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REVIEW ESSAYS

MICHEL FOUCAULT. *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. By Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. Pp. xxiii, 231.

An exciting philosophical debate is going on in the United States about how to interpret the French philosopher Michel Foucault. Does he belong to that family of intellectuals from whom we can learn a new way of reading history, literature, and philosophy—the so-called deconstruction of texts? Or should we rather consider, as does Larry Shiner, that “Foucault is not looking for a ‘method’ which will be superior to other methods in objectivity and comprehensiveness, but is forging tools of analysis which take their starting point in the political-intellectual conflicts of the present?”¹ According to Shiner, Foucault’s “method is an anti-method in the sense that it seeks to free us from the illusion that an a-political method is possible.”² The same opinion is to be found in Shiner’s article in *Philosophy Today* where he says that “in Foucault’s work, philosophy ceases to be radical reflection or even a rumination of the world and becomes historical polemic.”³

It is true that all the important works of Foucault—from *Madness and Civilization* (1961) and the *Birth of the Clinic* (1963), by way of *The Order of Things* (1966) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), to *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (vol. I, 1976)—are not historical and theoretical studies applying well-known methods: the author opposes every method which seeks continuity in history and describes man as a sovereign being in this history. In his most recent works he also opposes every method which tries to demonstrate humanist progress in the development of modern forms of discipline and in modern “confessions” concerning sexuality. The problem under discussion is whether all these works simply serve a political strategy or in fact outline a new method in the human and social sciences for studying human beings. If Shiner is right, we have to recognize that “to treat Foucault as a methodologist . . . is to miss the point of his work.”⁴ In this case Foucault would be neither a true philosopher nor a real historian, but a political intellectual whose works have no value outside a special political context.

1. Larry Shiner, “Reading Foucault: Anti-Method and the Genealogy of Power-Knowledge” in *History and Theory* 21 (1982), 386.

2. *Idem.*

3. Larry Shiner, “Foucault, Phenomenology and the Question of Origin” in *Philosophy Today* 26 (1982), 319.

4. Shiner, “Reading Foucault,” 397.

The philosopher Hubert L. Dreyfus and the anthropologist Paul Rabinow proffer quite a different interpretation of Foucault's authorship in their fascinating book *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. They declare that this book is about "how to study human beings and what one learns from such study" (xiii). Thus they consider that, among the modern attempts to achieve this understanding, Foucault's works "represent the most important contemporary effort both to develop a method for the study of human beings and to diagnose the current situation of our society" (xiii). Describing the different phases in Foucault's thought, they show that he first attempted to use a hermeneutical method by looking for "a deep meaning" in the texts; then, in his important books during the 1960s he discovered that structuralism contained some very fruitful methodological ideas; finally, in the 1970s, he developed an original method using a structural (or "archaeological") analysis in an *interpretative analytics* of social practices. This analytics, the authors hold, "combines a type of archaeological analysis which preserves the distancing effect of structuralism, and an interpretative dimension which develops the hermeneutical insight that the investigator is always situated and must understand the meaning of his cultural practices from within them" (viii). By way of this method Foucault is able "to show how in our culture human beings have become the sort of objects structuralism and hermeneutics discover and analyze" (viii). Thus, taking useful ideas from both structuralism and hermeneutics, he is nevertheless beyond both of them.

This article seeks to outline a third way of understanding Foucault. I hope to demonstrate that it is not sufficient either to see Foucault as a methodologist for social and human sciences or to regard him as a political writer. Both interpretations may serve as successful strategies used in order to grasp some very important aspects of his thinking. But finally his writings must be considered as forming part of a French philosophical tradition which is deeply concerned about the human condition. I shall even venture to assert that this philosophy has secret roots in Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist claims about subjectivity and freedom, as well as in the ethical claims of another French philosopher, Emmanuel Lévinas, about the Other and the Different.

This may seem a daring and unlikely allegation, since it is well known that the structuralism Foucault used as methodological instrument was presented in the form of a sharp polemic against the phenomenological movement to which both Sartre and Lévinas belong. The structuralist proclamation about the "dissolution of man," as first pronounced by Claude Lévi-Strauss in the final chapter of his book about Sartre, *The Savage Mind* (1962), and then repeated by Foucault in *The Order of Things*,⁵ was at that time understood—without the slightest denial from Foucault—to be an open and direct declaration of war against phenomenology and existentialism.

But already in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* he declared that he did not

5. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, 1970), 379.

in his works aim “to transfer to the field of history . . . a structuralist method that has proved valuable in other fields of analysis,”⁶ and in the Foreword to the English edition of *The Order of Things*, he stressed more sharply that he was not a structuralist: “I have used none of the methods, concepts, or key terms that characterize structural analysis.”⁷ Today we can make a further step by saying that Foucault has never totally dismissed the ideas of freedom and subjectivity which form part of the phenomenological and existentialist basis of his philosophical education. The justification of that statement is now given by Foucault himself in an “Afterword” to Dreyfus and Rabinow’s book. There, more explicitly than ever, he advocates the ideas of freedom and subjectivity. He explains that the reason why he has analyzed power systems is because in our society the “struggle against the forms of subjection – against the submission of subjectivity” (213) – has existed for a very long time. All this represented “a struggle for a new subjectivity” (213). Today, he says, “we have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries” (216). He adds that when one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the action of others, “one includes an important element: freedom” (221).

However surprising those statements may seem, we must take them seriously when debating the meaning of Foucault’s work as a whole. There cannot be any remaining doubt that Foucault’s ultimate concern is a defense of subjectivity and freedom. Thus, Foucault’s philosophy has to be taken as a special kind of reflection on human existence. It is also necessary, however, to take a fresh look at all his writings and to try to understand why he opposed phenomenology and existentialism in the way he did in the 1960s.

This new way of viewing the development of Foucault’s thought can in many ways find support in Dreyfus and Rabinow’s book. I do not think they have discovered the essence of his entire thought, but they uncover most of the elements necessary for discovering it. Thus, their discussion of the shifts and continuity in his philosophy can serve as an eye-opener for a better understanding of his works.

I. THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF AN ILLUSION: FINITUDE AS SOVEREIGNTY

When Foucault criticized phenomenology in his writings in the 1960s it was not his intention to criticize the ideas of freedom and subjectivity as such. As Dreyfus and Rabinow put it, he opposed the “project of tracing all meaning back to the meaning-giving activity of an autonomous, transcendental subject” (xix). He rejected thereby the idea of the human subject as sovereign consciousness. The most famous expression of this idea was given by Sartre in his *Being and Nothingness*, where he claims that “from the instant of my upsurge into being, I carry the weight of the world by myself alone without anything

6. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York, 1972), 15.

7. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xiv.

or any person being able to lighten it.”⁸ The same idea was proclaimed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty in the preface to his chief-work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, in the following words: “I am the absolute source.”⁹

The declaration of sovereignty with the human subject carrying the world on his shoulders was founded upon Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological analysis of consciousness, as that intentionality without which things would have no objectivity. So Foucault had good reason for considering the idea of sovereign man to be an essential part of modern phenomenology.

The type of archaeology which is in opposition to this idea is an analysis of the anonymous structures underlying and determining all the knowledge a human being can obtain.

The hidden grounds determining what a human being is capable of grasping as meaning and reason is already of concern in Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization*. There he shows how the view of madness changes during the Renaissance, so that reason is no longer regarded as being connected with a mysterious insanity, but is defined as being the complete opposite of madness. The madman was excluded from society and confined to houses where lepers once lived. This was a radical shift in the concept of reason: what was considered reasonable was not the same as before.

In *The Birth of the Clinic* Foucault presents an “Archaeology of the Medical Look” (as the subtitle indicates) which expounds how this gaze (French: *regard*), in looking at human beings as dead bodies, succeeded in perceiving individuals: the medical examination and dissection of the dead leads to the idea of a single being constituting himself as the scientific object which presents itself in its purest form to the doctor’s gaze after its death. At the end of the eighteenth century, this appearance of man as individual before the medical look forms the threshold between the Classical and the Modern Age.

The confinement of fools is described in *Madness and Civilization* as determined by social practice, expressed in the form of royal proclamations. But in order to emphasize the anonymous character of the changes, Foucault saw the shifts more and more in terms of pure events in discursive practices. In *The Birth of the Clinic* the practice considered was reduced to the doctor’s purely gazing at the corpse. And in *The Order of Things* Foucault seems to have given up every idea of any social practice underlying the discourse; apparently his concern now was to define a silent discursive structure which alone sustained and governed all that is said and understood.

Furthermore, it may be true, as noted by Dreyfus and Rabinow, that if Foucault in *The Order of Things* concentrated exclusively on discourse and not on social institutions, it was because of “the influence of the structuralist enthusiasm sweeping Paris” (16).

Foucault did not make use of the notion of structure, but introduced another notion which was similar to it, that of *epistème* or epistemological field¹⁰ which

8. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (London, 1957), 555.

9. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York, 1962).

10. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 13.

he defined as the “positive ground of our knowledge.”¹¹ As an anonymous and unconscious field, *epistème* had much in common with what was called structure in linguistics (Jakobsen, Hjelmslev), in ethnology (Lévi-Strauss), in psychoanalysis (Lacan), and in a particular French type of Marxism (Althusser).¹²

But if Foucault was to some extent employing a structuralist model of thinking—or what appears to be such a model—it was not only in order to be heard and accepted in the years when structuralism was in fashion in Paris. It was rather because he was convinced that the idea of a human being’s dependence on an *epistème* could strengthen his criticism of the phenomenological and existentialist conception of man as sovereign subject.

It was of prime importance to him that the idea of an unconscious *epistème* meant that a human being’s knowledge and speech is not essentially the product of a human subject’s will, but depends on epistemological rules.

But the idea of an epistemological field was also useful for Foucault’s project because it served to demonstrate that the concept of man in European culture “is a recent invention,”¹³ that it belongs to a very special *epistème* which is “not yet two centuries old, a new wrinkle in our knowledge,” and that it “will disappear again as soon as that knowledge has discovered a new form.”¹⁴ This idea of man—which constituted the main theme in *The Order of Things*—is the idea of a living, working, and speaking subject, the destiny of whom is to transform and dominate the world and whose central position in the world is described by the humanities or “human sciences.” In Foucault’s eyes this idea is an untenable combination of two concepts: that of finitude (man as limited by his physical life) and that of sovereignty (man as origin by virtue of his conscious activity).

Before the emergence of this idea of man, the concept of finitude had another sense, as Foucault already explained in the conclusion to *The Birth of the Clinic*:

For classical thought, finitude has no other content than the negation of the infinite, while the thought that was formed at the end of the eighteenth century gave it the powers of the positive: the anthropological structure that then appeared played both the critical role of limit and the founding role of origin.¹⁵

In *The Order of Things* he presents the idea of man as developed in “the analytics of finitude” (the phenomenology and existentialism of Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and others). The aim of these analytics was to demonstrate that the foundation of man’s determination was his own being in all its radical limitation. It sought to show “that the contents of experience are already their own conditions.”¹⁶

11. *Ibid.*, 385.

12. Cf. my article “Le structuralisme français” in *Contemporary Philosophy: A New Survey*, ed. G. Flöistad (Boston, 1982), II, 413–452.

13. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 386.

14. *Ibid.*, xxiii.

15. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (New York, 1973), 197.

16. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 339.

The notion whereby finitude is made the condition of the possibility of all things appears in modern thought in the shape of an individual who on the one hand is subject to the laws of economics, philology, and biology, but who on the other hand, by means of a kind of internal torsion and overlapping “has acquired the right through the interplay of those very laws, to know them and to subject them to total clarification.”¹⁷

Foucault considered this individual to be a really strange invention, who—as Dreyfus and Rabinow put it—“is sovereign precisely by virtue of being enslaved, a being whose very finitude allows him to take the place of God” (30). This individual is both subject and object of his own knowledge. He is not, like the human being in the Classical Age, an entity contained within a representation of the world and maintained in a “serene nonexistence by the imperious unity of Discourse.”¹⁸ He is now an organizer of the very spectacle in which he plays the central role by creating his own image in the interstices of a fragmented language.

However, the contradiction contained within the very idea of man has doomed it from the start, and in Foucault’s eyes this cannot be recognized without its having an influence on the different trends of phenomenology and existentialism which, by way of futile strategies, have tried to conceal the contradiction.

In phenomenology, man’s double existence as product and source is treated as an ambiguity between the empirical and the transcendental, and it can never be quite clear whether the human being is an object or a subject: it is an empirical object which understands itself as a constitutive or transcendental subject.

Phenomenologists think they have discovered the empirico-transcendental doubleness in the actual experience of world (Husserl’s *Lebenswelt* or Merleau-Ponty’s *expérience vécue*). But Foucault can only see the analysis of actual experience as a discourse of mixed character: the discourse of man living in the world as part of nature, society, and language—and the discourse of man as origin of the world’s human significance and usefulness. Thus, it is an ambiguous discourse both about a fact (the human body and its action) and about a condition for the possibility (the meaning-giving consciousness) of all facts, including itself.

According to Foucault, this empirico-transcendental idea of man was the very basis of the “human sciences”—psychology, sociology, the study of literature and mythology—which grew up in the nineteenth century. Today, however, sciences such as biology, economics, and linguistics no longer consider the ambiguous idea of man to be their fundamental concern. They now consider the unconscious structures of life, society, and language to constitute the real texture of the human world.

Furthermore, the disappearance of man is confirmed both by psychoanalysis (as, for example, Freud and Lacan) and by ethnology (for example, Claude Lévi-Strauss) which establish “counter-sciences” as opposed to the “human

17. *Ibid.*, 310.

18. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 386.

sciences”: “They ceaselessly ‘unmake’ that very man who is creating and re-creating his positivity in the human sciences.”¹⁹ Finally, philosophy too, as an archaeology of the “human sciences,” helps to unveil the fact that these sciences are based on the impossible idea of man as simultaneously object and subject of scientific work.

The Archaeology of Knowledge constitutes Foucault’s reflection on the theoretical impact of the archaeological method he used in his two previous books. Here he sums up the role of his archaeology in four points: 1. Archaeology tries to define discourse as practices obeying certain rules. It does not treat discourse as a *document* which has to be interpreted as a sign of something else, but is “concerned with discourse in its own volume, as a *monument*”²⁰; 2. Archaeology does not seek to rediscover the continuous, insensible transition which relates discourses, but seeks to define discourses in their specificity. Its aim is to “show in what way the set of rules that they put into operation is irreducible to any other”²¹; 3. Archaeology is not governed according to the sovereignty of an author’s work. It does not consider a work or authorship to be a relevant entity, even if it concerns replacing it in its total context. But it defines “types of rules for discursive practices” which run through individual works, sometimes governing them entirely, sometimes governing only part of them²²; 4. Archaeology does not pretend to discover what has been thought and experienced by man in the very moment he expresses it in discourse. It is “nothing more than a rewriting. . . . It is not a return to the innocent secret of the origin; it is the systematic description of a discourse-object.”²³

It follows that archaeology must be distinguished from a “history of ideas” analyzing “permanences which persist beneath apparent changes.”²⁴ Abandoning the analysis of genesis, continuity, and totalization in history, it is “an attempt to practice a quite different history of what men have said.”²⁵

Dreyfus and Rabinow, however, find Foucault’s defense of archaeological investigation extremely problematic. They note that his “pure description of discursive events”²⁶ not only “remains neutral as to the truth of each and every serious truth claim,” but equally “neutral as to the necessity of transcendental justification of the possibility of serious truth claims” (50).

According to Dreyfus and Rabinow, this is tantamount to a decline in interest in the seriousness and meaning of discourse. Thus, they consider that Foucault runs a great risk of rendering his own writings insignificant. In their own eyes this is mainly a consequence of an “overreaction to hermeneutics” (12). They consider that, in reacting against the search for a deeper meaning developed by

19. *Ibid.*, 379.

20. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 138–139.

21. *Ibid.*, 139.

22. *Idem.*

23. *Ibid.*, 139–140.

24. *Ibid.*, 138.

25. *Idem.*

26. *Ibid.*, 27.

hermeneutics in an effort to save “man,” Foucault has gone too far in rejecting all search for a serious import in human discourse. They do not agree with Foucault’s claim that what history has recounted is not the gradual overt expression of an internal deeper meaning, but rather its own rules for systematic change. They cannot follow Foucault (73) when he maintains: “Discourse, at least as analysed by archaeology, that is, at the level of its positivity, is not a consciousness that embodies its project in the external form of language. . . . It is a practice that has its own forms of sequence and succession.”²⁷

Dreyfus and Rabinow are unable to accept this extreme form of “structuralism,” because it involves a rejection of valuable views shared by “pragmatics such as Dewey, hermeneutic phenomenologists such as Heidegger, and ordinary language philosophers such as Wittgenstein, that in order to study linguistic practices one must take into account the background of shared practices which make them intelligible” (57). And indeed, in Foucault’s archaeology at the end of the 1960s, the background of social practice disappears and linguistic practice proclaims itself as an autonomous realm.

Dreyfus and Rabinow reject this position of illusion, finding it expressed in the conclusion of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* by the words: “Discourse is not life, its time is not your time.”²⁸ Such statements, they think, prove that Foucault “avoids becoming involved in the serious research for truth and meaning he describes” (83). But then his archaeology seems to be a “methodological failure” (79), since it enables his reader to ask him a nasty question about the significance of his own discourse: “How can his discourse have meaning at all?” (83).

Dreyfus and Rabinow are ready to admit that Foucault is hesitating on the brink of meaninglessness. There are moments when he “seems to think of himself as one among many ‘serious workers’ ” (86). And indeed he speaks about his involvement in his own *epistème* or archive: “It is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say—and to itself, the object of our discourse—its mode of appearance, its forms of existence and coexistence.”²⁹

Dreyfus and Rabinow insist on maintaining that “the archaeologist stands outside all discursive formations” (86) by considering meaning as an epiphenomenon of a network of rules. In fact they think that neither the serious scientist nor the archaeologist could do any valuable work, “if it weren’t for the illusion that there is serious meaning” (88). In the words of Merleau-Ponty they proclaim that we are “condemned to meaning” (88).

They conclude that in his archaeological period Foucault plays the role of a divided spectator, “both sharing and denying the serious meaning” (90). For this reason they maintain that archaeology has not overcome the ambiguity contained within the phenomenological idea of man: “One can say of archaeo-

27. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 169.

28. *Ibid.*, 211.

29. *Ibid.*, 130.

logical discourse what Foucault says of the existential phenomenologist's discourse, viz. that it is a discourse of mixed nature" (93).

They also argue that archaeological discourse is ahistorical, for Foucault speaks about "a discourse which is not life, whose time is not the time of those who live in history and take seriously its progress, conflicts and decline" (96).

Foucault too, they think, tries both to affirm and deny his finitude, since he affirms his involvement in his own discourse but at the same time presents a theory which denies the validity of all involvement. The question is how the archaeologist can "appear *in* history as the pure a-historical thinker who disinterestedly catalogues the death of man and God?" (96).

The value of Dreyfus and Rabinow's account of Foucault's archaeology is that it provides a critical description of the "illusion of autonomous discourse" to which Foucault was very nearly a victim. But their analysis lacks any understanding as to why in fact he was tempted by this illusion. Was it merely an irrational act to which he was led by his interest in making a successful study of the human being? Was there no deeper concern?

It is difficult for the two authors to complete their interpretation of Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*. They fail especially in their attempt to explain the concluding words quoted above: "Discourse is not life, its time is not your time." They suppose that here the philosopher is defending the autonomy of discourse against man's claim to live an historical existence in time. But in reality he is defending precisely the opposite position, because he speaks about historical life in time which cannot be reduced to discourse and its *epistème*. It is important to read the whole sentence, which, unfortunately, is not quoted by Dreyfus and Rabinow. After having said "Discourse is not life," and so on, Foucault continues: "in it, you will not be reconciled to death." These words imply that in emphasizing that the human being cannot overcome his death, just as he cannot disguise his life as origin by surrendering to discourse, Foucault is taking the true finitude of man seriously.

The sentence quoted should not be detached from its context. If one takes heed of the context it is clear that the sentence provides an answer to the question: "Must I suppose that in my discourse I can have no survival? And that in speaking I am not banishing my death but actually establishing it?"³⁰ The answer is: Yes, in your discourse you cannot be reconciled to death, for discourse changes; it cannot make your life eternal, it can only confirm your finitude.

Thus, Foucault's archaeology is not simply an attempt to establish a better method for studying human beings, but has been developed as a weapon against the illusion that human subjectivity can, by means of language, conquer sovereign immortality and infinity.

As Michel de Certeau wrote in his profound analysis of Foucault's archaeology: "It is not the end of man which Foucault proclaims, but the end of a con-

30. *Ibid.*, 210.

cept of man by which one supposes to have solved by the positivism of the “human sciences” . . . the ever recurrent problem of death.”³¹

This interpretation is confirmed by Foucault’s own explication of “the end of man” in *The Order of Things*:

From within language experienced and traversed as language, in the play of its possibilities extended to their furthest point, what emerges is that man has “come to an end,” and that, by reaching the summit of all possible speech, he arrives not at the very heart of himself but at the brink of that which limits him; in that region where death prowls, where thought is extinguished, where the promise of the origin interminably recedes.³²

But Foucault is not only committed to facing a negative aspect of human existence: mortality. He is fighting for a positive aspect: the freedom or autonomy of human subjectivity. This idea is not pronounced explicitly in Foucault’s archaeological writings, but is nevertheless to be found indirectly in many ways. It is present in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, when he declares that none of his books are devoted primarily to debating structure, but concern the “field in which the questions of human being, consciousness, origin, and the subject emerge, intersect, mingle, and separate off.”³³ And it is present in the conclusion when he emphasizes: “I wanted not to exclude the problem of the subject, but to define the position and functions that the subject could occupy in the diversity of discourse.”³⁴ He advocates human freedom even more clearly when he writes in the introduction: “I have tried to define this blank space from which I speak, and which is slowly taking shape in a discourse that I still feel to be so precarious and so unsure.”³⁵ And he proclaims his own freedom in these words: “I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality and let us be free to write.”³⁶

According to Dreyfus and Rabinow the archaeological method is ahistorical, but Foucault says the contrary in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: “I did not deny history, but held in suspense the general, empty category of change in order to reveal transformations at different levels.”³⁷ And in *The Order of Things* he asserts even that the sense of history has been lost by the idea of the man who is sovereign despite his finitude. He argues that before the invention of this idea, people were living in and understanding themselves according to a “great narrative common to things and men.”³⁸ History appeared to them as

31. Michel de Certeau, “Le noir soleil du langage” in *L’Absent de l’histoire* (Paris, 1973), 130.

32. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 383.

33. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 16.

34. *Ibid.*, 200.

35. *Ibid.*, 17.

36. *Idem.* The final words in French about civil morality: “Qu’elle nous laisse libres quand il s’agit d’écrire” are in the English edition translated in such a way that there is no idea of being free; therefore the translation of these words is modified here.

37. *Ibid.*, 200.

38. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 367.

a “vast historical stream, uniform in each of its points, drawing with it in one and the same current, in one and the same fall or ascension, or cycle, all men, and with them things and animals, every living or inert being, even the most unmoved aspects of the earth.”³⁹

This unity was shattered in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and so the man who appeared at that time was “dehistoricized.”⁴⁰ Indeed, this man found himself surrounded by history, since during the course of history he discovered changes in all positive things. But in his very relationship to the changes in the conditions of his existence—transformed into economic systems and developed in forms and usages of language—he was not himself historical. Or if he was historical, he was only “a simple form of human historicity,”⁴¹ a naked temporality regarded as another, more radical history than the history of positive things—a history which concerned his most interior being.

In Foucault’s eyes, this was a contradictory concept of the same sort as sovereign finitude: man was conceived as the object of psychological, sociological, and linguistic determinations, but also as the living, working, and speaking subject or origin of all these determinations. He was at the same time inside and outside history: on the inside, exposed to the events; on the outside, forming continuity in the succession of events.

Thus, the “modern man” who believes in his own historicity is a being who, despite his historical finitude, has given birth to the illusion that he can dominate both time and the past by the sheer omnipotence of his thinking, as if there were no radical difference between now and then, between here and there, between the Same and the Other. Precisely this “man” has lost the sense of history by divorcing abstract historicity from the real historical process.

It should now be clear that Foucault’s archaeological concern about autonomous discourse was no simple methodological failure. It was specially designed to fight the illusion of man as “sovereign in the kingdom of the world,”⁴² the illusion of “the sovereignty of the subject,”⁴³ in order to foster awareness of the subject’s real conditions and possibilities of existence. Thus the object of Foucault’s approach was never limited to the search for a good method for studying human beings scientifically, but included—even in his most structuralist period—the liberation of human existence from alienation and delusion. He was never a totally detached spectator, but was always in his own way, and more or less secretly, an “existentialist” committed in a highly original manner to the seriousness and meaning of what has been and could be said about the meaning of existence as subjectivity.

II. THE GENEALOGY OF MODERN SUBJECTION: THE QUESTION OF POWER

The transference of Foucault’s thought from archaeology in the 1960s to

39. *Idem.*

40. *Ibid.*, 369.

41. *Ibid.*, 370.

42. *Ibid.*, 348.

43. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 12.

genealogy in the 1970s is described by Dreyfus and Rabinow as an “inversion of the priority of theory to that of practice” (102). But in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* the author describes the *epistème* or archive as “the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification.”⁴⁴ Therefore it might be more correct to define the above change as a return of Foucault’s ideas in *Madness and Civilization* about social practice as the basis for discursive practice. Dreyfus and Rabinow are correct in saying that “in Foucault’s later works, practice, on all levels, is considered more fundamental than theory” (103) in the sense that his previous archaeological analysis of discourses and theories now serves him as a means for the genealogical exposure of social and institutional dependencies. Thereby he has arrived at a position from which he is able to deal with the question of power, with its relationship to human knowledge and corporeal life in modern society. This investigation of power forms a new element of his thinking. “What was missing from my work,” he has declared, “was the problem of ‘discursive regime,’ the effects of power proper on the enunciative play.” The reason was that “I confused it too much with systematicity, the theoretical form, or something like a paradigm”⁴⁵ (104). In this later period he tries to reveal the development of different power rituals by describing specific models for exercising power: in *Discipline and Punish* he explains, for example, Bentham’s sketch of the Panopticon-prison, and in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* he makes use of the institution of the confessional—in both cases as an instrument for diagnosing power-relationships which infect man’s body and form his ideas.

The exercise of power demands special knowledge about how to entangle human bodies in a system of subjection, and it demands the ability to manipulate a technology of the body. Consequently, power and knowledge are not external to one another, and the aim of his genealogy is to analyze the cultural and social practice in which power and knowledge intersect. It might seem as if Foucault is only studying the past: the birth of the prison and the development of the confessional. But Dreyfus and Rabinow point out correctly that he is in fact diagnosing the present by asking: how did we get there? (119). As he says in *Discipline and Punish*, in writing the history of prisons, he is “writing the history of the present.”⁴⁶

As a genealogist Foucault is no longer averse to the hermeneutical research for a deeper meaning in the texts, as he was before; he goes in for a “decipherment” of texts. Dreyfus and Rabinow consider this method of investigation to be a further development of what they, like Paul Ricoeur, call the hermeneutics of suspicion. To suspect a text is to try to discover distortions of meaning in people’s minds and to urge them to liberate themselves from false conscious-

44. *Ibid.*, 130.

45. Foucault, “Truth and Power,” interview in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings by Michel Foucault, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York, 1980), 105.

46. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (London, 1977; New York, 1979), 31.

ness. According to Dreyfus and Rabinow, however, there is a difference between the hermeneutics of suspicion and Foucault's decipherment. Foucault does not think that the secrets the actor can be forced to face should be regarded as the most true and deepest meaning of his outward behavior, but he seeks to demonstrate that the deeper meaning, which the authority (the "voice of conscience" or an interlocutor, for example, the psychoanalyst) urges the actor to uncover, "also hides another more important meaning, which is not directly available to the actor" (124). Thus, the genealogist who is doing historical, sociological, and philosophical work must be more suspicious than a human being can be of himself with the help of an interlocutor who reveals to him a "truth."

Dreyfus and Rabinow call this radical diagnosis of meaning in cultural works "an interpretative analytic of our current situation" (124). As the title of their book suggests, this analytic is "beyond structuralism and hermeneutics"; it employs both structuralism and hermeneutics as instruments of understanding, but it understands both past and present better than they.

What meaning is it that cannot be directly available to the actor himself by way of a deeper awareness? It is the meaning of the determination of himself as both subject and object by power technologies. So, in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault studies disciplinary technologies which force human beings to regard themselves as social and mute bodies, but also as sources of resistance to this subjection.

The first step in the development of modern power relationships was the use of brutal torture in order to dominate the human being as material object. But torture often kills the criminal, so in a sense the latter escapes punishment. Thereafter a "humanist reform" made an attack on this excess of violence and advocated a punishment which could save the "soul" of man. Instead of rude violence punishment became *watching*: man was now supervised in systems where he could always be under control—constructed as in Bentham's Panopticon so that "in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen."⁴⁷ The man manipulated here as object of the supervisor's gaze is precisely the same human being who is individualized and transformed into a subject which human science treats as object.

This individual, however, acquired the idea that he could liberate himself from suppression by confessing something "forbidden" about himself to another individual. So the aim of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* is to demonstrate how the confession of sexuality is a vain attempt to resist power by speaking the "truth." It is vain because the "truth" is exactly what is required by those exercising the power of watching. And so belief in the idea of the liberating effect of a talking cure is an effect of a masked disciplinary technology, which Foucault calls bio-technico-power or bio-power. It is an illusion to think that truth can be separated from power—that a human being can be beyond power

47. *Ibid.*, 202.

merely by telling the “truth.” In reality, the talking cure transforms the individual into the “subject” he is intended to be. He is no longer mute, but becomes talking object—or “subject”—for the Others’ gaze; an object of domination and alienation.

This alienation is disguised because knowledge of myself is not only given to the others, but to myself as well. In the confessional I am the Other not only for the interlocutor, but for myself, so that confessing the “truth” is a process of self-formation or auto-colonization. Here violence is not noticeable, so bio-power is really a sophisticated method of exercising power which it is extremely difficult to resist.

But Foucault maintains that even the auto-colonization (as element of confession) is a way of exercising power which we must resist. The problem is how can he be sure that things we have done and are doing by our own free will nevertheless produce discontent and stimulate our resistance, and therefore demand genealogical investigation? It seems that he must presuppose the idea of an unalienated life. But if that is the case, from where does he have this idea? Is it a product of history and culture—or is it as old as history itself?

Dreyfus and Rabinow seem to advocate the first answer. They suppose “that something in our historical practices has defined us, for the time being at least, as the sort of being who, when sensitive, resists submitting to and furthering the sort of totalizing ordering which Foucault’s analysis has shown to be characteristic of our current practices.” They think that “some concrete paradigm of health would seem to be required, if one claims to have a concrete diagnosis of how things have gone wrong” (201). In their eyes, modern networks of power are a “disease” (202) inherent to our culture.

But how can we be found at the same time inside this culture, as the sick structure of our practices and discourses, and outside it, by way of our critical stance? Dreyfus and Rabinow are well aware of this paradox which is a result of their interpretation of Foucault. One of their final questions to Foucault is therefore: “What are the resources which enable us to sustain a critical stance?” (206). And this question precipitates the fundamental question: “What is power?” (207). To these questions they think that Foucault fails to provide answers, so that his thinking, they conclude, constitutes a dilemma.

It is possible that they are unable to find the answers because they consider that resistance to power is a product accidental to history. Foucault’s “Afterword” to their book shows that this interpretation is wrong. The source of resistance is the very subject, or the person who, since the dawn of history, claims freedom or autonomy. To argue that there can be no basic idea of subjectivity in Foucault’s genealogy of power because his work is a research into the different modes by which human beings are converted into “subjects” is a mistake that is not without connection with the false image of Foucault as a structuralist. In the “Afterword,” in which Foucault declares that his objective has been to study the “modes of objectivation which transform human beings into subjects” (208), he also asserts that “we have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been

imposed on us for several centuries” (216), and that “if we speak of the structures or mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others” (217). Thus, the basis for resistance is the person who seeks his own form of subjectivity.

The idea of a person involves that of freedom: resistance to power presupposes “freedom’s refusal to submit” (221). So we can now say retrospectively that despite Foucault’s entire polemic against the idea of man, his archaeological criticism was merely aimed at a specific illusionary image of man, never at the idea of man as acting subject or free person.

Thus, resistance to power draws its resources from the practices of human freedom. Resistance to subjection is a more fundamental human act than recovery from an illness. And therefore an idea of health, accidentally emerging in history, cannot be sufficient reason for this act. It is rather this act which is a precondition for ideas of health. Only the free subject can constitute the real basis of resistance.

What then is power? It is—like resistance—a concept which cannot be defined without the idea of subject. Thus, Foucault says in the “Afterword” about the exercise of power: “it is always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions” (220).

We can exercise power only as acting subjects, but it is likewise as such subjects that we afford “an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principle of freedom” (225). Insubordination is the subject’s escape or possible flight.

Foucault concludes that between power relationships and the strategy of struggle there is “a reciprocal appeal, a perpetual linking and a perpetual reversal” (226). This appeal and this reversal has of course no meaning unless there exists a freedom and a subjectivity to revolt.

III. THE EXISTENTIAL ANALYTICS OF SUBJECTIVITY: SARTRE AND LÉVINAS

The existentialist foundation of Foucault’s writings can be thrown into relief by referring to two great philosophers belonging to the French existentialist tradition: Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Lévinas.

1. Sartre

In the 1960s Sartre and Foucault seemed to be radical antagonists; there were indeed good reasons for their antagonism. In Sartre’s classic work *Being and Nothingness* the idea of consciousness, of man as being carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders alone,⁴⁸ is surely the idea of the sovereign being which is “consciousness through and through” and “can be limited only by itself.”⁴⁹ However, it is also finite being. As being-for-itself it emerges by a kind

48. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 555.

49. *Ibid.*, xxxi.

of nihilating withdrawal (*néantisation*) from the material being-in-itself. It exists only by being nothingness in the form of a fundamental negation of established things, only by a NO to all substantial being. Freedom is precisely this negation of what has already been materialized or established. Thus, man is both sovereignty and finitude: insofar as he is relative to being-in-itself, he is “effected with facticity,” but insofar as he creates himself, he “is an absolute.”⁵⁰

This, of course, is the empirico-transcendental being Foucault has criticized in his archaeology, wherein he rejects the idea of man as absolute but nevertheless relative.

The antagonism between Sartre and Foucault became particularly apparent when Sartre explicitly dissociated himself from what he considered to be Foucault’s “refusal of history.”⁵¹ In an interview he rejected Foucault’s attempt to replace the practice which shapes human thought by a succession of immobilities. Sartre complained that Foucault had refrained from understanding the transition from one historical period to another and had substituted a scientific analysis of structures for what Sartre considered necessarily uncertain investigation of changes in history. He considered Foucault’s position to be a kind of “return to positivism” although it was “not a positivism of facts, but a positivism of signs.”⁵² However, Sartre did not regard himself to be an enemy of structuralism insofar as it explained already established language structures. But he insisted that “man is only a product of structure if he transgresses it.”⁵³

Thus, Sartre saw Foucault as a structuralist who employed structural analysis in order to deny the idea of human practice in history. During the 1960s Foucault himself was partly responsible for this image, because he strongly opposed the phenomenological idea of the empirico-transcendental subject who dominates history. Moreover, at that particular time Foucault was not speaking directly about freedom and there was no mention of resistance to power. The most likely reason for his silence about freedom was that he could not agree with the fashionable existentialist way of speaking about subject and freedom, expressed in Sartre’s most daring statements, such as: “two solutions and only two are possible: either man is wholly determined (which is inadmissible, especially because a determined consciousness—i.e., a consciousness externally motivated—becomes itself pure exteriority and ceases to be consciousness) or else man is wholly free.”⁵⁴ In another statement he says about responsibility: “I am responsible for everything, in fact, except for my very responsibility, for I am not the foundation of my being.”⁵⁵

Today the idea of freedom has turned up in Foucault’s philosophy as a condition for the resistance to power. Thereby he has also recognized freedom

50. *Ibid.*, 619.

51. “Sartre Aujourd’hui,” *l’Arc* 30 (Aix-en-Provence, 1966), 87.

52. *Ibid.*, 94.

53. *Ibid.*, 90.

54. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 442.

55. *Ibid.*, 555.

as a condition for the criticism of all kinds of alienation, so that his denial of the extreme existentialist idea of freedom as an alienation of the human being's self-understanding must also be regarded as conditioned by freedom!

However, this idea of freedom to resist is not totally different from Sartre's idea of freedom as negation and revolt. Like Sartre, who declares in *Being and Nothingness* that he is "an existent who learns his freedom through his acts,"⁵⁶ Foucault does not separate freedom from practice. And like Sartre, who presents freedom as man's escape from being transformed into a thing or an object, Foucault speaks of freedom in order to explain the resistance to objectification and the refusal to subjugate oneself.

Even the very model upon which the understanding of objectification is based is the same in Sartre and Foucault: it is that of *a man looking at the Other*. In one of the most famous passages in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre analyzes the look (*le regard*): it is thanks to my look or gaze that I perceive another human being as an object, and, correspondingly, I discover the other as subject from the moment she or he looks at me as an object. In Sartre's own words: "It is in and through the revelation of my being-as-object for the Other, that I must be able to apprehend the presence of his being-as-subject."⁵⁷ The other is subject as "the one who looks at me"⁵⁸ and transforms me into an object for him. But this is a danger to my free existence: "The Other's watchful look" is a "gun pointed at me."⁵⁹ Thus, communication between human beings is a struggle between looks in which everybody tries to administer his look in such a way as to make him or her "the master of the situation."⁶⁰ With the help of his gaze each actor is fighting to gain a position from which he or she can watch without being watched, and see the other as object without being seen as such.

We know how important the look — *le regard* — is in Foucault's work. If we recall the subtitle to *The Birth of the Clinic*, for which the most correct translation would be: "An Archaeology of the Medical Look," the doctor's look is described here as the basic process by which human beings may be turned into individuals who can be treated as objects.

In *The Order of Things* Foucault opposes the idea of man's claiming to be the subject or origin of the representation of the world. This is the idea of man's sovereignty over the world by virtue of his *seeing* things: life, work, and language constitute the person who is master by virtue of his look.

In *Discipline and Punish* the chief model of domination, Bentham's Panopticon, is a system whereby someone can see without being seen by the others. Here power is exercised essentially by watching.

Thus, in Foucault's philosophy, as in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, resistance to power is resistance to the Other's gaze. It is the subject's fight for the

56. *Ibid.*, 439.

57. *Ibid.*, 256.

58. *Ibid.*, 257.

59. *Ibid.*, 264.

60. *Ibid.*, 265.

right to unfold his own look in the world. Both in Sartre and Foucault this fight is a constant struggle for freedom.

What, then, is the real difference between Sartre and Foucault where freedom is concerned? The difference is that Sartre considers freedom to be not only the ability to resist objectification, but the very act of consciousness whereby things in general acquire signification. Therefore he claims that even obstacles to freedom are created as such by freedom itself: "Human-reality everywhere encounters resistances and obstacles which it has not created, but these resistances and obstacles have meaning only in and through the free choice which human reality *is*."⁶¹ Foucault, however, merely speaks of freedom as a denial of the Other's power, and rejects Sartre's idea of the subject as master of all meaning. Another difference between Sartre and Foucault has hitherto been that the latter does not advocate freedom directly as Sartre has always done, but freedom is only present indirectly in his descriptions of the strategies for introducing separations between the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, and the criminal and the good fellow, insofar as these analyses constituted a critical form of resistance to those distinctions. And in his archaeological analysis of discourses freedom was only indirectly present as the reason why he opposed the illusion of man's sovereignty. But this difference between him and Sartre has since disappeared, because in his "Afterword" to Dreyfus and Rabinow's book he openly declares: "At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom" (221–222).

Sartre is dead. Long live the new philosopher of freedom: Michel Foucault!

2. Lévinas

Like Sartre, Emmanuel Lévinas (born in 1906) belongs to the French phenomenological movement. But Lévinas's own philosophy is not concentrated on man's lonely consciousness. Its aim is to provide a phenomenological description of the emergence of "the totally Other," that is, the other person face to face with the subject. The first great work in which Lévinas has developed this view of the Other is *Totality and Infinity* published in French in 1961. The reflections in this book on the *Same* and the *Other* may have influenced Foucault's idea of an archaeology and genealogical defense of the Other.

In his preface to *The Order of Things* Foucault explains that the history of madness presented in *Madness and Civilization* can be regarded as "the history of the Other—of that which, for a given culture, is at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded (so as to exorcize the interior danger) but by being shut away (in order to reduce its otherness)," whereas he considers that the history of the order imposed on things, as described in *The Birth of the Clinic* and in *The Order of Things*, can be seen as "the history of the Same—of that which, for a given culture, is both dispersed and related, therefore to be distinguished by kinds and to be collected together into identities."⁶²

61. *Ibid.*, 468.

62. Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xxiv.

Furthermore, he declares in *The Order of Things* that the origin revealed by modern thought in the very movement whereby it invented man “is something like the Same”: it was an attempt to “return to man in his identity.”⁶³ Thus, the analytics of finitude is “always concerned with showing how the Other, the Distant, is also the Near and the Same.”⁶⁴ It fails, however, because “what is revealed at the foundation of the history of things and of the historicity proper to man is the distance creating a vacuum within the Same.”⁶⁵ In other words, the idea of man is the idea that the same human spirit—a universal Subject always able to recognize itself in the different—is the driving force in history.

If we do not wish to give up this view of history, Foucault says in the introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, it is because we are “afraid to conceive of the Other in the time of our own thought.”⁶⁶ As opposed to this egoism, Foucault wishes to express his consideration for the Other, in the past as well as in the present. So the archaeology should be conceived of as an historical approach to the past which refuses to reduce the Other to the Same.

As regards Foucault’s relationship to his own time, he affirms that “rather than trying to reduce the others to silence, by claiming that what they say is worthless, I have tried to define the blank space from which I speak.”⁶⁷

This consideration for the Other is the very theme of Lévinas’s philosophy, which develops the “metaphysical desire toward *something else entirely*, toward the *absolute Other*.”⁶⁸ Lévinas opposes Hegel’s philosophy where self-consciousness “expresses the universality of the Same identifying itself in the alterity of objects thought and despite the opposition of the self to self.”⁶⁹ Thus he rejects the Hegelian idea of history and world as *Totality*, and pleads for the idea of *Infinity*, that is, the idea of the Other who is always infinitely distant. He calls face (*visage*) the way in which the “Other presents himself exceeding the idea of the Other in me.”⁷⁰ And the aim of the whole book is to describe how the face reveals the Other as radically separated from me and therefore never able to be reduced to the Same.

On the basis of this ethical philosophy he accuses “the history of historiographers” of a totalization whereby life is always regarded as dead, and history as nature, since “birth and death as punctual moments, and the interval that separates them, are lodged in this universal time of the historian, who is a survivor.”⁷¹ In “the time of the historiographer” the separation between itself and the Other is not maintained. But separation is necessary if one tries to conceive the possibility of an existent being possessing its own destiny, “that is, being

63. *Ibid.*, 334.

64. *Ibid.*, 339.

65. *Ibid.*, 340.

66. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 12.

67. *Ibid.*, 17.

68. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh, 1969), 33.

69. *Ibid.*, 36.

70. *Ibid.*, 50.

71. *Ibid.*, 55.

born and dying without the place of this birth and this death in the time of universal history being the measure of its reality.”⁷²

Just as Sartre explicitly developed the idea of freedom, Lévinas has explicitly presented the idea of the Other. Since these themes can be found implicitly in Foucault’s works, we may say—without postulating that he has only expressed the Same as the two other French philosophers—that he belongs to the same family of thought, the same *epistème* or archive: the phenomenological and existentialist movement.

But do we also discover a genuine ethics in Foucault? Yes, but likewise indirectly. In an article entitled “Is it Useless to Revolt?” he concludes: “My ethics is to be respectful when something singular arises, to be intransigent when power offends against the universal.”⁷³

This is not only—as Shiner argues—a statement of the principle for a “politics of truth” that seeks to unveil power strategies in what is presented as the truth. It is also a declaration of principle for an existential analytics that claims that the Other cannot be reduced to the Same, and is never, therefore, merely what I see when I look at him or her as object for my subjectivity.

It is true that there remains an important difference between Foucault and Lévinas: the basis for his ethics appears in Foucault’s works as the conviction that human beings are linked together by their affording, universally, the same human resistance to power. According to Foucault, I am responsible for the Other because she or he is a resister like myself. In Lévinas’s view, this conviction is still a kind of egoism incapable of motivating self-sacrifice and generosity. On the other hand, if ethics were to be founded on the revelation of the face that imposes itself, Lévinas thinks it would then be based on a “primordial speaking that *summons me*, questions me, stirs me, provokes my response or my responsibility.”⁷⁴ In other words, the foundation of ethics is for Lévinas the very idea of the Other who is presented to my mind through face to face encounters with other human beings.

In Foucault the Other plays far too much the role of the adversary who is looking at me for him to be able to regard the Other’s look as an ethical authority. At any rate his philosophy has adopted more and more of an ethical position, taking up the defense of the Other who has so often during the course of history been subjected to a master’s gaze. It was precisely because of this ethical involvement that the question of power turned up in his writings. This way of thinking cannot possibly avoid a political impact, since it concerns the ways in which political and technological rationalities are able to oppress people and subjugate the freedom of the Other. But Foucault is not primarily a politician; he is a philosopher as much as Sartre and Lévinas.

72. *Idem*.

73. Michel Foucault, “Is it Useless to Revolt?” in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 8 (1981), 9; quoted by Larry Shiner, “Foucault, Phenomenology and the Question of Origins,” 320.

74. Emmanuel Lévinas, “Beyond Intentionality” in *Philosophy in France Today*, ed. Alan Montefiore (Cambridge, England, 1983), 111.

IV. FINAL REMARKS: BEYOND HERMENEUTICS?

Dreyfus and Rabinow have written their book in order to show that Foucault offers a means of understanding which is a powerful alternative to structuralism and hermeneutics. Their comments about the structuralist aspect of Foucault's works are in accordance with his own self-criticism. But what they have to say about hermeneutics does not seem to take into account recent developments in hermeneutics, especially its most outstanding representatives, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. They only mention these two philosophers' works very briefly. They explain that modern hermeneutics began with Heidegger's existential analysis in which he scrutinized "the deep truth hidden by everyday practices," and that Ricoeur has named this discovery the "hermeneutics of suspicion" (xviii). After Heidegger, Gadamer in his *Truth and Method* (1960) has given hermeneutics "a more positive direction as a method for reappropriating a profound understanding of Being preserved in traditional linguistic practice (xix)." They do not mention that in *Freud and Philosophy* (1965) Ricoeur has emphasized the importance of the interpretation of texts in order to discover the deep truth of everyday practices and that he has developed a dialectic between interpretation as suspicion and interpretation as reappropriation. Since then Ricoeur has elaborated on his theory of hermeneutics in his great works from the 1970s especially in *The Rule of Metaphor*, *Interpretation Theory* and *Temps et récit*,⁷⁵ three books whose main concern is metaphorical and narrative discourses.

In this light it is not easy to discover in which way Foucault's interpretative analytics really goes "beyond hermeneutics." Perhaps the hermeneutics of suspicion "has not been suspicious enough" (181). But Ricoeur, who has so often referred to suspicion in Marx and Nietzsche, has not thereby excluded a hermeneutical search for "meaning which is not directly available to the actor" (124). On the other hand, he precludes the existence of a meaning in the actor's life that the actor himself does not need to acknowledge. However, Foucault has never claimed that such a meaning exists. So it is difficult to understand how Foucault should go "beyond hermeneutics."

On the contrary, it seems more reasonable to suggest that Foucault has not yet arrived at hermeneutics. As Ricoeur has demonstrated, interpretation is not only suspicion but trust. Thus, the hermeneuticist seeks to unveil not only the illusionary in what is said, but also what is valuable in it for his own time. This positive part of the hermeneutical project has never been considered by Foucault. Why not? Perhaps because, in his eyes, the only valuable facts the Other's discourse might contain are expressions of pure resistance.

This is a consequence of his radically negative concept of power. In his way of thinking power is never something good, but always alienating, and this is why he cannot conceive of power without a correlative resistance to it: "The

75. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (Toronto, 1977); *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Texas, 1976); *Temps et récit* (Paris, 1983), 2 Vol.

relationship between power and freedom's refusal to submit cannot be separated" (221). But if power, as he claims, is a subject's way of acting upon another acting subject, why could it not be a generous action in the form of an encouragement or an appeal by demonstration setting an example of the good life? And why could it not be a political and technological organization that preserved justice in society and encourages order for the purpose of fostering human differences and creativity? Despite Foucault's denial (220), he has reduced power to violence: man's violence against the Other or against himself. His idea of communication amounts merely to Sartre's comic idea of a struggle between different gazes. In this respect one can think, like Hilary Putnam in *Reason, Truth and History*, that Foucault is less an historian than a satirist.

A more dialectical concept of power would allow for more than suspicion in the interpretation of stories and history. It might even prove necessary to read stories and study history in order to learn something from the narratives, that is, something more than the sheer fact that people have always resisted power. It might even be important to study stories which not only tell us about different modes of concrete resistance but about different experiences of the good life.

Dreyfus and Rabinow ask: "Is there a way to make resistance positive, that is, to move toward a 'new economy of bodies and pleasures?' " (207). Our reply must be as follows: how can you imagine finding answers to this question without thinking of listening—in a hermeneutics of trust—to what has been said in stories and in history about liberation from subjection and involvement in a real community?

Foucault has provided us with the elements for a history of the power of oppression. What we need now is someone to write a supplementary history of the power of emancipation. This would be the history of resistance and generosity.

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HISTORICAL WRITING IN ENGLAND II. c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century. By Antonia Gransden. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982. Pp. xxiv, 644.

Medieval historians endowed the written word with an authority so unimpeachable in its character that it was only rarely regarded critically. They used earlier histories as quarries for their material and as models for their own compositions, sometimes embodying substantial segments in their own works without acknowledgment. Likewise they gave to historical characters features which they borrowed from Roman historians, such as Suetonius, whose influence can,