> We are proposing not the rewriting of human history, but the critical investigation of bonds of interiority...or, in other words, the discovery, in connection with real, though quite ordinary, undertakings, structures and events, of the answer to this all-important question: in the process of human history, what is the respective role of relations of interiority and exteriority?[23]

Marxism has failed to illuminate class consciousness because, according to Sartre, it has not explored the ways in which individuals live their freedom with others, at the subjective level, in the mode of alienation or oppression. Only a focus on the "bonds of interiority" can illuminate the process in which class consciousness becomes false consciousness and in turn may re-emerge as class consciousness. Sartre thus presupposes that a particular form of bonds of interiority is possible, one in which the action and consciousness of each individual depends on the mutual recognition of freedom.

With this concept of social class, Sartre avoided the mistake that he attributed to official Marxists--one that he made in *Communists and Peace*--of jumping too quickly to a unitary view of the proletariat. The role of classes in the social field could not simply be assumed; it would have to be determined through careful analysis, by studying the concrete factors of specific series and groups. To asses the political situation at any given time, a realistic appraisal of the working class would have to replace the mere assumption of its constant and unitary readiness for revolution. But an analysis of the working class in the 1960s would reveal new sectors, like technicians and engineers, and discontented social layers, like students, women, and homosexuals.

Sartre's notion of the class-subject from *Communists and Peace* was now a loosely connected conglomeration of small units that could not become an active political subject. Sartre never really thought of the historical world as the knowable product of a collective human praxis, as had Lukacs in *History and Class Consciousness*. In 1969 he was asked if he believed that the proletariat could "transcend the level of seriality to become effectively and totally the subject of collective action." Sartre replied:

> This is an impossible condition; the working class can never express itself completely as an active political subject; there will always be zones or regions or sectors which, because of historical reasons of development, will remain serialized, massified, alien to the achievement of consciousness.[24]

Sartre believed that instances in human history of true reciprocity and intersubjective consensus were rare, because of material reality itself; more specifically because of scarcity, which acts as a constraint on human cooperation and a source of violence.

> Man is violent *throughout* History right up to the present day (until the elimination of scarcity, should this ever occur, and occur in *particular circumstances*).[20]

Thus Sartre had a sober assessment of the repetitive and non-progressive dimension of human temporality.

> For us the reality of the collective object rests on *recurrence*. It demonstrates that the totalization is never achieved and that the totality exists at best only in the form of a *detotalized totality*.[25]

In the micrological analysis of group creation and destruction that occupies Sartre throughout the *Critique*, the emphemerality of totalization was in fact a constant theme.

> The group itself, insofar as it is totalized by the practice of a given common individual, is an objective quasi-totality and, as a negated multiplicity of quasi-sovereignties, it is in a state of perpetual detotalization.[26]

Thus, Sartre's wager on a future common totalization in which history would gain a single intelligibility was undermined by this more pessimistic appraisal (as in *Being and Nothingness*) of the dynamics of small group formation.

Because Sartre remained insistent on the priority of the individual over the collectivity, claiming that "individual practices are the sole ground of totalizing temporality,"[27] there was no possibility for him to adopt a

truly expressive view of the whole in the manner of the early Lukacs. For there could be no original meta-subject who created history, forgot its original creative act through the mystifying effects of reification, and then would regain it in the revolutionary act of becoming both subject and object of the whole. The historical process, Sartre contended, should be understood instead as a "human work without an author,"[28] a "totalization without a totalizer."[29] Thus humanity as a collective "we-subject" was still an unattainable goal.

Marx endeavored to give history a single meaning by theorizing a future in which a unified proletariat would realize the ultimate stage of the class struggle. A telos of history would be unveiled through the creative action of the working class.

> History was finally to have a meaning for man. By becoming conscious of itself, the Proletariat becomes the subject of History; that is, it must recognize itself in History.[30]

In agreement with Marxism, Sartre proclaimed that history *could* have only one meaning; that epistemologically one could not write history without projecting onto it a single meaning. That is, in writing history (or thinking about society), if one failed to do so, one incorrectly severed the tie between thought and practice. But if there were no meta-subject at the root of an expressive totality and no truly universal human subjectivity was indeed

possible, then how was it meaningful to talk of history as a unified and intelligible whole?

> The plurality of *the meanings* of history can be discovered and posited for itself only upon the ground of a future totalization--in terms of the future totalization and in contradiction with it. It is our theoretical and practical duty to bring this totalization closer every day. All is still obscure, and yet everything is in full light. To tackle the theoretical aspect, we have the instruments; we can establish the method. Our historical task, at this heart of this polyvalent world, is to bring closer the moment when History will have *only one meaning*, when it will tend to be dissolved in the concrete men who will make it in common.[31]

But his faith was expressed in conditional terms:

> If History really is to be the totalization of all practical multiplicities and of all their struggles, the complex products of conflicts and collaborations of these very diverse multiplicities must themselves be intelligible in their synthetic reality, that is to say, they must be comprehensible as the synthetic products of a totalitarian *praxis*. This means that History is intelligible if the different practices which can be found and located at a given moment of the historical temporalization finally appear as partially totalizing and as connected and merged in their very oppositions and diversities by an intelligible totalization from which there is no appeal.[32]

Sartre's objective of the unfinished second volume of the *Critique*, was to move beyond this conditional hope and actually demonstrate how struggling classes created, even in their opposition to each other, a single intelligible history. As late as 1969 he said: "My aim will be to prove that there is a dialectical intelligibility of the singular. For ours is a singular history."[33] But, according to Aronson, the *Critique* "tells us nothing about class struggle."[34] Aronson concludes from his analysis of the unfinished second volume that

> Sartre would never explain the intelligibility of class struggle. The enveloping totalization--the meaning of history--would remain an unsolved puzzle for his social thought....[35]

According to Aronson, The *Critique* sets out to reach social and historical being from premises that preclude arrival. That is, its goal, "historical man," is in contradiction with its basic assumption, the isolated individual.[36]

As we have discussed, and as Sartre acknowledges in the passage quoted above, Marxism depends for its truth on the premise that there is a unity of different classes which supports and produces their irreducible conflicts. But Sartre never provides an account of such a unity and thereby not only does not provide the philosophical basis of historical materialism that he sought, but ironically undermines the global liberatory hopes that he thought Marxism could still provide. Toward the end of his life Sartre expressed a realization of the despair to which his work had led and that his theoretical aims were as yet unfulfilled:

> with this miserable ensemble that our planet is, despair returns to tempt me again: the idea that we will not ever finish it, that there is not any goal, that there are only individual goals for which people struggle. People start small revolutions, but there is not a goal for humanity, there is nothing that interests mankind, there are only disruptions.... But...I know that I will die in hope; but it is necessary to create a foundation for this hope.[37]

Sartre seems to revert to an individualistic notion of freedom after all. The model of Cartesian freedom, the notion of a self-subsisting, autonomous, self that developed

into the Enlightenment's valuation of autonomy appears again at the end of Sartre's long excursion through Marxism. Thus the logic of Sartre's own concepts in the *Critique* precludes him from relying on the Marxist precept that the proletariat is the bearer of the universal and thus provides the grounds to assess the adequacy of one's social theoretical claims. Interestingly, however, Sartre, perhaps unwittingly, has expanded significantly on the notion of alienation as a critical concept even as he has rejected Marx's reduction of that concept solely to class exploitation. But he has done so at the price of losing any epistemological ground that the concept of the universal class might have provided. We will pick up this theme in the concluding section of this chapter. For now, we must address the issue of how Foucault conceives of the notion of the practical standpoint.

C. Foucault's Critical Standpoint.

The issue for this chapter is the question of how, or on what basis, Sartre and Foucault, after rejecting the thesis of value-neutrality and the privileged position this would afford, each nevertheless develop a critical standpoint. This has become a particularly controversial issue where Foucault is concerned. For, as we have seen, Foucault rejects the foundational approach to political criticism. That is, he does not attempt to justify the privileged position he takes in regard to institutions and practices he nonetheless criticizes.

While rejecting conceptions of knowledge as value-neutral, Foucault also rejects the traditional Marxist position on the proletariat as the bearer of the universal and thus rejects the justification this position may afford to one's theoretical activity.

> Just as the proletariat, by the necessity of its historical situation, is the bearer of the universal..., so the intellectual, through his moral, theoretical and political choice, aspires to be the bearer of this universality in its conscious, elaborated form. The intellectual is thus taken as the clear, individual figure of a universality whose obscure, collective form is embodied in the proletariat. Some years have now passed since the intellectual was called upon to play this role. A new mode of the 'connection between theory and practice' has been established.[38]

Although we will examine Foucault's position on intellectuals at greater length in our concluding chapter, there are two points worth noting at this point. First, Foucault seems to be alluding to the fact that the historical configuration has changed such that the proletariat, which might have at one time played the role of the bearer of the universal, no longer can play such a role. Foucault here seems to be agreeing with Sartre, who wanted to maintain a Marxist position and yet whose analyses of the historical situation revealed a new set of circumstances where smaller groups now play the role of historical agents. Second, the very issue of the role of "universal" knowledge is called into question. That is, for Foucault, criticism in general, *ought* to avoid expression in universal terms. Thus, as Foucault states above, a "new mode of theory and

practice has been established." But the nature of this "new mode" is not at all clear in Foucault's work. If criticism cannot and ought not be grounded in the concrete universal, then on what is it based?

Such figures as Habermas, then, have criticized Foucault for not offering a justifiable normative framework, indeed for not even attempting to justify such a framework. According to Habermas, for Foucault

> validity-claims are of interest only as functions of power complexes; value-judgments--in general, the problem of justifying criticism--are excluded in favor of value-free historical explanations. [G]enealogical historiography emerges from its cocoon as precisely the *presentistic, relativistic, cryptonormative* illusory science that it does not want to be.[49]

Foucault would probably counter this sort of criticism by claiming that such criticism misses the point; that this sort of objection presupposes the very position that we have seen Foucault argue against in our first chapter.

For Foucault objections like this one from Habermas assume that criticism and political action require a normative theory as a foundation if they are not to be arbitrary. Contrary to what Habermas might think, according to Foucault, genealogical histories do not pretend to be "value-free." Genealogy is meant to allow formerly "subjagated knowledges" to emerge, showing that particular arrangements of power are not monolithic. So it is possible to stand outside of the particular hegemonic power arrangement one criticizes, but not in some "neutral" realm, but from the perspective of an alternative knowledge. The

genealogist does not articulate "impartial" truths; he or she articulates the claims of an excluded knowledge against present hegemonic forms of knowledge.

> It is through the re-appearance of this knowledge, of these local, popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work.[40]

Foucault simply seems to be saying that criticism of and action against established practices take place all the time, but not on the basis of theoretical/normative grounding. Rather such criticism and action take place in the name of differing practices already existing within the domain of dominant practices. Over time Foucault developed and refined somewhat his position on this issue. It is to that development that we will now turn.

Because it was one of his last sustained reflections on his own critical methods, we might for that reason take as authoritative Foucault's text "What is Enlightenment?" In this essay Foucault contrasts his critical practice to that of Kant's transcendental critique which was an attempt to reveal necessary conditions for knowledge. As we have already seen from the previous chapters, Foucault rejects a reliance on universals of any sort. Thus, for Foucault

> This entails an obvious consequence: that criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying. In that sense, this criticism is not transcendental....[41]

What Foucault admires in Kant's original "What is Enlightenment?" is that for the first time a philosopher

realizes that his thinking arises out of and attempts to respond to his historical situation. But for Kant, the transcendental turn meant one could give up dependence on religion or metaphysics as a basis for justifying or criticizing current practices of the epoch, thus maintaining the possibility of universal, ahistorical, normative judgments concerning the form of one's society.

The notion of responding to the present inspires in Foucault a rethinking of the notion of *modernity*. Interestingly Foucault "wonder[s] whether we may not envisage modernity rather as an attitude than as a period of history."[42] Modernity is not a specific historical event, but an historical conjuncture which has happened several times in history, for example, the breakdown of the traditional virtues in Athens at the time of Socrates and the end of metaphysics at the time of Kant. This breakdown results in a specific attitude toward reality which Foucault calls an *ethos*. In such a crisis that characterizes the time of modernity, the received opinion regarding the understanding of reality ceases to function as a shared background in terms of which people can orient and justify their activity.

> The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.[43]

Presumably, then, "counter-modernity" embraces all the forces of normalization and conservation in a society as posed against the transgressive forces embodied in a critique.

At the beginning of this chapter I referred to Foucault's earlier work wherein he paid attention to "illegitimate" (in relation to the dominant discourse) knowledges of the excluded. For he thought they could provide the material for those genealogies that would render apparent the "contingency" of existing social forms, the possibility that things could be otherwise.

> Let us give the term *genealogy* to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today.... What it really does is to entertain the claims of attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise, and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects.[44]

In these earlier works genealogy appears dependent on the voices of the "disqualified" in order to disrupt the given order of things. But later, Foucault moves away from the idea of this use of the voice of the other for disruption in favor of a concentration on the notion of "contingency" that genealogy reveals. Such contingency, as opposed to necessity, opens up the possibility of freedom.

As we have seen from our previous discussions of Nietzsche's use of genealogy, history is shown to be the product of successive power struggles that are understood as

discontinuous. Thus, For Foucault, genealogy reveals that history could have been other than what it has been. This is just the sort of critical practice alluded to by Foucault in "What is Enlightenment?" This sort of critique

> will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.[45]

Foucault explicitly links this revelation of contingency to the possibility of freedom, a freedom that remains "undefined" but involves "the possibility of no longer being...what we are."

The crucial issue for Kant in his examination of the Enlightenment turned on the concept of *maturity*. He says, "*Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity.*"[46] For Kant maturity had to do with the right use of reason, for he says, "*Immaturity* is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another."[47] Foucault agrees that the crucial issue concerns maturity, but for him maturity consists in both an heroic and ironic stance towards one's present situation. As Foucault points out in the case of Baudelaire, the ironic stance results in seeking in the present those practices which offer the posibility of a new way of acting.

> For the attitude of modernity, the high value of the present is indissociable from a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what is. Baudelairean modernity is an exercise in

> which extreme attention to what is real is confonted with the practice of a liberty that simultaneously respects this reality and violates it.... This modernity does not "liberate man in his own being"; it compels him to face the task of producing himself.[48]

In calling on the model of Baudelaire, Foucault seeks to be responsive to what is intolerable in his current situation so as to frame both a general problem and to embody a style of action which allows us to see, through a test of limits, that there are meaningful differences in the kinds of society we can have and there are ways of being human worth opposing and others worth strengthening.

> Criticism indeed consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits. But if the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge has to renounce transgressing, it seems to me that the critical question today has to be turned back into a positive one: in what is given to us as universal, necessary, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression.[49]

The "ethos of permanent critique," in Foucault's words, does not attempt to achieve anything but its own permanence. Permanent critique in this way resembles the notion of permanent revolution. This critical project is directed toward all those forces in society that establish and sustain hegemonic representations and meanings, that resist and try to control thought that threatens to be transgressive. Foucault had earlier criticized liberal or socialist notions of freedom that sought to secure or guarantee it in permanent institutional structures.

> Liberty is a *practice*...The liberty of men is never assured by the institutions and laws that are intended to guarantee them. This is why almost all of these laws and institutions are quite capable of being turned around. Not because they are ambiguous, but simply because 'liberty' is what must be exercised...I think it can never be inherent in the structure of things to guarantee the exercise of freedom. The guarantee of freedom is freedom.[50]

Not unlike the early work of Sartre, Foucault seems to identify freedom with thought itself.

> Thought is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it meaning; rather, it is what allows one to *step back from* this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and question it as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem.[51]

One interesting point that Foucault makes here, that we will return to later, is that the activity of thought, not anything that it might accomplish, is freedom. More important for our immediate purposes, though, is that Foucault's position should not be confused with the more traditional approach that Sartre, for example, takes wherein freedom becomes an ideal to which one aspires and against which one can measure current social formations and practices. As opposed to the approach wherein criticism is grounded in freedom, freedom, for Foucault, is seen as an opportunity that emerges from the critical confrontation with power.

> This work done at the limits of ourselves must, on the one hand open up a realm of historical inquiry and, on the other, put itself to the test of reality, of contemporary reality, both to grasp the points where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take. This means that the historical ontology of ourselves must turn away

> from all projects that claim to be global or radical. In fact we know from experience that the claim to escape from the system of contemporary reality so as to produce the overall programs of another society, of another way of thinking, another culture, another vision of the world, has led only to the return of the most dangerous traditions.[52]

Foucault might be understood to be saying that power inevitably creates social relations and social situations that afford certain strategic possibilities to the agents within those relations and situations. The options for these agents are limited by the context, but the relations and formations established by power cannot predict or limit the range of options in advance. Thus, for Foucault, the space of freedom becomes what power has made possible but cannot control. We will return to Foucault's notion of freedom in the next section of this chapter.

Foucault is not far from Marx in articulating the insight that different groups within a society, by virtue of the different positions they occupy in the social whole, will have different aspirations and visions. Like Sartre, though, Foucault came to the conclusion that the proletariat as the universal class was no longer a viable theoretical tool and thus emphasized that the search for the concrete universal should be abandoned. This, of course, made the theorization of his own practical standpoint problematic.

Since, for Foucault, all claims to justice are merely effects of power and thus serve only to mask determinate power interests, there can be no criteria of legitimacy or right via which the various competing interests might be

adjudicated. Political judgment is reduced to the effects of an all-encompassing war of position. Thus Foucault seems to regress behind Marx, for whom the standpoint of the proletariat was justifiable on the basis of a claim to justice, in so far as it embodied a greater claim to historical universality than its adversary, the bourgeoisie.

> ...the proletariat doesn't make war against the ruling class because it considers such a war to be just. The proletariat makes war with the ruling class because, for the first time in history it wants to take power. And because it will overthrow the power of the ruling class it considers such a war to be just.... One makes war to win, not because it is just.... When the proletariat takes power, it may be quite possible that the proletariat will exert towards the classes over which it has just triumphed, a violent, dictatorial and even bloody power. I can't see what objection one could make to this.[53]

Thus, in Foucault's terms, even a partisanship for the oppressed must remain ungrounded; it is a deduction based on instrumental calculations of force or tactics, and not a question of right.

It seems that Foucault's position is at odds with his own intentions. This is true insofar as it is presented as a critique of power and normalization that implicitly intends to free us from power's grasp. Yet it simultaneously suggests that the goal of emancipating ourselves from power is illusory; that in the final analysis, all we can expect is that one set of coercive practices and controls will be exchanged for another. Berman sees Foucualt's ultimate position this way:

> Do we use our minds to unmask oppression--as Foucault appears to be trying to do? Forget it, because all

> forms of inquiry into the human condition "merely refer individuals from one disciplinary authority to another," and hence only add to the triumphant "discourse of power." Any criticism rings hollow, because the critic himself or herself is "in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves, since we are part of its mechanism.[54]

Foucault's conception of power implies in effect that power is not something that can be legitimately exercised or wielded. Consequently Foucault is methodologically compelled to search for a source of normativity that would be totally outside networks of power. But the very existence of such a source is ruled out by the same methodology. For as Foucault himself reminds us, "Between techniques of knowledge and strategies of power, there is no exteriority...."[55]

If power is indeed omnipresent, if there is essentailly no such thing as the legitimate exercise of power, and, if further, those who contest power must necessarily partake of the very mechanisms of power in their struggle to combat it (as Foucault holds, resistance itself is something that is produced by power[56]), then their struggles are condemned *a priori* to reproduce the very thing they are combatting.

D. Comments.

Our analysis of the work of Sartre and Foucault has shown them to reject the position of the proletariat as the universal class and to embrace the notion of a proliferation of historical agents not solely determined by membership in

a class or the economic structure in general. Accordingly, this raises questions concerning two specific issues. The first has to do with the status of their theoretical work and the role of critical intellectuals generally. We will return to this issue in more detail in the concluding chapter of this dissertation. The second issue, the one we will explore below, has to do with how Sartre and Foucault each understand the nature of freedom once having rejected Marx's notion of the proletariat as the concrete universal.

For Marx, future communist society represents both the full emancipation and further enhancement of the already objectified, but alienated, ensemble of historically accumulated abilities, needs and social possibilities. The theoretical function of Marx's concept of human "essence" (understood as the ensemble of these abilities, needs and possibilities) was to designate some human traits as essential, as values in relation to which the present social totality could be inserted within a constructed developmental process. In this way, Marx's critique situated itself in actual, immanent historical possibilities yet still retained its critical relation to existing bourgeois society. Aside form this important theoretical function Marx's understanding of the social totality has an urgent practical meaning. It enables one to express the massive contemporary suppression of existing human potentials.

Marx insisted that critical theory provide a unified understanding of this self-reproducing totality by indicating the necessary unity of its partial systems and, simultaneously, revealing its determination by a set of contradictory, historically contingent, relations which are themselves subject to immanent change in the very process of their reproduction and open to conscious intervention on the part of a collective social subject. Marx achieves this double aim in establishing that all the constitutive elements of the world capitalist system--production, distribution, exchange, consumption--are not merely related parts but subordinate moments of a self-reproducing, concrete social totality. As mentioned earlier, the mode of production is the theoretical category that allows Marx to argue that the "dehumanization" imposed by the commodification of labor will shape social interaction as a whole, rather than just the immediate relation between worker and capitalist.

According to Marx, freedom seems to be measured by the extent to which we eliminate the influence of material forces on our lives. When we are governed by forces created by our own actions, but which have escaped our control, then we are governed by "material forces." Marx's arguments locate in the fundamental relations of production under capitalism the source of all social conditions that make the human individual a "debased, enslaved, neglected and contemptible being."

Pursuing the issue of freedom as he finds it in Marx, we find Sartre in the *Search* quoting with approval a well-known passage from Marx:

> This reign of freedom does not begin in fact until the time when the work imposed by necessity and external finality shall cease; it is found, therefore, beyond the sphere of material production proper.[57]

Sartre, then, embraces Marx's ideal of obtaining "*for everyone* a margin of *real* freedom beyond the production of life" as the highest of political aspirations.[58]

Sartre is perhaps most well known for his tireless defense of freedom as the principle value to be pursued in the human struggle. Throughout his career, Sartre has had occasion to distinguish between different senses of freedom.[59] But the most fundamental distinction, and the most important for our purposes, is that between what one commentator appropriately calls "ontological freedom" and "practical freedom."[60]

Ontological freedom is the sort of freedom that is perhaps most often associated with the name of Sartre. In *Being and Nothingness* he says,

> ...freedom...is not a quality added on or a *property* of my nature. It is very exactly the stuff of my being;...I am condemned to be free.[61]

Freedom in this sense is a defining characteristic of human reality for Sartre and refers to the fact that any consciousness is absolutely free in the sense that it can separate itself from all that is external to it and thus can disentangle itself from the chain of causal determinism.

Therefore the situation does not determine how I will react or choose to interpret what is external to me. A man is absolutely free, says Sartre,

> *because he can always choose to accept his lot with resignation or to rebel against it.*[62]

Practical freedom, in contrast, is the ability to obtain what we value. This sort of freedom, of course, varies according to the situation and persons involved. Here failure is possible, i.e., one may not always be free in this sense. Sartre illustrates this sort of freedom in his well know example of a hiker who comes across a boulder on the path. He says,

> ...what my freedom cannot determine is whether the rock 'to be scaled' will or will not lend itself to scaling. This is part of the brute being of the rock.[63]

These two senses of freedom are necessarily related in Sartre's political theory. For, he says,

> ...if man is not originally free, but determined once and for all, we cannot even conceive what his liberation might be.[64]

In any case, Sartre's use of the notion of practical freedom itself remains abstract. That is, practical freedom can only be specified in relation to particular resistances. Furthermore, like Marx, Sartre understands freedom as correlative with that which fetters it and, if human capacities are understood as collective possibilities, then freedom can be understood as a universal aspiration or value. That is, for Sartre, understanding the felt needs of

my situation, then, goes a long way toward understanding those of others.

> What men have in common is not a "nature" but a condition, that is an ensemble of limits and restrictions: the inevitability of death, the necessity of working for a living, of living in a world already inhabited by other men. Fundamentally this condition is nothing more than the basic human situation, or, if you prefer, the ensemble of abstract characteristics common to all situations.[65]

Sartre defines the human condition ultimately as "all the constraints which limit [human beings] a priori."[66] Again, individual aspirations for freedom provide the intuitive evidence of a common condition for Sartre.

> I sense in myself certain needs which are not only mine but the needs of every man. To express it another way, it is the experienced certainty of my own freedom, to the extent that it is everyone's freedom, which gives me at the same time the need for a free life and the certainty that this need is felt in a more or less clear, more or less conscious way by everyone.[67]

It is important to note Sartre's language in these important passages. He speaks of *the* "human condition" as "the ensemble of *abstract* characteristics" and he speaks of the certainty that the felt need for freedom is felt "by *everyone*." Note the difference in Sartre's and Marx's understanding of the human condition. For Marx, as we just saw, the human "essence" consists of historically specific social conditions. For Sartre, on the other hand, "the human condition" remains at an abstract level. Moreover, we have already seen that practical freedom, for Sartre, can only be specified in relation to specific resistances. Thus these general comments on freedom and the human condition

necessarily remain abstract and of little help in providing the critical practical standpoint in any particular case.

Furthermore, like Marx, Sartre thinks we can speak concretely about "enlarging our possibilities of choice", i.e., increasing the realm of our freedom, only when we take account of the fact that we exist along side other human beings.[68] For Marx, communism subjects the external forces that influence our social interaction to the control of the general will, of the autonomous human subject. In doing so it actualizes our general will. One "naturally evolved" premise that communism strips, says Marx, is the "cleavage between the particular and common interest."[69] Far from understanding this fact to be necessarily a hindrance to our freedom, as some commentators interpreted it, Sartre understands collective human activity as the key to expanding individual freedom. Therefore, from a political point of view, it is the formation of *the group* that Sartre wishes to encourage.

> The group defines and produces itself not only as an instrument, but also as a *mode of existence*; it posits itself for itself...as the free milieu of free human relations...thus the group is...*the absolute end* as pure freedom....[70]

Taking account of the necessarily social nature of human freedom is, of course, important, but it still does not advance us very far toward the concrete either, especially when we recall Sartre's understanding of the unstable nature of groups discussed above.

We have already seen that Sartre rejected the notion of class exploitation as the basis of the formation of proletarian class consciousness. Marx limits alienation closely to the realm of labor, restricting the scope of praxis to labor. For Marx, the status of the proletariat as the *universal* class is derived from its position in the structure of work. Unlike other oppressed classes in history, the proletariat is unique in its universality. Its misery is the key, for Marx, to the complete emancipation of humanity.

> A class must be formed which has *radical chains*, a class in civil society which is not of civil society, a class which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society which has universal character because its sufferings are universal, and which does not claim a *particular redress* because the wrong which is done to it is not a *particular wrong* but *wrong in general*.... This dissolution of society, as a particular class, is the *proletariat*.[71]

But, according to Sartre, Marx is incorrect in arguing that overcoming alienated labor is identical with human emancipation. Alienation is a more pervasive phenomenon than economic exploitation and thus the former can and must become the critical basis of revolutionary aspirations.

> The consciousness of the intolerable character of the system must therefore no longer be sought in the impossibility of satisfying elementary needs but, above all else, in the consciousness of *alienation*--in other words, in the fact that *this life* is not worth living and has no meaning, that this mechanism is a deceptive mechanism, that these needs are artificially created, that they are false, that they are exhausting and only serve profit. But to unite the class on this basis is even more difficult.[72]

Furthermore, Sartre reformulates the relation between subject and object which is the central question of dialectical thought. Subject and object for him become "men" and "things" and their relation is one of mediation.

> The crucial discovery of dialectical investigation is that man is 'mediated' by things to the same extent that things are 'mediated' by man.[73]

My suggestion here is that Sartre has refocused attention from economic exploitation to intersubjective oppression, with the understanding that individuals belong to many groups in constant formation and disintegration. If critical social theory is to be situated from the perspective of a practical standpoint, with a particular value orientation, then Sartre's elaboration of freedom remains on such an abstract level that it can provide no help in identifying the concrete standpoints that would situate his critical claims in a way that his own theory requires. In fact, Sartre goes so far as to say that, "the critical investigation can and must be anyone's reflexive experience."[74] But admitting this is to reveal the tension in his own work between philosophy's traditional universal concerns and the requirements of a social theory that aims to be genuinely critical.

As we saw in the last section of this chapter Foucault, too, rejects Marx's idea that the proletariat represents the only historical agent and understands the contemporary social field to contain a proliferation of agents. This latter notion, however, is not completely foreign to Marx's

general ideas. For the insight derived from Marx, embraced by both Sartre and Foucault, is the notion that different groups within a society, by virtue of the different positions they occupy in the social whole, will have different aspirations and visions. Foucault emphasizes this aspect of Marx, suggesting that with this insight the hold of the dominant ideology will be mitigated, the opportunities for conflict and for alternative visions multiplied, and the notion that a dominant social order also generates internal resistance introduced. Read in this way, Marx appears close to presenting the view that we have ascribed to Foucault, namely that power itself produces the possibility of freedom and the terms within which freedom is enacted.

What Marx emphasizes and Foucault neglects, however, is a positive notion of freedom that rests on the conviction that different social contexts can make all the difference between a condition of freedom and a condition of unfreedom. The trouble with the play of resistance at particular sites of confrontation with power is that Foucault seems to locate freedom in this "play" and to assume we have achieved our goal when we have theoretically satisfied ourselves that "practices of freedom" are possible. What such an account misses is that something is usually at stake in confrontations and that we designate a dominant and a dominated partner in such relations on the basis of how the confrontation's resolution leaves one party relatively well

off or more satisfied than the other. Thus, the portrait of productive power ignores how specific social arrangements bias possible outcomes from the start and what arrangements might work to mitigate such bias. From the standpoint of productive power, all social arrangements, apart from the limit case of total domination, seem to be pretty much the same, affording various possibilities for freedom.

> I do not think it is possible to say that one thing is of the order of "liberation" and another is of the order of "oppression." There are a certain number of things that one can say with some certainty about a concentration camp to the effect that it is not an instrument of liberation, but one should still take into account--and this is not generally acknowledged--that, aside from torture and execution, which preclude any resistance, no matter how terrifying a given system may be, there always remain the possibilities of resistence, disobedience, and oppositional groupings.[75]

Not acknowledging the realization Foucault points out may be due to the fact that this notion of freedom is simply rather vacuous. This notion sounds remarkably like Sartre's early notion of ontological freedom. But even Sartre came to admit that that notion of freedom was scandalous. Consider the following passage from Foucault where he criticizes Sartre's early notion of *authenticity* for its "esentialism" regarding his notion of the self.

> I think that from the theoretical point of view, Sartre avoids the idea of the self as something which is given to us, but through the moral notion of authenticity, he turns back to the idea that we have to be ourselves--to be truly our true self. I think that the only acceptable practical consequence of what Sartre has said is to link his theoretical insight to the practice of creativity--and not of authenticity. From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is

> only one consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art.[76]

Again, Foucault seems to assume here an understanding of freedom like Sartre's early idea of ontological freedom. It remains on an abstract level. The self, according to Foucault here, is something that we can simply create, like a work of art. What he leaves out of account, though, are the social relations, indeed power relations, that according to our earlier discussions of Foucault, he sees as the very determinants of the self. Does Foucault mean to suggest that we can "create" the self as a work of art in any circumstances, or without regard to the social circumstances? But the pursuit of freedom apart from a vision of the social context that underwrites its possibility, belongs to anarchist or liberal versions of a negative freedom. Sartre, at any rate, later in his life seemed to acknowlege just this. An interviewer quotes Sartre as saying, "If one rereads all my books, one will realize that I have not changed profoundly, and that I've always remained an anarchist." To this Sartre adds, "...I never allowed anyone to hold power over me, and I have always thought that anarchy--which is to say, a society without powers--must be brought about."[77]

For Marx, just as Sartre seems to suggest above, freedom is still something that is constrasted to power and imagined as a release from power's constraints, not an exercise, or an acceptance of power. Since power constructs and is subsequently embedded in the social relations that

establish the terms of individual life in any given society, there remains the hope that certain relations will afford greater freedom, will minimize domination. Because Marx believes that the individual's location within a set of social relations is inescapable, he is committed to a version of positive freedom.

To live where power does not predetermine the outcome of conflicts or one's own determinate position in social relations is not to live outside society but to live within a society that is set up in such a way as to ensure the possibility of freedom. Social arrangements are certainly the primary locus of domination for Marx, but they are also the only possible place for the establishment of the conditions of freedom. As we pointed out earlier, it is only in a community, for Marx, that personal freedom is possible. Thus, a lesson we can take from Marx is that we must consider the form community should take in order to promote the kinds of freedom we desire.

I am not suggesting that Marx's views are are complete and sufficient and that Sartre and Foucault are wrong to dismiss them. After all, Marx's refusal to consider the possible legitimacy of any social forms prior to the truly communist society precludes him from taking full advantage of the sensitivity toward the difference that social contexts can make. Marx has a tendency to see social conditions not as the dialectical product of conflicting forces but rather as the pure product of one force: the

economic base or the ruling class. This is clearly the position of the "orthodox" Marxists that Sartre and Foucault each criticized. In this tendency to see a part as governing the structure of the whole, we can find the origins of the monolithic and evil (totalitarian) understanding of the totality that replaces Marx's hopeful vision of communist society and that Sartre and Foucault were so critical of. What I am suggesting is that ignoring Marx's insight into the need for positive, or concrete, forms of freedom can lead one to embrace an abstract form of freedom unhelpful to critical social theory. Thus, the useful observation that the social field is populated by a plurality of historical agents, coupled with the value of freedom both as a practical goal or value to be instantiated, indicates an unfinished philosophical project in the sense that an adequate form of the universal remains to be theorized.

At times Foucault seems to acknowledge this, as, for example, when he alludes to "consensus" as a critical principle in his own work since non-democratic forms of power had the danger that they did not allow for criticism and protest. The consensus model, he says,

> is perhaps a critical idea to maintain at all times: to ask oneself what proportion of nonconsensuality is implied in such a power relation, and whether that degree of nonconsensuality is necessary or not, and then one may question every power relation to that extent. The farthest I would go is to say that perhaps one must not be for consensuality, but one must be against nonconsensuality.[78]

Thus Foucault seems, at this particular point at any rate, to allude to consensuality as the form normative criteria for criticism must take. As we suggsted above, Sartre sometimes leans in this direction as well. This is the direction that Habermas' work took. But, again, the logic of Foucault's own concepts militates against any critical standpoint that is not itself implicated in networks of power. As we have seen, for Foucault, politics has the form of a war rather than that of a language (like for Habermas, where politics is oriented toward mutual understanding), relations of power, not relations of meaning.

Finally, because Sartre and Foucault each seem to be at a loss to articulate a concrete form of freedom that can apply across the social field to the plurality of historical agents, the role of the critical intellectual remains problematic. It is to that issue that we will turn in the concluding chapter.

NOTES

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[24] Jean-Paul Sartre, "France: Masses, Spontaneity, Party," in Between Existentialism and Marxism, (NY: Pantheon Books, 1974), p.123.

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[27] Sartre, Critique, p.579.

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[29] Sartre, Search for a Method, p.100.

[30] Sartre, Critique, p.805.

[31] Sartre, Search for a Method, p.90.

[32] Sartre, Critique, p.817.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Toward the beginning of this dissertation we suggested that the general problematic with which Sartre and Foucault were engaged was a recurring one in the history of philosophy, the relationship between theory and practice. More specifically, we saw that each of these thinkers attempted to develop critical social theories that overcame the more problematic aspects of Marxian critical theory, while at the same time retaining its most powerful insights. But, as the last chapter suggested, although Sartre and Foucault each ultimately come to reject the Marxian dependency on class analysis and to agree on the useful observation that the social field is populated by a plurality of historical agents aspiring to the goal of freedom, they nonetheless leave us with abstract conceptions of freedom and an unfinished philosophical project. Before turning to one last implication of their work in regards to the issue of the role of the critical intellectual, let us review how we arrived at the above conclusion.

Almost from its inception, philosophy has assumed that theory is relevant for practice, that thought could clarify means as well as ends. But thinkers have disagreed on the exact nature of this relationship. A discernible trend

began in the modern period that developed the idea that theory and practice were to be conceived of in terms of a strict dualism; and that if theory was to be widely applicable regarding practice it would have to be developed while divorced from any particular practical commitments. This is the trend of thought to which Sartre and Foucault each respond. They argue that critical social theory, if it is to be useful in the practice of overcoming domination, must be developed from particular value orientations. Let us summarize the development of the tradition to which they are responding and their own alternative positions.

In chapter two we saw that Descartes' epistemological program assumes that in the absence of foundational truths and values social and political fragmentation and perpetual conflict was inevitable. This position developed into the positivistic approach to scientific methodology which sought after true, or objective, depictions of reality. Such representations, according to this approach, could only be the result of the "disinterested" (or value-neutral) observations of theorists "detached" from (and hence neutral regarding) any particular ideological commitments. In the case of positivistic social theory these "representations", reduced to their essential elements, would then, it was claimed, form the "foundation" for a critique of the social or political situation.

Sartre and Foucault are each eager to reject these particular understandings of the nature and role of

knowledge because, as they see it, the presupposition of value-neutrality masks the way value commitments are actually involved with knowledge claims. These unacknowledged value commitments distort the nature of human beings and their social reality and impose partisan "truths" in the name of universal knowledge.

Specifically we saw Sartre argue that the thesis of value-neutrality adopted by the "analytical reason" of positivism suggests both a strict distinction between facts and values, and that once one has a sufficient grasp of the facts, nothing remains for the theorist to do but to adopt an attitude that "conforms" to them such that rational deliberation of what attitude to adopt would be inappropriate. The notion that there is one right way of describing and explaining reality, the notion that defines "truth" for the positivist, is for Sartre, just the notion of having a way of describing and explaining imposed on us as if it were a material reality, masking the role of choice.

Sartre also argues that analytical reason's presupposition of value-neutrality assumes a common, abstract human nature which, he claims, abstracts individuals away from their specific social situations, preventing them from clearly understanding those situations, and thereby precludes the sort of social and political analysis that would motivate a critical social theory.

We saw that a similar conclusion, that claims to value-

neutrality in the human sciences amount to nothing more than myths that mystify real networks of domination, is also reached by Foucault. This conclusion results from Foucault's examination of the human sciences, like psychiatry where, in spite of the psychiatrist's own claims to be a neutral investigator of the phenomena of madness, his or her real power derived from the values of bourgeois society.

Furthermore, we saw that for Foucault, the positivistic human sciences do not actually yield "truth" in the traditional value-neutral sense, i.e., truth that is free of ideological commitments, and that can be therefore, according to this view, liberating. Our discussion of Foucault's later investigation of the social practices of the human sciences showed that they play the role of "regimes of truth" which impose normalizing standards that "subjectify" human beings, i.e., make them subjects in more than one sense of that term.

Finally, we saw that Sartre and Foucault are each troubled by the positivistic tendencies they see contained within orthodox Marxism that they think can be traced to the presupposition by orthodox Marxism of the thesis of value-neutrality. Both of them believe that it is the very claim to value-neutrality as used in orthodox Marxism that has led more than once to the terroristic imposition on human beings of policies that were formulated in self-proclaimed value-neutral methodologies.

In chapter three we developed Sartre's and Foucault's reconstructions of the practices associated with the formation of knowledge. Although approaching this issue from very different perspectives, the conclusion of both Sartre and Foucault is that knowledge is understood to be necessarily "interested" or "value-laden."

Beginning with Sartre's reconstruction, we saw that he understood both knowledge and subjectivity to be moments of praxis. For Sartre, praxis is an intentional engagement with the world and value is described by Sartre as a lack in the world that I want to overcome. Therefore, all human activity can be understood as goal-oriented, or value-laden. For Sartre, then, knowledge is based on the fact that nothing is given to me by the world, and everything must be grasped by me. We then saw that Sartre applied the same approach to his understanding of subjectivity. Subjectivity, too, is an active construct, not a passive and neutral foundation for knowledge, according to Sartre. Subjectivity amounts to an active engagement with the world. It consists, for Sartre, in an irreducible intentionality, but an intentionality made possible only by material circumstances. As intentionality, then, "subjectivity" is oriented through one's project. According to Sartre, every one of our actions is influenced and governed by our (freely chosen) original projection of a general goal or manner of life. This practical appropriation of material circumstances is what Sartre means by *totalization* and is

what gives shape to and limits our historical understandings by determining both cognitive and practical norms.

Turning to Foucault's reconstruction in the next section of chapter three, we saw that he, too, rejects the Cartesian epistemological approach that presupposes a correspondence between a passive subject and a given reality. Instead, he ultimately arrived at conceptions of knowledge and subjectivity which were understood as constructions of power, undermining the thesis of value-neutrality. We saw that he is interested in describing the historical conditions that made it possible for certain representations, objectifications, and classifications of reality to dictate which kinds of statements come up as candidates for truth and falsity. Thus, Foucault locates what he calls "regimes of truth" that are the result of the constitutive effects of power.

Foucault understands power in terms of "productivity" as opposed to the traditional understanding of power in terms of "repression." This innovation allows him to elaborate the process by which subjects are constituted through the play of power. Subjectivity, for Foucault, is not a passive, neutral mirror upon which given reality is reflected. On the contrary, it is an active construct that is however constrained and directed by the epistemic and practical norms generated by power's disciplinary techniques. Even though power is intentional, according to Foucault, it is also nonsubjective. It is the result of a

network of relations, not the intention of an originary domineering subject. Thus, we saw that like Sartre, Foucault offers a reconstruction of knowledge that is opposed to the understandings of knowledge developed in the Cartesian epistemological or later positivist traditions.

Our discussion in chapter three concludes by identifying two implications that emerge from the reconstructions developed by Sartre and Foucault. The first has to do with the fact that both Sartre and Foucault develop positions that understand knowledge to be historical and local, not certain and universal (in the Cartesian sense of this term). The second has to do with the constructed nature of the knowing subject. Both of these implications seem to force Sartre and Foucault to agree with an untenable epistemological relativism. Such relativism could be seen as an obstacle to developing a critical theory of society, for questions can now be raised concerning the privileged position from which Sartre and Foucault develop critical analyses. But, although, neither thinker responds to this issue directly in his work, I suggested that the charge of epistemological relativism only makes sense based on the presuppositions of Cartesian epistemology or positivism, which, of course, both Sartre and Foucault reject.

Let us not forget that the general aim of both Sartre and Foucault is to articulate critical theories that illuminate relations of domination with the intent to overcome them. This, combined with their view that such

theories cannot be value-neutral, but must be elaborated from particular value commitments, requires each of them to specify the situated, practical standpoint that gives content to the necessary commitment of their critical theories. This is the issue discussed in the fourth chapter.

As I said above, Sartre and Foucault each attempted to develop critical social theories that overcame the more problematic aspects of Marxian critical theory, while at the same time retaining its most powerful insights. It was Marx who stood Hegel on his feet by concretizing historical agency in the form of the proletariat. Because, according to Marx, the proletariat was the "universal class", its practical standpoint illuminated the relations of domination that exist under capitalism. The struggle of this class identified specific points of resistance, thus making possible specific strategies of liberation. It is this insight that we saw appropriated into the work of both Sartre and Foucault.

Our discussion of Sartre in the fourth chapter showed that early in his career he rejected Marx's notion of the proletariat as the universal class on ontological grounds, later coming to embrace for political reasons the universality of the proletariat and the representation of its interests in the form of the Communist Party. We saw, however, that ultimately, in spite of the explicit aim of his major work of social theory, the *Critique*, to place

historical materialism on a firm foundation, Sartre was forced to reject the idea of the proletariat as the universal class. That is, through his analysis of the social field and the actual dynamics of group formation and disintegration, Sartre came to the conclusion that there simply was no unitary body such as the proletariat that could play the role, as for Marx, of the representative of universal interests. According to Sartre, Marxism had consistently failed to account for individual subjectivity and thereby failed to illuminate modes of alienation specific to individuals that could not be accounted for through class analysis. Our discussion in this section showed that in rejecting traditional Marxist class analysis, Sartre offers new sociological insight into the various modes of alienation, but at the same time he loses the normative ground that the concept of the universal class played for Marx.

Turning to the section of this chapter on Foucault, we saw that he agrees with Sartre that the contemporary social terrain has changed since the time of Marx such that the social field is now populated by a variety of historical agents, rendering the concept of the proletariat as the universal class obsolete. Furthermore we saw that, for Foucault, criticism can and ought no longer be couched in universal terms at all. Foucault's method of genealogy, as opposed to developing criticism from the point of view of "impartial truths" in the mode of a Kantian

transcendentalism, articulates claims of excluded or subjugated knowledges against present forms of hegemonic knowledge. Similar to Marx, then, Foucault believes that a practical standpoint will reveal current hegemonic social configurations as contingent as opposed to necessary, thus illuminating possible points of transgression.

Interestingly, however, our discussion showed that Foucault's position is at odds with his own intentions insofar as it represents a critique of power in order to overcome its effects while at the same time holding that such emancipatory goals are illusory. Foucault argues that any knowledge, critical knowledge included, is not external to power and therefore it must reproduce the very sort of power relations it is developed to overcome. So Foucault claims that any thought that can separate itself from hegemonic forms of knowledge is the space for freedom. Yet this claims means that freedom is detached from the particular practical standpoints that can give it substance and thus remains abstract, or on the level of thought alone.

The concluding section of chapter four identified two important implications resulting from Sartre's and Foucault's rejection of the proletariat as a unified body that can provide the practical standpoint necessary for criticism. The first has to do with the nature of the role of critical intellectuals which we will pursue later in this concluding chapter. The second has to do with what Sartre and Foucault each understand by the concept of freedom.

We saw in the last chapter that Marx's "positive" conception freedom is measured in social/historical terms. The particular relations of the capitalist mode of production understood as the social totality are that which fetter human possibilities. Sartre, too, understands practical freedom to be measured in terms of what resists it. But his conception of the "human condition" remains abstract, thus freedom itself must be understood, for Sartre, as the abstract aspirations of "anyone." Thus, we saw that Sartre has not resolved the tension between the universal aspirations of his critical theory and the need for a practical standpoint. Furthermore, our discussion showed that Foucault, like Sartre, is forced to embrace an abstract sense of freedom as well, because he does not account for the specific social arrangements that may be more or less dominating or free, as Marx suggests.

Our last chapter concluded with the observation that Sartre and Foucault leave us with an unfinished philosophical project because they never resolve the tension between their abstract conceptions of freedom and the practical standpoints they claim are necessary for a social theory that aims to be critical. As I suggested earlier this also leaves unresolved the issue of the nature of the role of the critical intellectual, as we shall see below.

The issue of the critical intellectual is explicitly raised by both Sartre and Foucault. They find the role of the intellectual as an ultimate arbiter or interpreter, as

we saw in their criticisms of orthodox Marxism, repugnant. In our previous discussions we saw that Foucault rejects the notion of representation. In a discussion between Foucault and Deleuze, the latter says,

> you were the first--in your books and in the practical sphere--to teach us something absolutely fundamental: the indignity of speaking for others. We ridiculed representation and said it was finished...[1]

Questions regarding the nature or even the possibility of legitimate political representation are not new. Debates about it within radical political circles can be traced at least as far back as Marx's debate with Bakunin.[2]

What Bakunin found particularly troublesome in Marx's politics was exactly the idea of representation as a political concept. For Bakunin, as for Rousseau, where there is representation, there is oppression. Representation, as a political concept, is the handing over of power by a group of people to another person or group of people ostensibly in order to have the interests of the former realized. The conservative, Edmund Burke, rejected any idea of a "mandate" or "instructions" from his constituents as to how he should vote or what line he should take on any particular issue. According to Burke,

> Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.[3]

Foucault apparently believes the view expressed by Burke is the only way to understand the concept of representation.

Thus he concludes representation *per se* is to be avoided as always being illegitimate.

Perhaps Foucault's position is understandable if one considers the events of May 1968 in France, events that made clear intellectuals' alienation from the participants of the mass movements then taking place, as the discussion between Deleuze and Foucault cited earlier suggests. Spivak makes sense of Foucault's position by claiming

> that two senses of representation are being run together: representation as 'speaking for', as in politics, and representation as 're-presentation', as in art or philosophy.[4]

Here Spivak seems to make a distinction between "political representation" understood in the Burkean interpretation and "re-presentation" in the sense of an "administrative representation" which involves no fundamental transfer of power but instead merely a delegation of administrative capability, including the clarification and articulation of the interests of constituent groups.

My point so far is that critical theory demands the sort of organic connection between theorist and those theorized about in order to avoid what Foucault seems to think inevitable: the untoward imposition of values on them by the theorist. Furthermore, that very organicity, it seems to me, is possible to achieve. In the last chapter we examined Sartre's development of the idea of the evolution of groups and their role in enhancing individual freedom. In one sense we can say that Sartre's position was

approaching that of Gramsci regarding the nature of the organic intellectual.[5]

Gramsci took the view that many modern intellectuals did not have the problem of social integration since they developed in interaction with one of the major classes in society. Complete identification with a group may not be possible, nor may it be desirable. But a realistic relationship between intellectuals and groups desiring amelioration of their felt frustrations is, it seems to me, conceivable. Consider the following remarks.

> A representative person is one who will act in a given situation in much the same way as those he represents would act in that same situation. In short, he must be of their kind...Election is only one part of representation. It becomes full representation only if the elected person speaks with the authentic accents of those who elected him...he should share their values; that is, be in touch with their realities.[6]

Gramsci was perhaps more enamored of class analysis than the current social situation would warrant, as has been pointed put by both Sartre and Foucault. So I am not suggesting that the solution to the problem of the intellectual can be found complete in Gramsci's work. Yet there is at least one valuable insight he offers that ought not be forgotten. That is, for Gramsci, the organic intellectual does not impose or impute a conception of the good on or to the group, but by his or her link with the group lives that conception and tests out ways of making it more explicit. This notion was alluded to in the quotation above when Bevan refers to shared values and realities

between intellectuals and their "constituents." Later I will suggest that the locus or medium of these shared realities is to be found in language use. This is the insight developed by Habermas's conception of a discourse ethic to which we shall turn shortly.

Before turning to a discussion of the development of a focus on language to solve some of the problems confronted by Sartre and Foucault, let us see how Foucault responds to a criticism proposed by Richard Rorty to his position on his own status as an intellectual in relation to political groups or movements.

> R. Rorty points out that in these analyses I do not appeal to any "we"--to any of those "we's" whose consensus, whose values, whose traditions constitute the framework for a thought and define the conditions in which it can be validated. But the problem is, precisely, to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself in a "we" in order to assert the principles one recognizes and the values one accepts; or if it is not, rather, necessary to make the future formation of a "we" possible, by elaborating the question. Because it seems to me that the "we" must not be previous to the question; it can only be the result--and the necessary temporary result--of the question as it is posed in the new terms in which one formulates it.[7]

If one must first decide whether one is going to place oneself in a group, then one needs to know how one would ever proceed to decide this. It seems clear that to decide this one would have to have adopted principles and values that it would be possible to have only through already being part of some group. Since political theories are the articulation of a vision of the social good, are fundamentally based on value choices, there can be no value-

neutral interpretations of the criteria for rational choice between competing political theories. The fantasy of being "detached" from any context still haunts Foucault's work in this sense. Thus his unwillingness to concretely situate his own analyses prevents him from assuming a standpoint necessary to discern the intentions of the actors in question. His own critical stance, which amounts to a political evaluation, takes on the character of the very sort of value-neutral posture that he rejects. I do not mean to suggest that Foucault actually achieves anything like value-neutrality in his work. On the contrary, I believe it suffers from the very sort of criticism he proposes to any theory that claims value-neutrality, i.e., it masks its own value choices and masks the representative function of his own work. As stated earlier, evaluation cannot occur without values; and where there are values there is representation because these values are, at least in Foucault's case, held to be valid for all those seeking to be unburdened of the norms of hegemonic discourses, of all those seeking liberation, as it were, from these forms of power.

Foucault might respond to all this by pointing out that the point of his critical work, as with Sartre, is to advance the cause of freedom.

> I would like to say something about the function of any diagnosis concerning the nature of the present.... Any description must always be made in accordance with these kinds of virtual fracture which open up the space

> of freedom understood as a space of concrete freedom, i.e. of possible transformation.[8]

What Foucault does not seem to take account of is that freedom is not definable without reference to some conception of the good as many critics of Sartre's early views were eager to point out. The intellectual cannot advocate freedom without advocating a conception of the good for society. The intellectual who dares speak against a specific form of oppression and proceeds to advocate a given freedom must recognize that he or she will have to take one side or the other on the question of what kind of society is best, at least in the minimal sense relevant to the particular freedom in question.

In the last years of his life, with the events of May 1968 still fresh in his memory, Sartre's work more and more revealed its dependence on the notion of the organic intellectual. Stressing the importance of the intellectual's membership in a group, Sartre says the individual is not the bearer of truth, but "only the thought of the group is the truth."[9] According to Kellner's account of this last major political work from Sartre, as Sartre and his collaborators see it, these new intellectuals form their picture of the world from practice. Discussing and acting thus replaces reading and writing as the privileged function of the intellectual. Kellner points out that all of the participants (the book is made up of a series of conversations among the collaborators) contribute and in the course of the discussion, the give and take of debate

changes all their positions towards a common perspective.[10] This is not altogether unlike the approach suggested by Habermas as we shall see shortly.

I think it important to understand that I am not suggesting that Sartre and Foucault offer nothing of value. Sartre's emphasis on the notion that freedom can only be achieved in any meaningful sense within the context of a group and his development of the concept of alienation as intersubjective oppression, and Foucault's insights into the complicity of hegemonic discourse in the play of power such that individuals are "subjectified," have advanced our understanding of the complexity of the phenomena that must be accounted for in a critical social theory. More importantly, they each bring the discussion of critical social theory to the threshold of language. That is, with the realization that the proletariat can no longer play the role, as it did for Marx, of the revolutionary class in the sense that it embodied universal, but fettered, aspirations, other thinkers have located those aspirations instead squarely in the use of language itself.

For example, Foucault has already described how individuals internalize the norms imposed by language users in various "regimes of truth" such that their very subjectivities are constructed. But Foucault can be read as having given us a one-sided picture of language use in that it seems in his work that power is conceived of as omnipotent, that language is necessarily and always an

instrument in the program of disciplining subjects. Although he does suggest that resistance is always concomitant with power, this idea is not developed in his work. In any case, this undeveloped conception of resistance seems to contradict the logic of his more fundamental argument about the "productive" nature of power and the complicity of discourse in the play of power.

One example of an understanding of language use as more fundamentally "open-ended" can be found in the work of Bakhtin, especially with his concept of "dialogism."[11] According to this concept, a person constantly engages in dialogues with others--whether written, spoken, or meditative. In part, that is because a person's meditations, speech, and writings consist of words that he or she has acquired from others. Moreover, language users can arrange those words to express ideas they have developed as a result of communicating with others. Inasmuch as their ideas and the words that express them are the products of historical and social forces, language users also engage in dialogue with their own and other civilizations. Furthermore, they embody the dialogue that their language carries on with itself.

According to Bakhtin, language must be understood in a two-sided sense. That is, for Bakhtin, on the one hand, language tends toward "monological" simplification and unity in the service of a society's dominant culture. On the other (this is where his conception of language differs from

Foucault's explicit comments on the matter), it tends toward "heteroglossia", i.e., complexity and randomness stemming from the self-expression of various cultures. A person's every utterance is thus shaped by a multitude of constantly changing factors, and is therefore unique. Most importantly, both individuals and societies have the potential for perpetual evolution as they blend together new and frequently unpredictable stimuli. Bakhtin understands this as "unfinalizability," or the human tendency to defy all that purports to be fixed and stable. Perhaps this is just the insight Foucault required in order to develop his notion of the "dialectic" of power and resistance.

Frankly, this discussion of Bakhtin does not demonstrate much more than that Foucault's one-sided understanding of language is not definitive, that others have fruitfully developed work in other directions. The more difficult question of what values to embrace in a community in order to develop a critical social theory, or indeed which community is to be emphasized, is something that Bakhtin does not address in a developed fashion. But these issues are more directly addressed in the work of Habermas.

Late in his career Foucault suggested that one might "ground" one's social critique in a new sexuality that emphasized new pleasures. This is reminiscent of Marcuse's attempt to ground critical reason in a theory of the instincts, which Habermas criticized for relying on a

nonverifiable speculative notion of human nature. A better ground for critical rationality, according to Habermas (perhaps like Bakhtin), is everyday speech. Habermas locates critical rationality in communicative competencies, institutionalized in democratic structures, which evolve in response to growing political oppression. These competencies, he believes, circumscribe necessary and universal structures of rational choice. Thus, they are the criteria for distinguishing between true and false needs.

Thus, the early part of Habermas's career was concerned primarily with resolving one aspect of the problem of theory and practice. That is, Habermas claimed that critical theory can justify its critique of society only by appealing to standards of justice and the social good that can be shown to be nonarbitrary and, in some sense, universally binding for all. Habermas undertakes a transcendental argument in the sense that he attempts to demonstrate that knowledge presupposes certain necessary and universal conditions. The conditions underlying the possibility of objective knowledge include those essential for the maintenance of free and undistorted communication. Politically, they imply a democratic society free of social inequality and domination. In claiming that transcendent freedom is the ultimate transcendental presupposition underlying knowledge and reason generally, Habermas could be said to be continuing the project of Kant and Hegel. For they all agree that Reason is essentially oriented toward

emancipation. This would also seem to be true for Bakhtin insofar as language could be said to embody reason.

Habermas argues that knowledge is grounded in practical interests, and thus, like Sartre and Foucault, he rejects the positivist valorization of and aspiration to value-neutral knowledge. As we have understood this term in the previous discussions, 'value' implies purposes and goals that ought to be pursued. The problem we saw facing Sartre and Foucault was that they did not or could not pursue the issue of the validation or justification of the value claims made in their own critical theories, that once having abandoned the Hegelian-Marxian paradigm their concept of freedom remained on such an abstract level that it lost touch with any concrete aspirations of any particular groups.

Habermas understands that values, in the sense of the prescription of goals, are generally justified by appealing to the commonly shared beliefs of our society. Intersubjective agreement, then, seems to be a necessary condition for bestowing validity on our value judgments. But Habermas knows that the collective judgment of a society might be distorted by ideology. Consequently, only an ideal and absolutely unlimited universal consensus, achieved through rational communication, will suffice to validate a value-judgement. As Habermas says,

> What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know: *language*. Through its structure, autonomy and responsibility are posited for us. Our

> first sentence expresses unequivically the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus.... [O]nly in an emancipated society, whose members' autonomy and responsibility had been realized, would communication have developed into the non-authoritarian and universally practiced dialogue from which both our model of reciprocally constituted ego identity and our idea of true consensus are always implicitly derived. To this extent the truth of statements is based on anticipating the realization of the good life.[12]

Rational speakers are oriented toward conditions of unrestrained reciprocity, or emancipation. But because everyday communication can be ideologically distorted by anonymous and diffuse power relations, they must be criticized by transcending the participatory context of everyday language. Thus Habermas gives his attention to the need to develop, as Marx suggested, a "positive" conception of freedom or the social good.

Habermas's later work derives from his aim to substitute the intersubjective relationship of speaker and listener for the subject-object relationship that we saw dominating in the epistemological and positivist traditions. This substitution has decidedly political implications.

As Rousseau noted, a true democracy demands direct participation on the part of its citizens. So long as others are delegated to speak on our behalf, to "represent" our interests, we fail to exercise a fundamental right to self-determination. Thus, representative democracy can begin to approximate this ideal only as long as it is guided by the informed consent of a rational and critical public. Habermas believes that democracy ought to establish procedures by which citizens can reach agreement on some

concrete vision of their good. Unlike Rousseau, however, Habermas argues that rational debate should be aimed, not at discovering some preexisting General Will, but at determining whether common interests can be brought about by transforming current needs which frustrate the attainment of long-term happiness for all.

Habermas's "discourse ethic" is best understood, then, as a deep justification for local forms of democracy. Rather than advance a concrete conception of the good, it encourages the proliferation of political discourses in local and small-scale associations. Habermas develops a communicative ethic where, he claims,

> a well-founded consensus is made dependent on considerations of the consequences that a contested general practice might have for the satisfaction of the interests of all concerned.[13]

Thus, rational consensus replaces Kant's lawful consistency as a criterion of moral right. It shifts the emphasis from what each person independent of any consideration of historical interests can will to be a universal law, to what all, in agreement with others on such interests, can accept as a universally binding norm. The ultimate aim of a communication ethic, then, is to bring about conditions of rational participatory democracy, in which existing needs can be critically assessed and transformed. Habermas says,

> Everyday communication makes possible a kind of understanding that is based on claims to validity and thus furnishes the only real alternative to exerting influence on one another in more or less coercive ways.... Every agreement, whether produced for the first time or reaffirmed, is based on (controvertible)

> grounds or reasons.... From the perspective of first persons, what we consider justified is not a function of custom but a question of justification or grounding.[14]

Habermas's focus on the anticipation of consensus presupposed in language use also influences his understanding of the role of the intellectual (or philosopher in this case). He, too, as for Sartre and Foucault, is critical of the sometimes repugnant role that philosophy has played when performed by "master thinkers" who fancied themselves to be ultimate arbiters. On this point Habermas says,

> as far as philosophy is concerned, it might do well to refurbish its link with the totality by taking on the role of interpreter on behalf of the life-world.... This simile at least helps identify the issue philosophy will face when it stops playing the part of a the arbiter that inspects culture and instead starts playing the role of a mediating interpreter.[15]

Presumably Habermas has in mind here a role for the philosopher understood in terms of a participant in a dialogue, rather than the perpetrator of a "paternalistic" monologue.

By calling on the approach developed by Habermas I do not mean to suggest that he has solved all the problems raised by the attempt to develop an adequate critical social theory that rejects the presuppositions of the epistemological and positivist traditions. The whole program of a "discourse ethic" is still in development and has generated a substantial amount of criticism.[16] But Habermas's approach, it seems to me, opens up the

possibilities for futher fruitful research in the area of practical rationality.

In any case, the considerations raised by Habermas's different approach clearly addresses the problem of the abstract nature of freedom that is found in the work of both Sartre and Foucault. Habermas identifies a concrete standpoint from which the aspiration to freedom of any particular group can be given content, thus retaining the insight of Marx that both Sartre and Foucault found valuable as he, at the same time, avoids falling into the mystifying abstractions surrounding Sartre's and Foucault's concepts of freedom.

NOTES

[1] "Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation Between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze," in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews By Michel Foucault, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p.209.

[2] For an intelligent account of this debate see Richard N. Hunt, The Political Ideas of Marx and Engels I: Marxism and Totalitarian Democracy, 1818-1850, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), pp.320-328.

[3] Edmund Burke, "Speech to the Electors of Bristol of November 3, 1774," quoted in Anthony Arblaster, Democracy, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p.83.

[4] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), p.275.

[5] See the discussion of intellectuals in Antonio Gramsci, The Modern Prince and Other Writings, trans. Louis Marks, (NY: International, 1957); and in his Selections from the Prison Notebooks, trans. Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (NY: International, 1971).

[6] Aneurin Bevan, In Place of Fear, (London: Quartet Books, 1978), p.35, quoted in Arblaster, Democracy, p.84.

[7] Michel Foucault, "Polemics, Politics, and Problemizations," in The Foucault Reader, trans. Lydia Davis, (NY: Pantheon Books, 1984), p.385.

[8] Michel Foucault, "Structuralism and Post-Structuralism: An Interview With Michel Foucault," Telos, number 55, Spring 1983, p.206.

[9] Jean-Paul Sartre, On a raison de se revolter, translated by and quoted in Douglas Kellner, "J.P. Sartre, P. Gavi, P. Victor, *On a raison de se revolter*," Telos, number 22, Winter 1974-5, p.198.

[10] Kellner, Ibid., p.193.

[11] A discussion of these issues can be found in the introduction and essays in Mikhail M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

[12] Jurgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p.314.

[13] Jurgen Habermas, "Justice and Solidarity: On the Discussion Concerning 'Strategy 6'," The Philosophical Forum, volume XXI, numbers 1-2, Fall-Winter 1989-90, p.43.

[14] Jurgen Habermas, "Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter," in Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen, (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1991), pp.19-20.

[15] Ibid., pp.18-19.

[16] For examples of the sorts of criticisms Habermas's recent work has received see the collection of essays in The Communicative Ethics Controvery, ed. Seyla Benhabib and Fred Dallmayr, (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1990).

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