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SUBJECTIVITY, FREEDOM AND HISTORY

Michel Foucault's Contribution to Critical Thought

by

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Declaration

This thesis is my own work. All sources used have been acknowledged.

Christopher Anthony Falzon

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Abstract

This thesis aims to defend Foucault, who pursues an 'anti-humanistic' critique of the subject, from the charge that he thereby falls into political pessimism, irrationalism and uncritical objectivism. Habermas in particular makes these criticisms. I argue that these criticisms depend on reading Foucault in terms of the very humanism that he rejects - more specifically, in terms of a 'humanistic subject-object framework', in which human beings are either free, autonomous subjects or determined, unfree objects. By questioning the subject in terms of history, Foucault seems to represent the latter alternative, and is criticised accordingly. But this situation can be turned around. In terms of this framework, it is not possible to give a historical account of the subject without destroying it, but by the same token, the autonomous subject lacks any historical context or any plausible account of its emergence. The freedom it represents turns out to be abstract and unworldly. Existentialism is discussed in this connection.

I then argue that the subject-object framework of thinking is itself the outcome of a subordination of the notion of history to a metaphysical First Philosophy, in the form of a foundational subjectivism. From the standpoint of the humanist subject, historical contextualisation appears only as the objectivistic dissolution of the subject, critique and freedom. And as long as thought proceeds in these terms, it is unable to take history seriously or use it to comprehend and interrogate the subject. On the contrary, thought is impelled by the threat of a reductive objectivism to affirm a historically transcendent standpoint. The Frankfurt School, or 'Critical Theory', provides an illustration of the difficulties thought experiences in doing justice to history when it proceeds in terms of the subject-object framework. Horkheimer and Habermas seek to save the subject and the possibility of social critique from what they see as their eclipse through an oppressive process of social objectification. In the process, however, they are unable to avoid assuming a transhistorical perspective as the basis of critique, flying in the face of their own historical awareness. This allows Habermas's criticisms of Foucault to be put into perspective. A form of thought that is unable to do justice to history is unable to properly grasp Foucault's historicising strategy.

Finally, I argue that Foucault does not represent an objectivistic denial of critique and freedom. He goes beyond the humanistic alternatives of autonomous subject
versus reductive objectivism, freeing historical reflection for this constraining framework in order to pursue the project of a historical critique of metaphysics. That is, he presents a historical analysis of the subject that is taken by humanism to be given, foundational, absolute, and capable of explaining society and history. What he thereby undermines is not critique and freedom per se but only their specifically humanist forms. Critique for Foucault no longer presupposes an essential subjectivity that has been historically distorted or denied, and freedom is no longer a matter of living in accordance with this subjectivity. It involves revealing the historical contingency in what we take for granted as essential and eternal in our existence, freeing us from the limitations on what we think and do engendered by these presuppositions, and opening up the possibility of rethinking our forms of thought and action. In developing this approach, Foucault gives expression to the historico-critical awareness that is also present in the Frankfurt School, and contributes to the activity of critical thought understood as a confrontation with metaphysics.
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Michel Foucault's work has excited a good deal of controversy and criticism, much of which is centred around the anxiety that, by calling into question the autonomous, rational subject, he undermines the possibility of social critique and human freedom. For such criticism, Foucault appears as an extreme representative of irrationalist, counter-enlightenment tendencies in contemporary culture. His position is seemingly self-destructive, for by debunking the central values and ideals of modernist culture, particularly the aspiration to rational self-determination, Foucault no longer seems to have any normative standpoint which might justify critical activity. He thus condemns human beings to subordination to social structures, and presents a reactionary politics of pessimism and resignation. We need to preserve the notion of the autonomous subject if there is to be any possibility of resistance and freedom. A key exponent of such criticism has been Jürgen Habermas, the contemporary representative of the German school of Critical Theory, whose work represents the major alternative to Foucault's in contemporary European thought.

It seems to me that this criticism presupposes a certain framework of thinking, which I will refer to as the 'subject-object framework'. In this context it is supposed that human beings are either autonomous, initiating subjects or determined, unfree objects. The existentialist celebration of the subject, the conflict between 'Hegelian' and 'Scientific' Marxism or between hermeneutics and structuralism, the efforts of critical theory to 'save the subject' in the face of an oppressive process of objectification - all of these are couched in the vocabulary of subject and object. And in these terms, Foucault's questioning of the subject inevitably appears as pointing towards an uncritical objectivism. But must he be read in this terms? To do so, I would suggest, is to entirely miss the novelty of his position. It seems to me that Foucault in fact explores the possibility of going beyond both these alternatives, of breaking from both the notion of an initiating subject and that of reductive objectivism; or at least, if we approach Foucault in this way, a lot of what he is saying falls into place.

In making such a break, Foucault departs from a picture that is problematic even in
its own terms. If we suppose that the only alternative to the founding subject is a reductive objectivism, it is also the case that a free subject which eludes concrete determinations in order to act autonomously is itself strangely abstract, unworldly, ethereal. It lacks any informing historical context or any real account of its historical emergence. In Chapter One I will discuss this strangely abstract subject, which is introduced by Kant, in its existentialist form, with reference to the work of Stuart Hampshire and Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre in particular pushes the notion of subjective autonomy to its limit, and the bizarre vision of *Being and Nothingness* is the result. It must not be thought, however, that self-conscious autonomy is any less abstract if it is seen not as the immediate possession of an existentialist subject, which stands apart from all being, but as a reflective achievement, in a Hegelian manner. By escaping objective determination through the appropriation of all being to itself, the Hegelian-style subject continues to suffer from the lack of a concrete historical context.

If the humanist notion of subjectivity is problematically abstract, this has serious consequences for the notions of critique, freedom and enlightenment to the extent that they are supposed to be dependent upon it. By detaching these notions from the humanist subject, Foucault in fact represents the possibility of preserving them. He goes beyond the humanist subject not to celebrate uncritical subordination to objective determination but to free the notions of critique, freedom and enlightenment from their humanist formulation. More positively, he seeks to give expression to a historico-critical awareness that he takes to be central to our enlightened modernity. In the second chapter I will suggest that in modern thought - in Kant, Hegel and Marxism - this modernist sense of the historical has been persistently subordinated to a metaphysical First Philosophy, in the form of humanism's transhistorical, foundational conception of subjectivity. The subject-object framework can be seen as the consequence of this metaphysical subjectivism. It is for the subject conceived as a metaphysical absolute that history appears as the threat of a reductive objectivism, which in turn invokes the need to restore the subject that we have never really left. By freeing modernity's historico-critical awareness from the grip of the transcendental subject and its correlative objectivism, Foucault continues the tradition of enlightened critique as a historical critique of metaphysics, in the form of a historical interrogation of the humanist subject.
At the same time, as long as modern thought is dominated by humanist metaphysics, it is unable to do justice to its own historical awareness. To the extent that history appears as the threat of a reductive objectivism, the subject cannot be located in a concrete historical context, and thought cannot avoid affording a transhistorical standpoint. In order to illustrate this I will discuss the work of the Frankfurt School of critical theory in Chapters Three and Four. My emphasis will be on Max Horkheimer's work, and to a lesser extent that of Theodor Adorno. I will argue that critical theory is in the first instance an attempt to restore the claims of the subject and the possibility of human freedom in the face of an objectivistic 'Scientific Marxism'. In this restoration of the subject, critical theory's distinctive incorporation of Freudian concepts into Marxism plays an important role. But I also want to suggest that critical theory has an acute awareness of the historical, which places it in opposition to all transhistorical, metaphysical perspectives. To the extent, however, that it proceeds in terms of the humanistic subject-object framework, historical immersion seems to raise the threat of falling into an uncritical, reductive objectivism; but in seeking to 'save the subject' critical theory is unable to avoid affirming a transhistorical perspective which in other contexts it rejects in a historicist spirit.

In Chapter Four I will also examine what can be called humanist criticisms of critical theory. That is, those criticisms which see the major problem in the Frankfurt School not as the tendency to return to a metaphysical, subjectivist standpoint despite the awareness of history, but rather as a tendency to undermine the subject and the possibility of critique and freedom through an implicit reductivism. By not adequately distinguishing the subjective realm from that of objective material determinations, critical theory participates in the very reductive objectivism that it should be opposing. Such criticism, conducted in terms of the humanistic subject-object framework, is both correct and incorrect. It is incorrect because it misses what is interesting and important in critical theory, its historic-critical awareness and the critique of metaphysical absolutes. But it also has some force insofar as critical theory itself proceeds in terms of the subject-object framework, in the context of which its historicism appears in the form of a reductive objectivism. To that extent, Horkheimer and Adorno do indeed undermine their own hopes for freedom, understood as the overcoming of objective determinations and the realisation of autonomy. Two alternatives present themselves here. We can radicalise historical critique so as to escape from the
constraints of the subject-object framework altogether, a move which points towards Foucault. Or we can remain within the humanist framework and reaffirm the claims of the founding subject in the face of all threats of objectivism. This points us to the contemporary form of critical theory, and in particular to Habermas.

In Chapters Five and Six, I will examine the way in which Habermas reformulates critical theory in order to unequivocally affirm the claims of the subject in the face of objectivism, including that which seems to have entered into critical theory itself. In this context, I will discuss the sharp distinction Habermas makes between 'linguistic interaction' and 'work', as well as the use he makes of Freud in articulating the distinct realm of intersubjectivity. Once again, however, there is the question of history to be considered. Like the earlier critical theorists, Habermas also expresses an awareness of the historical and calls into question transcending metaphysical standpoints. But the overriding framework of interaction and work, a further version of the subject-object framework, prevents him from following through this historical awareness. In the process of saving the subject from a one-sided, reductive objectivism, his thought returns to a transcending, metaphysical standpoint. In Chapter Six we will see how the later phase of Habermas's thought does not resolve this situation, but on the contrary exacerbates it. The historicist side of his thought is further suppressed, and his transcendental turn becomes more emphatic. The notion of the 'ideal speech situation' takes us back to an extreme Kantian foundationalism, securing a normative standpoint for critique but leaving history far behind.

This brings us to Foucault, and it is now possible to see Habermas's criticisms of Foucault in perspective. Thought that is dominated by the humanistic subject-object framework, and for that reason is unable to do justice to history, is unable to properly comprehend Foucault's historicist investigations. In Chapter Seven, I will seek to distinguish Foucault from his Habermasian portrayal as the reductive objectivist who lacks any basis for critique and freedom. On the contrary, Foucault frees historical reflection from the constraints of the subject-object framework, in order to give expression to the historical awareness that Habermas is unable to fully pursue. And where Habermas falls back into an ahistorical metaphysics, Foucault is able to pursue the project of a historical critique of metaphysics, specifically of the foundational subject of humanist
metaphysics. In so doing, he does not destroy the possibility of critique, freedom or enlightenment. Rather, he takes up the notion of enlightenment as thought's historically self-conscious break from metaphysical absolutism, in the form of a history of the subject that we have come to take as given, the indispensable foundation of our existence.

In these terms it will be possible to properly understand Foucault's concrete historical analyses of the formation of modern subjectivity. In particular it will be possible to understand his notion of a positive, productive form of power, which 'really and materially' constitutes human beings as subjects, as part of a historical and political analysis that critically reveals hitherto unnoticed forms of constraint. The subject that we seek to free is already the product of forms of subjection. And those humanistic forms of critique that see power as objectifying, denying or repressing our true subjectivity, and which seek to champion the claims of that subject in the face of repressive power, themselves participate in these positive forms of subjection. The Frankfurt School and Habermas employ this understanding of power and critique, and incorporate Freud into their picture in this connection. In departing from this picture, Foucault similarly sees psychoanalysis as a key expression of the modern notion of subjectivity, but he is able to grasp it as a central avenue for the operation of contemporary relations of power.

In the final chapter, I will examine the ethico-philosophical dimension of Foucault's historic-critical work, which is explicitly articulated in his later texts. It stands in direct opposition to the humanistic picture, which seeks to anchor thought and action, and the process of critique, in a normative conception of foundational subjectivity. The task there is to grasp and to live in accordance with one's true self, to be ourselves, in the face of all that distorts, represses or objectifies our selfhood. For Foucault in contrast, the ethical and philosophical task is to constantly 'break away from ourselves', to break free from the subjective identity that has been historically imposed on us, through a reflection on the historical processes that make us 'what we are'. To the extent that what we are is revealed to be historically contingent, the possibility is opened up of inventing different ways of thinking and acting. It is this willingness to question constraining self-images, to experiment with different forms of life, that Foucault sees as most characteristic of our modernity, as creatures of the Enlightenment.
To sum up, my contention is that Foucault's anti-humanism is not adequately grasped when it is interpreted as an uncritical, reductive objectivism, i.e., in terms of the alternatives of subject and object. I argue firstly that the subject-object framework is itself the outcome of the subordination of the notion of history to a metaphysics, to a subjectivist foundationalism; and secondly, as a corollary, that to the extent that thought proceeds in terms of the subject-object framework, it is unable to do justice to history. Finally, I argue that Foucault goes beyond these alternatives, freeing historical awareness from the subject-object framework in order to pursue a historical critique of humanist metaphysics.

One proviso needs to be made. I am not suggesting that any of the authors here can be exhaustively summed up in terms of the interpretive framework I have applied. A perspective broad enough to touch them all necessarily fails to do justice to the richness of the material they present. Their work always overflows easy categorisations, and could be approached from many other perspectives. The worth of my reading lies in the extent to which, if the material is approached in this way, a certain misreading of Foucault can be avoided. Foucault's work need not fall into the place so readily allotted to it by his humanist critics, and by Habermas in particular. In historically questioning the foundational subject, Foucault does not represent the end of critical thought and enlightened freedom, but rather the very exercise of critical thinking and free thought that keeps them alive. And whilst departing significantly from the work of the Frankfurt School and Habermas, Foucault also in a certain sense continues their work. What he rejects is the humanist metaphysics that constrains their historico-critical awareness. He thus makes a positive contribution to the activity of critical thought and to the modern struggle for enlightenment.
CHAPTER ONE
Subject and Object: The Abstractness of Autonomy

1.1 Subject and Object in Modern Thought

In order to come to an understanding of Foucault's 'anti-humanism', his effort to purge philosophy of its attachment to the subject as the autonomous foundation of thought and action, I would like first of all to consider a problem that arises with this notion of the subject as it stands. On the face of it, human beings are either autonomous, initiating, meaning-giving subjects or they are determined objects, subordinate to worldly determinations that exclude autonomous subjectivity and freedom. Yet this picture is highly problematic. It does not seem possible, in terms of these alternatives, to comprehend human beings in concrete, historical terms without reducing them to unfree objects. By the same token however, a free subject that eludes all concrete determinations is strangely abstract, unreal, ethereal, lacking any worldly historical context or any plausible account of its emergence. To escape from the problematic alternatives of an abstract subjectivity that needs to be 'brought down to earth' and an objectivistic account that destroys the notions of subjectivity and freedom, it will ultimately be necessary to reconsider the idea that participation in history represents an objectivistic denial of subjectivity - and in so doing, to make possible a history of the subject that we have come to take as the basis of our thought and action, and the locus of freedom.

To make clearer the difficulties encountered by thinking that proceeds in terms of the alternatives of subject and object, let us consider the 'subjectivism' that is characteristic of the existentialist mood in modern thought. This subjectivism is evident both in Sartre and in what Murdoch identifies as the more muted Anglo-Saxon version to be found in Hampshire's philosophy of action. It would be easy to see such thinking in a merely negative light, i.e., as an abstract individualism that fails to take into account the question of institutions, of social structures, of power relations and so on, which pre-exist and condition the formation of the individual. As a result it gives inflated significance to the role of active, creative, autonomous human agency, at the expense of what is hidden to social actors, informing and determining them. However, I want to suggest that it is not simply a matter here of a limited view that needs to be supplemented to get
the full picture. There is rather a real tension between the idea of the human being as a source of meaningful action and as the product of determining forces. To invoke the latter means that we lose our grip on the notion of agency.

This tension between individual and society, agency and structure, subject and object - in short between the domination of the system and the expression of human agency - is, as Giddens and others have noted, a persistent feature of sociological thought. It can be found just as readily in Marxist thought, in the ambivalence between a deterministic 'Mechanical Marxism' in which actors are propelled by scientifically discoverable historical laws, and a dialectical-critical 'Marxist Humanism' that seeks to bring out the Kantian and Hegelian inheritance of Marx, with the stress on active consciousness and the coming-to-be of the subject in history. This will become important when the discussion turns to the Frankfurt School and Habermas. For now, what is essential is a recognition of this persistent tension in thought about human beings, between a view which celebrates active subjectivity, and one which sees human beings as passive objects.

It is not simply a question of two alternative, competing accounts, but of an oscillation between two viewpoints, each of which is inadequate in itself, but also standing in opposition to the other. A subjectivism bound up with a philosophy of immediacy, an acceptance of individuals' immediate experience of themselves and of what they are up to, appears as naive and abstract. Materialist or structuralist accounts offer a quite warranted criticism of the reliability of consciousness, of its supposed transparency to itself. At the same time however, the concentration on what is hidden to and determines social actors means that we lose our grip on subjectivity, which becomes an epiphenomenon of structure, or is subordinated to the determining forces of history, ceasing to be active, initiating agency.

The structuralist or materialist move inevitably invokes a counter-move in some way recover or save the subject, to make a space for the notion of active intentional agency and the subject's own understanding of what it is about. Here we can sympathise with Giddens' recent efforts to challenge the 'objectifying tendency' and recover the subject, without at the same time lapsing into a subjectivism. Yet this project must fail, for to the extent that we invoke pre-existing determinations, we erode the claims of autonomous, initiating agency. As Smart suggests, to invoke such things in order to 'make out a case' for the subject is
Self-contradictory.\(^{(5)}\)

Smart has pointed illuminatingly to Foucault's interpretation of the epistemological 'space' within which modern, i.e., post-Kantian thought moves, as a way of comprehending this conflict.\(^{(6)}\) Modern thought for Foucault is dominated by the contorted effort to conceive of the human being as a knowable, finite, determined being which is also the transcendental foundation of that knowledge. There thus emerges the ambivalent figure of 'Man', both subject and object in epistemological - as well as ethical and historical - reflection concerning human beings. That is, a fact among facts to be studied empirically, and yet the transcendental condition of all knowledge; also, as surrounded by obscure determinations which Foucault calls the 'unthought', and yet a potentially lucid, self-aware cogito, the basis for the intelligibility of action; and as the product of a long history that is shrouded in mystery, yet the origin of history.\(^{(7)}\)

On this reading, the tension between subject and object is intrinsic to modern thought, which moves between the conflicting poles of determination and agency.\(^{(8)}\) Whilst recognising human finitude and determination, thought cannot conceive of human beings purely as inert objects from which consciousness and agency have been excluded. It always proceeds from there to an affirmation of the human being as active, initiating subject. At the same time, the affirmation or retrieval of human agency necessarily involves a denial of finite determination. Modern thought cannot ignore the abstractness of its own conception of agency, of the Kantian-style subject that we take to be indispensable for freedom. The notion can only be maintained at the expense of any recognition of pre-existing determinations or of historical development. It remains the case, however, that this subject cannot be made more concrete without being compromised. In short, for modern thought we are either a free, but empty and abstract subject, or a determinate but unfree object. It is the latter prospect, the threat of dissolution of freedom, which seems to leave us no option but to cling to the idea of subjective autonomy, no matter how abstract and empty it might be.

Existentialist subjectivism, it seems to me, is one variation of the attempt to construe human beings as determined objects who are nonetheless also initiating subjects. It follows Kant and affirms subjective agency in a direct way by making a sharp distinction between the world of determination and the realm of agency or
freedom. Human beings as subjects are wholly and immediately self-conscious and free - and at the same time abstractly lacking in concrete determination. It should however be noted that the notion of autonomous agency is no less abstract if we see it in a more sophisticated way, as a reflective achievement. In this variation, human beings as determined objects are subjects in a state of dispersion or alienation, subordinated to an objectivity they themselves have produced. The reflective task is to comprehend ourselves in this dispersion, to overcome our alienation and to restore ourselves to self-conscious sovereignty. Existentialist detachment gives way to the Hegelian-style reconciliation of subject and object. Yet this subjectivism, though 'mediated', remains abstract. As the work of Hegel suggests, the attainment of a mediated subjective sovereignty still involves the effective negation of the empirical and historical character of humanity, which is subordinated to the process of the coming-to-be of the subject. The Hegelian subject remains abstractly beyond empirical and historical determination. I will return to this theme in the next chapter.

In the light of these reflections, I would now like to consider more closely the 'unmediated' subjectivism of Hampshire and Sartre. What becomes apparent here is the effort to maintain the integrity and priority of the self in the face of worldly determination by isolating it from the world. Freedom as self-determination is nurtured and grasped in its immediacy in the context of a withdrawal from all external determinations, through a retreat into a self-enclosed, individualistic subjectivism. I determine who I am and what I am about immediately through the conscious formation of my intentions, and enjoy an unimpeded, wholly lucid self-understanding. This subject is not the outcome of a historical process of development. Nor are its actions the outcome of conditions preceding choice. It is abstractly self-sufficient. And yet it is only through this abstract separation from external determinations that freedom as autonomy can be articulated in such a forceful, unqualified way. This tells us something about the essential abstractness of the idea of autonomy.

1.2 Hampshire and the Subject in 'Oxford Philosophy'

Thought and Action
For Hampshire, freedom resides in self-conscious activity, in knowing what I am
up to and thereby being in control of my activity. He is mindful that we act in the world and that our actions have unintended effects. Freedom is thereby linked with knowledge of the world. To become aware of unintended consequences of my actions confers responsibility upon me, as part of my awareness of what I am doing. In general, the more I know of my situation, the more my acts will produce the effect I intend, and the less will objective exigencies compromise me. This equally applies to factors in my own makeup, including unconscious purposes. These may direct my acts in ways that are at variance with my conscious purposes. But to the extent that I become aware of them, of what I am really up to, I cease to be compromised by them, can 'take them into account' as objective factors, and can assert conscious control over the direction of my acts.

Consequently, in *Thought and Action*, Hampshire writes - 'it is through the various degrees of self-consciousness in action, through more and more explicit knowledge of what I am doing, that in the first place I become ... free.' To be a free and responsible agent entails that I am not at the mercy of forces that I do not recognise and which are out of my control. Insofar as I do what I intend, and do not find my actions diverted along a course I have not consciously designed, I am responsible for my actions, and can be accounted a free agent.

Everything is directed then towards maintaining the primacy and integrity of my conscious self-understanding whilst in the midst of a world I have not created. Freedom is not a function of activity per se but rather of the extent to which what we are doing corresponds to what we consciously and actively intend, and not to the workings of unacknowledged worldly influences. Having chosen, we may be heteronomously compromised in practice by factors external to our self-understanding (unconscious purposes, unforeseen consequences), but it is always possible to reflectively 'stand back' and bring these influences to light - 'Every influence bearing upon me is added to the factors in the situation confronting me, as soon as I become aware of the fact of the influence'. I can thereby detach myself from the sway of worldly influences and act in full self-consciousness.

Of particular interest here is the way in which Hampshire deals with Freudian psychoanalysis, as a potentially serious threat to the priority of the conscious self. As Hampshire sees it, psychoanalysis does indeed suggest that we are not aware
of the tendency of our actions in a wide domain of our behaviour, i.e., that we are
governed by unconscious purposes. But this does not fundamentally undermine
the ego. On the contrary, the 'discovery of the unconscious mind' simply opens
the way to an increased self-consciousness in action through the revelation of
hitherto unacknowledged influences. The recognition and acknowledgement of
unconscious purposes through analysis allows me to control or modify them, or
form plans for escaping from my obsessions. Psychoanalysis 'provides a
reflective knowledge of the workings of the mind that fits into the philosophical
definition of freedom in terms of self-knowledge' (13) and leaves the primacy of
the conscious mind essentially untouched.

It is true that, for Hampshire, freedom is not simply an immediate given, but an
achievement. The picture that he espouses registers that we are not purely
detached beings but act in the world and are prey to worldly influences beyond our
choices. But at the same time the picture is predicated on the essential externality
of these influences (witness the treatment of unconscious purposes). They may
affect or define 'what I am doing', in ways that escape my self-understanding and
the determinations of my will, but they do so only in an exterior, contingent
fashion. I am not dependent on them for what I think and decide to do. I can
always stand aloof from my situation and my own makeup, and in full awareness
of them freely form my will. My choices themselves do not rest upon or
presuppose any 'necessary background'. For Hampshire I am essentially the
conscious mind, the independent, self-lucid, self-determining will. (14) This is the
locus of my freedom.

And yet Hampshire's picture is problematic, precisely because I cannot detach
myself from all worldly influences. Or rather, the aforementioned agent is indeed
free, but also empty, lacking in content, hopelessly abstract. Murdoch, in The
Sovereignty of the Good, criticises Hampshire's ideal of pure agency in these
terms, as part of a more general critique of the Kantian tradition in morality. She
points to the unrealistic and implausible character of this vision of a 'highly
self-conscious, self-contained being' that freely chooses its reasons in terms of,
and after surveying, the facts, and then acts. (15) I am not this solitary, detached,
omnipotent will. Murdoch sees Freud as providing a more realistic picture,
insofar as he portrays the psyche as an egocentric, obscure system of
quasi-mechanical energy, hard for the subject to understand and control, and out of
which emerge choices and acts of will in ways that are often unclear. From Freud's point of view, Hampshire's picture might be seen as a philosophical rationalisation of narcissism.

Murdoch suggests that it is precisely because 'Oxford Philosophy' has failed to come to terms with the notion of a necessary background to human activity that it has developed no serious theory of motivation. The agent's freedom is said to lie in its choices, but we are not told what prepares it for those choices. Instead, we have the detached, solitary, free agent who appears in the 'quick flash of the choosing will'. As I see it, the notion of freedom as agency, as moving rather than being moved or determined, denudes the self of concrete motivation. Indeed, if the pure agent could be said to be 'moved' at all, it would, paradoxically, have to construct its own motivation, i.e., to constitute the motivating power of its own motives. Hampshire stresses that we decide for ourselves what is a sufficient reason for acting. No doubt within the limits of conscious self-understanding we are not simply moved by obscure energies, but deliberate, evaluate our motives, and are able to give reasons for our actions. Yet even here don't we presuppose standards of evaluation that condition our reflection, which are not themselves rationally determined?

This effort to maintain the primacy and integrity of the choosing agent in fact runs counter to Hampshire's own efforts to also see human beings as substantial, as embodied in and involved in the world. Hampshire wants to jettison the 'old empiricist idea of the self as a detached, disembodied observer. On the contrary, I find myself from the beginning able to act upon objects around me.' I do not merely observe but move amidst and interact with a world of resisting objects, as an active being. Furthermore, he rejects the Kantian notion of a detached 'transcendental' will, indifferent to what actually comes about, and to ordinary desires and interests. This is to be replaced with the 'attempts and tryings which are recorded in our ordinary speech, and embodied in action, and with the desires and interests that explain them'.

The Kantian subject thus appears to have been 'brought down to earth', to be concrete, embodied, worldly. As such its integrity can be compromised by unforeseen and unacknowledged factors. Knowledge of my situation and my own makeup is required so that I can escape from the sway of these influences.
and keep what I am and what I am up to within the bounds of my self-understanding and the determinations of my will. But this presupposes not taking seriously this very embeddedness in the world. I can self-consciously detach myself from and objectify the world and my own makeup with impunity, i.e., they must be essentially external to me. Hampshire's explicit identification of the self with the self-determining will stands in acute tension with his emphasis on ourselves as concrete beings, embodied and in situation.

The essential antagonism between the idea of agency and the concrete order is brought out by Nagel, through his notion of 'moral luck' (21). Moral luck involves the recognition that what someone does depends, to a significant extent, on factors beyond their control. The normal condition for moral accountability is control over what we do, active agency. But the closer we look at what is actually done, the more we become aware of external influences that seem to make a person less responsible for what they do, and this undermines our moral judgements about them. Moral luck arises in relation to the consequences of our actions, along with the surrounding circumstances that pose one's moral choices; and also in relation to antecedents of one's acts, properties of temperament not subject to one's will, the kind of person we are. Our situation and our past bring the extent of our responsibility into question.

Nagel sees Kant as trying to avoid these worldly influences and contingencies by paring acts down to an inner act of pure will, and insisting on the moral irrelevance of outcome or temperament. However unconvincing this picture might be, there is no easy alternative. Nagel sees dire consequences for agency if it is seen more concretely and the external determinants of what we do are gradually exposed. Eventually 'nothing remains which can be ascribed to the responsible self, and we are left with nothing but a portion of the larger sequence of events' (22). The area of agency and therefore of moral judgement seems to shrink under our scrutiny to an extensionless point, and we are absorbed as mere products into a world we have not created.

Thus the cost of seeing the agent in concrete terms is that we lose our grip on the notion of agency. Nagel articulates the dilemma involved here. It is not possible to see ourselves as just parts of the world. Despite the external, 'objective' view of ourselves as objects which seems to force itself upon us, we still have our
internal, 'subjective' view of what is us and what is not, what we do and what happens to us, what is our personality and what is an accidental handicap. What appears to this point of view cannot be accounted for in external terms, for objectively, the idea of responsible agency evaporates. In the end, for Nagel, neither point of view ought to have priority over the other. Rather, the conflict just has to be accepted. For Nagel, the 'coexistence of conflicting points of view' is simply an irreducible fact of life.\(^{(23)}\)

I would put the dilemma in starker terms. Either we give substance to the agent, in terms of situation and past, and thereby lose our grip on the notion of agency, or we are a free but abstract agent. The agent cannot be portrayed more concretely, more 'realistically', without freedom being eroded. Thus the notion of agency resists incorporation into the world, at the cost of being abstract. The dilemma becomes manifest in Hampshire, in relation to the motivation for action. Murdoch points us to the idea that in action there is an unspoken, taken-for-granted background out of which we choose and act. It need not be restricted to desires but can be extended to values, norms, basic commitments which pre-exist and condition choices. Following Taylor, let us call this informing content our 'identity'.\(^{(24)}\) Hampshire sees any influences on us other than our own determinations in essentially external, negative terms. We do not necessarily presuppose anything in order to choose and act. Consequently, there is nothing problematic in our objectifying all influences upon ourselves in order to choose freely and determine ourselves in full self-consciousness.

The resulting freedom is abstract and empty. Nonetheless, it is equally problematic to say that I depend on such a background. It is hidden, obscure, and puts the ultimate source and meaning of my actions out of my control. To that extent I remain unfree, compromised, the object of compulsion. But it remains the case that to fully clarify and objectify this background, in order to act in full self-consciousness, would mean the end of meaningful action. Our values would no longer move or orient us. They would be objects that we could choose or reject at will, and such 'radical choices' would be without basis or justification, wholly arbitrary.\(^{(25)}\)

This is the reality of the Hampshirean ideal of pure agency, of the sovereign chooser. Such a figure is absolutely free, but utterly without identity. As Taylor
puts it - The agent of radical choice would at the moment of choice have ex hypothesi no horizon of evaluation. He would be utterly without identity. He would be a kind of extensionless point, a pure leap into the void...this promised total self-possession would in fact be the most total self-loss. The metaphor of the extensionless point now suggests itself not in terms of absorption into the world and unfreedom but in terms of detachment from all being, including our own, for the sake of freedom. As such we would have no substance, no being - or, paradoxically, we would have to choose the identity in terms of which we choose. With the use of the term 'radical choice' Taylor has Sartre in mind. It is Sartre who most consistently brings out the self-destructive consequences of the notion of agency pushed to its limits.

**Freedom of the Individual**

Before turning to Sartre, however, I want to say one or two more things about Hampshire's picture. We have seen that Hampshire seeks to reinforce the claims of autonomy by characterising influences on what we do in essentially external, negative terms. At the same time this identification of the self with the isolated will stands in some tension with Hampshire's emphasis on ourselves as concrete beings in the world. In *Freedom of the Individual* this tension seems to be 'resolved' through an explicit dualism which emerges between ourselves as choosing agents and ourselves as influenced objects.

First of all we have ourselves as objects, as part of the factual world, i.e., the unwilled features of ourselves, which involves not only our physical capacities but also states of mind, particularly the 'lower' phenomena of mind (sensations, passions etc.) which just happen to us. They are the outcome of external causal conditions, and are quite distinct from ourselves as subjects and our actively formulated states of mind (especially intentions). Knowledge of the factual is 'natural-scientific', and knowledge of my factual make-up is 'inductive self-knowledge'. Having this knowledge, I can take these facts into account in forming my intentions. Moreover, I have the opportunity of actively modifying these facts through the various 'techniques' that this knowledge makes possible. All of this is quite inappropriate to states of mind that are formed actively. Self-knowledge here is not a matter of discovery, of waiting to see how I will decide. We know what our intentions are by virtue of having decided. And I change my mind here through rationally reappraising the justifiability of my
The greater my inductive knowledge of the external world and myself qua factual, the less is the risk of my intentions being compromised in practice by unforeseen factual influences. At the same time these influences do not fundamentally touch me qua choosing agent. I am in the world, as a causally determined being, but qua choosing agent I am radically distinct from factuality, the undetermined author of my intentions. In terms of this dualism it is possible for Hampshire to say that even if scientific explanations extended to the most intimate workings of the mind, 'the knowledge would still have to be put to use by an agent who decides'. He goes on to say - 'Why then has it been thought that the growth of scientific knowledge of human nature would lead to a narrowing of the area of free decision, and therefore of the area of individual freedom? Why has so little attention been given to the Baconian doctrine - that the more a man knows of the laws of nature, including the laws of human nature, the greater his power and his freedom of choice?' Whether or not this is an accurate rendering of the Baconian doctrine, it does open up a new theme for consideration, that of power - that is, the idea that knowledge liberates by virtue of being linked with power, in the sense of quasi-technical control and manipulation exercised over the world and ourselves qua factual. Freedom is still a matter of knowing what one is up to, and achieving what one sets out to do, but it now also involves what it is possible to achieve. The more power we have, the less we have to put up with the factual influences and constraints of our situation, and the more we can consciously manipulate and determine our existence. In particular, technology liberates by providing ever-increasing means of controlling our bodies and environment, allowing us to increasingly exercise choice over our existence.

Can we say, consequently, that the project of autonomy, the struggle to be 'master of one's fate and captain of one's soul', is in reality a project of domination and control? And that this Hampshirean dichotomy between ourselves as choosing subject and the natural order of events is the result of this drive for domination? Thus it might be said that in the struggle for autonomy, for mastery, we come to identify the self with what is rational, active and masterful; and what cannot be regarded as part of this autonomous self - what is passive, or whatever is
something to be controlled by reason and will, becomes part of that useful, seductive or threatening externality called nature.\(^{(30)}\) And it might also be said that the self, seeking to objectify and manipulate its environment, and all the properties and relationships pertaining to it, even its most fundamental attributes, thereby becomes the denuded, empty self that 'objectifies all being, including its own'.

However, the whole drift of the discussion so far suggests that it is too narrow and reductive an understanding of autonomy to see it purely in terms of power, or at least power so conceived. I have sought to characterise autonomy in terms of the issue of authorship, of the theme of agency versus determination. And to see the dichotomy of the self and the world, via Hampshire, as a distancing of the choosing self from the realm of worldly influences in order to maintain in principle the integrity and authoritative status of the subject. Instead of saying that power produces the subject-object dualism and underlies the formation of the autonomous agent, it might be more useful to question this particular conception of power. It seems to me that this is a conception of power which presupposes the duality of subject and object, as something wielded by an agent over a world of external objects. It rests on the notion of the free agent, sovereign and detached from the world, rather than that subject being an outcome of objectifying power. I will return to this theme in the discussion of the Frankfurt School. What I now want to examine is the radical articulation of the notion of sovereign subjectivity to be found in Sartre.

1.3 Sartre and the Existentialist Subject

*Being and Nothingness*

Murdoch describes Hampshire's picture of pure agency as 'existentialist' in its elimination of a substantial self and its emphasis on a solitary, omnipotent will. Both Hampshire and Sartre represent for Murdoch a 'last dry distilment of Kant's views of the world'.\(^{(31)}\) In fact with Sartre the notion of autonomous agency receives its fullest, most consistent expression - 'for human reality, to be is to choose oneself; nothing comes to it either from outside or from within which it can receive or accept. Without any help whatsoever, it is entirely abandoned to the intolerable necessity of making itself be - down to the slightest detail'.\(^{(32)}\) This is
the wholly sovereign chooser who no longer has any reason to choose, whose choices are unsupported 'leaps into the void'.

Sartre maintains the Kantian-style focus on agency and will as the locus of freedom. At the same time, like Hampshire, he rejects the idea of a transcendentally located freedom. He wants to articulate a conception of freedom as 'embodied' and 'in situation'. However, unlike Hampshire, Sartre also insists that freedom is in no sense a matter of degree - 'Man can not be sometimes slave and sometimes free; he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all' (33). As Meszaros puts it - 'The Kantian problematic which insists on the absoluteness of freedom is fully retained, and yet is totally transformed in that it is no longer confined to a transcendental world'. (34) It is necessarily embodied in a concrete situation. How can this be the case without freedom being compromised in any way? In fact for Sartre the situation is invoked only insofar as it is reduced to a product of our freedom.

There is a double movement in Sartre's Being and Nothingness. Firstly there is the complete withdrawal from the world, from external determination, in order to abstractly maximise self-determination. Secondly, the world is restored to us, but only insofar as we 'reveal' it through our choices of ourselves. We are responsible for the world of which we are a part. The first move is the decisive one. As a result no breath of genuine objectivity, of external determination or of historical conditioning, enters into the Sartrean subject. Involvement in the world is subsumed into the activity of choosing subjective projects through which the world and our situation is revealed. Freedom is immediate and unqualified, but only because it remains, in the last analysis, entirely unworldly.

The Sartrean radicalisation of choice and agency rests on the fundamental expulsion of all substance, all content, all 'opacity', from consciousness (the for-itself), a negation of being (the in-itself) which is constitutive of consciousness. There are no obscure, unacknowledged determinations below or prior to consciousness. Nor is there any process of reflective detachment whereby such influences might be made objects of consciousness, of reflection. All being is from the start objectified, an object of consciousness, which is nothing but the awareness of, and detachment or escape from, being. Consciousness is wholly empty, lacking in content, entirely transparent to itself. It has a pure, unimpeded,
Having objectified all being, Sartrean consciousness is free of all determination and chooses itself in radical freedom. I am wholly responsible for myself at every moment. Since I have no substance, I cannot just be or subsist like a determinate thing. For human reality, to be is to make oneself be, to permanently choose oneself. Equally, as the absence of being, I cannot simply be what I choose to be. Rather, I choose myself as pure possibility, as ideal, as a future self which is to be realised. These choices are not the outcome of reflection, for there is nothing which pre-exists choice, in terms of which to reflect. Sartrean freedom is the extreme expression of the idea of fully self-conscious choice. All determining being has been in principle expelled, made the object of consciousness, and our choices cannot but be wholly unjustified and spontaneous. They are consciousness's own, immediate, pre-reflective self-determinations.

Intertwined with this is the theme of anguish, the apprehension of our emptiness as a pure agent. As Taylor suggests, the complete objectification of all substance, all being, would represent not only complete freedom but also a terrifying loss of identity, a dizzying lack of any place to stand. For Sartre, the undetermined, free agent feels the anguish of its freedom, and the intolerable burden of having to wholly choose itself. We yearn for the solidity, the security of substantial identity - 'Fundamentally, man is the desire to be'. We choose ourselves in the attempt to gain a stable identity. This is a reversal of Hampshire's picture. Instead of seeking to detach ourselves from obscure worldly influences on our behaviour in order to choose freely, we, as lucid sovereign choosers, ache for substantiality, for a self or character that justifies our choices and actions. But at the same time, Sartre holds, we do not want to become an object, moved by obscure influences. We seek to be a substantial being without losing our self-lucidity, self-awareness and freedom. This ideal of incarnate autonomy, of 'being-for-itself-in-itself', is necessarily unattainable. It represents in fact the impossible union of initiating agency and objective determination.

The Hegelian overtones are quite manifest in Sartre's account, and it has often been pointed out that Sartre has in effect absolutised the 'unhappy consciousness'. That is, the consciousness differentiated from objects by negation, which regards the objects of consciousness as alien, impenetrable existence, and which desires
the being from which it feels itself alienated. Hegel, of course, saw this as merely a stage in the development of consciousness, in which the conflict of subject and object will eventually be overcome. For Sartre, however, consciousness never overcomes its alienation from its objects. We are presented with a 'truncated dialectic'.(39) But it should be noted that Sartre's purpose is a positive one, to affirm human freedom as an immediate possession and as absolute by detaching the subject from all objective determinations. In this he is not so much a frustrated Hegelian as a particularly stubborn Kantian.

In existentialist thought from Kierkegaard onwards, the separation of subject and object, subjective isolation, is seen as the condition for moral decisiveness, for authentic human existence understood as the individual's immediate responsibility for himself or herself. Freedom is rendered absolute by separating 'what we really are' from the social and the historical, from all factors external to our choices. Our intentions and self-understanding alone define our identity. But this immediate freedom comes at the cost of abstract isolation, which is embraced by existentialism as the essential tragedy of the human condition: its loneliness, anguish and restlessness.(40)

For Sartre, the either-or of agency and determination cannot be surpassed. The desire to be is necessarily frustrated, and consciousness remains detached from being. It eludes all determinations, including its own. In realising our possibilities, we surpass them - 'The future does not allow itself to be rejoined; it slides into the Past as a bygone future'.(41) That is, it becomes part of my 'facticity', which in essence represents the failure of the attempt to establish myself as being-for-itself-in-itself. Again, this detachment from myself is not the result of a reflective process of detachment, a clarification of obscure forces that move me. As consciousness I am never determined but always immediately, pre-reflectively, detached from myself. Consciousness immediately surpasses and makes objects of its motivations, resolutions, values, which consequently do not move me, are 'without force'. Hence I am always in the position of choosing myself anew, and without justification or basis.

**Freedom and Situation**

Now it has been noted that Sartre wants to see freedom as embodied and in situation - without in any way compromising the absoluteness of freedom. It is
our facticity that locates us in the world, individualises and contextualises our freedom. For Sartre I am only free in situation. At the same time, however, there is only a situation through freedom. I am responsible for the situation in which I find myself. In relation to the past, we have seen that insofar as I am conscious of it, I negate it. Detach myself from it, and it does not move me. Sartre then asks whether we are not nonetheless conditioned by our past in the sense that we have to negate this past. We cannot give ourselves any past we like. If it does not determine our decisions, don’t we at least never take a new decision except in terms of it? But for Sartre it is only for the for-itself that there is a past. And how it is maintained in existence depends on my choices. I decide the bearing, the weight and value the past has for me, in the light of my chosen ends or projects.

In general, there is a world only for me, through my denial and escape from the in-itself through which the latter is revealed. The choices I make of myself determine how the world is revealed and give it the significance that it has. Even the obstacles and resistances I encounter only exist in the light of my projects. It is true that my facticity locates me in the world, in the sense that I can only reveal the world as existing ‘from a particular point of view’. However it is only through the revelation of the world by the choice through which I flee it, which is also the immediate surpassing of my own facticity, that the world can appear to me as indirectly referring to myself as located in it. In the end: ‘We choose the world, not in its contexture as in-itself but in its meaning, by choosing ourselves’. The situation is revealed ‘only in the light of our projecting freedom’.

So Sartre does not really bring the abstract, wholly self-determining self down to earth. To do so would indeed be to compromise freedom as autonomy. The gap between the free self and concrete human existence is bridged by Sartre in a way that in fact intensifies the abstractness of the subject. I choose myself entirely, in detachment from the world, and the world is only restored to me as a consequence of my choices. I choose the situation, the world, that I am a ‘part’ of. Another example of this is Sartre’s treatment of motivation. I noted earlier in relation to Hampshire that a wholly free agent, insofar as it had motives, would have to constitute their motivating power. This becomes explicit in Sartre. My situation and past cannot move me. By fleeing them, I reveal them in their meaning and value. And in particular, it is only because I escape the in-itself towards my chosen possibilities that this in-itself can take on value as reason or motive. I
choose the motives that 'move' me. Insofar as motives can be said to be 'already there', they are once-living motives that have become dead, slipping into the past to become part of my facticity. They can only act on me if they are recovered through a choice that confers on them once again the value of being a motive for me.

By the same token Sartre cannot take at face value the idea of reflectively forming our will, i.e., of making choices on the basis of deliberation on or evaluation of motives and reasons, which in turn justifies our choices. He is right to say that if we accept the idea of sovereign agency there is something deceptive about deliberation. Hampshire avoids the full implications of the idea of pure agency, its arbitrary emptiness, by saying that having detached ourselves from our situation and makeup we can act purely on the basis of what we consider to be adequate reasons. But for the truly sovereign chooser, there are no reasons for choice except insofar as we choose them. For Sartre, as we have seen, we choose our reasons and motives before all reflective deliberation, through our absolute choice of ourselves. Insofar as we deliberate, we choose to do so, i.e., it is part of our project to reveal our motives to ourselves reflectively. And in so doing, Sartre argues, we are attempting to be both free and to see our choices as justified - to be the in-itself-for-itself which can only be realised as a self-deception, through which we hide from the full implications of our freedom.

The other side of this picture is that the reflective will need no longer be seen as the 'privileged manifestation of freedom'. Freedom conceived in terms of pre-reflective self-determination allows Sartre to see phenomena of consciousness that are not obviously reflective and voluntary, that seem to introduce a note of determination into consciousness - in particular, the 'passions' - as expressions of active agency. In reflectively willing, I have pre-reflectively decided that the pursuit of my ends will be reflective and deliberative. The same ends can be posited passionately, e.g., in fleeing terror-stricken from a threat, I implicitly posit as a supreme end the value of life. Yet even though this inclusion of the emotions in the picture seems to make the detached, choosing agent more concrete, substantial and human, it does so only through an abstract, intellectualist conception of the emotions which detaches them from the world and one's makeup, and sees them as expressing a coherent, wholly intentional and meaningful subjective project. They thus share the abstractness of pure agency in
Sartre is torn between preserving a reference to concrete human phenomena and maintaining the abstract freedom of the pure, undetermined agent. The picture becomes progressively more contorted. A final instance is choice itself. In choosing ourselves, we determine our 'original project' which gives unity to our acts, i.e., what amounts to our identity. To be a pure, unconditioned chooser would seem to imply that there can be no unity to our acts, that the self disintegrates into a Humean stream of unrelated, gratuitous, arbitrary projects. This is very remote from concrete experience, as Sartre is aware. However he argues that it is in fact choice that gives acts their coherence. In choosing ourselves, we choose our fundamental relation with our facticity and the world, an entire world-view. It is this choice which originally creates all motives and reasons that can guide us in partial actions. And all our acts are expressive of the world-view that is our fundamental project. At the same time, this radical project is itself wholly gratuitous, without any justification. It is 'fragile' and there is the permanent possibility of a 'conversion' to a different global world-view. We remain entirely free.

The notion of the radical project informs Sartre's response to Freud. Freud also sees acts as referring to 'more profound structures', but in his case they are unconscious, and exert their influence deterministically. Like Hampshire, Sartre views Freudian psychoanalysis as a challenge to the primacy of consciousness and agency which must be met. For Sartre, the translucency of consciousness does not allow an opaque unconsciousness. In fact, he argues, psychoanalysis confuses the for-itself with the in-itself, neglecting the dimension of the future, of choice and possibility, and accounting for us purely in terms of the past. His response parallels his treatment of the passions. An explicitly reflective self-awareness is not required to impute consciousness and choice to what is going on in human behaviour. The notion of active agency is extended via the notion of the pre-reflective to encompass the phenomena that psychoanalysis sees as unconscious. Through an 'existential psychoanalysis' we can uncover a person's pre-reflective radical choice, the particular 'project of being' that underlies their acts. And once again, if all this seems to make the radical chooser more human, concrete and realistic, it only does so through an abstract and intellectualistic picture of behaviour that sees all our acts passions, attitudes, gestures, etc., as general.
manifesting a global, coherent, meaningful project.

At every turn we run into the abstractness of the notion of pure agency. What has to be stressed however is that Sartre's picture is not simply an aberration. In its own way it merely pursues the implications of the idea of freedom as self-conscious agency. In particular, Sartre cannot be written off as an 'irrational voluntarist'. Murdoch can write - 'Sartre is a rationalist: for him the supreme virtue is reflective self-awareness'. Far from denying the idea of rational, self-conscious activity, Sartre stubbornly maintains it as the absolute value, even if this ultimately leaves us without any content, any reason to choose. Against this is set the irrationality of the in-itself - unthinking, opaque, unreflective, mute and senseless. If the pure agent feels its emptiness in anguish, far worse is the horror of being engulfed in the 'slimy', 'viscous' mass of the in-itself. Sartre provides a vivid evocation of a form of thought caught between the conflicting poles of agency and determination. Thought cannot simply deny Sartre without denying itself.

1.4 The Issue of History

None of this is meant to deny that the Sartrean vision of pure agency is abstract and unconvincing. What is particularly striking is that the subjectivist picture cannot account for the historical emergence of the subject. Nietzsche points to the paradoxical character of the idea of freedom of the will, the 'desire to bear the whole and sole responsibility for one's actions and to absolve God, world, ancestors, chance, society from responsibility for them' insofar as it implies that it could be possible 'with more than Münchhausen temerity, to pull oneself into existence out of the swamp of nothingness by one's own hair'. Both Hampshire and Sartre avoid this paradoxical picture only to the extent that they see the free agent as 'given', as essentially 'already apart' from the world. Such a subject lacks a concrete historical context, or any plausible developmental account. Yet it is also the case that to provide a concrete, developmental, historical account of the self, to invoke pre-existing structures to account for the emergence of human agency, appears self-contradictory. In the very process of trying to account for it we lose our grip on the notion of initiating agency.
What I am trying to bring out is not simply the abstractness of autonomy, but also
the difficulty in overcoming this abstractness in terms of the discourse of subject
and object. We need to bring the existentialist subject down to earth, and yet the
abstractness of the idea of initiating agency is not merely contingent. An
objectivistic account destroys the subject and the possibility of freedom. There
remains the profound tension in modern thought between subject and object. Two
tasks now present themselves. Firstly, to examine further this subject-object
framework, particularly in relation to its political dimension and the notion of
socio-political critique. And secondly, to question whether the alternatives of
initiating subject and reductive objectivism are the only ones. Having noted that
Foucault explicitly thematises the subordination of modern thought to the interplay
of subject and object, where does he himself stand in relation to this interplay?
What avenue does he provide for escaping it? These considerations are bound up
with the theme of history. As long as thought proceeds in terms of the
subject-object framework, participation in history appears to objectivistically
dissolve the subject and to exclude freedom. Equally, the notions of subjectivity
and freedom stand in opposition to, and require us to assume a position above,
historical processes. If thought is to take history seriously, it has to go beyond the
alternatives of initiating subjectivity and reductive objectivism.
2.1 The Subject-Object Framework and Modernist Critical Reflection

The preceding discussion of existentialist subjectivism has made visible a certain problematic - a basic tension in modern thought between the individual and society, agency and structure, subject and object. And this has wider implications. The question of autonomy is important not only with respect to the individual's existential situation but also in a political context, as an ethico-political ideal. Here too the tension makes itself felt, in the idea that people must somehow be held responsible for determining their own history, or be completely resigned to it. On the one hand there is the optimistic, Promethean vision of freedom through complete control over our social existence, and on the other the pessimism engendered by the idea that human beings are determined by impersonal social structures. The maintenance of political hopes seems to require that we hold on to a utopian vision of human autonomy, of humanity as capable of making its own history, at least to some extent. This equally applies to the question of social criticism. It does not seem possible to do social criticism without appealing to human autonomy as a historical possibility. There would be no point to it if human beings were helplessly caught up in their social practices and institutions.

Above all, the autonomous subject seems indispensable if we are to hold on to what Habermas calls the 'Enlightenment project' or the 'project of modernity', i.e., the rational organisation of everyday life. This hope rests on the notion of the subject as the autonomous, self-legislating agent, with freedom understood as the capacity to act in accordance with human reason alone. Revolutionary politics raises the aspiration to rational autonomy to a vision of total social liberation. This in turn provides the normative underpinning for social critique. To question the autonomous subject itself appears to threaten us with no less than the abandonment of the modern aspiration to enlightened existence, and the unquestioning subordination to ready-made ways of life that is the very antithesis of enlightenment.

Once again, however, it is possible to speak of the abstractness that pertains to the
notion of human autonomy, now in a political context. Autonomous subjectivity, insofar as it underpins and orients the activity of criticising existing historical practices, cannot itself be made the object of a critique that denies its normative function. To grasp it as a 'thing of this world', to see it as itself implicated in historical practices of power and violence, would seem to be the critical move that destroys the possibility of critique, for such a critique would undercut its own normative basis. The cost of this picture, however, is that the notion of the subject eludes social and historical definition, and cannot be critically reflected upon in its political and historical role.

All of this bears on how Foucault's work is to be read, on how to assess the political and critical implications of his work. Insofar as he brings into question the notion of the autonomous, meaning-giving subject, it is easy to interpret his anti-humanism along objectivistic or structuralist lines, as destroying the possibility of critique and freedom, and as entailing a pessimistic and quietistic political position. Indeed, Foucault seems to abandon the Enlightenment itself as the aspiration to a conscious rational organisation of life, condemning us to subordination to the existing world. This has been the thrust of criticism from the Habermasian perspective, which represents the major alternative to Foucault in the contemporary European context. Anti-humanism in general has been said to reflect in theory what is being increasingly accomplished in practice - the eclipse of the subject by the "overarching structures" of a reified world. Foucault is seen as condemning human beings to subordination under objective, impersonal structures, and as having no ethico-political basis to underpin criticism of or resistance to the existing order. His evident political commitments, and his opposition to modern practices of power, can find no support in his own work.

But must he be read in this way? This is to read him in terms of a subject-object framework which, as we have seen, is itself problematic in its inability to comprehend the notion of subjectivity in concrete historical terms. I want to suggest that Foucault goes beyond this framework of thinking, and hence beyond the idea that immersion in history means the objectivistic denial of subjectivity. Precisely in so doing, he is able to use history in order to comprehend and interrogate the humanist subject in its historical emergence and role. Moreover, he is not the first to have brought humanist thinking into question in this manner. There are elements in Kant, Hegel and Marxism that go beyond humanism.
2.2 Humanist Metaphysics: History as Objectivism

As a preliminary, let me restate the picture presented in Chapter One, and elaborate on it a little. Firstly, there is the abstractness of autonomy. The existentialist picture of freedom in terms of the autonomous, meaning-giving subject, detached from worldly determinations, is problematic in its seeming lack of content and distance from concrete human existence. What is in question here is the attempt to assert the privileged, authoritative status of the conscious subject in the sphere of meaningful activity. This is not so much a regression to the immediate and sovereign transparency of a Cartesian cogito as a post-Kantian Cartesianism that is no longer so innocent. The pictures discussed in Chapter One were unable to ignore the question of the embeddedness of the human being in the world, the extent to which it is a determined object, although this is problematic for the idea of the human being as active agent. Insofar as the priority of the active agent is nonetheless asserted, in detachment from the world, the existentialist subject knows itself to be insubstantial, lacking concrete determinacy. Ironically enough, to the extent that this subjectivist or humanistic conception of freedom rests on a disembodied, abstract subject, it is an inhuman freedom, not one fit for concrete human beings.

Secondly, I want to suggest that the attempt to simply do away with the autonomous, meaning-giving subject, reducing it to objective determinations, does not represent a radical break from this humanism. To concentrate on what is hidden to, and determining of, human actors, is indeed problematic for the human being understood as the initiating agent, the basis of thought and action. But to suppose that a history of the subject necessarily means the objectivistic destruction of subjectivity and the end of freedom is to implicitly maintain that conception of the subject, of the human being as the originary maker of events. It is present as that which the objectivistic picture denies, and in the latter's lack of any conception of freedom or the ethical, which continue to be identified with the initiating subject. And a reductive objectivism in turn invokes the need to restore or retrieve the autonomous subject, in order to preserve the possibility of freedom and ethics. Accordingly, it represents a humanist anti-humanism, one which still refers us to the humanist subject. More generally, thought remains within the subject-object...
framework, moving between an objective, concrete account of human beings that dissolves the subject and precludes any concept of freedom, and a subjectivism that escapes objective determinations and preserves freedom but is itself problematic in its lack of a concrete historical context.

It is Foucault's own contention, it seems to me, that in humanist thought a socially and historically constituted human identity has been raised to the status of a metaphysical absolute, the foundation of thought and action, the privileged focal point of the historical fabric. This not only obscures the contingent nature of our subjective 'essence', but also engenders a reading of history which presupposes and supports our self-understanding as a metaphysical refuge from history. There is, in short, a humanistic conception of history in which the notion of history has been 'mastered by a suprahistorical perspective' and bent to metaphysical purposes. In the case of the Kantian-style existentialist subject, I would argue, it is only in terms of this putatively self-contained, initiating subject that the historical world on which we depend can appear in a negative light, as an implacably alien realm of objectivistic determination that undermines and dissolves the subject, and which we need to rise above or stand apart from in order to do justice to our subjectivity. As a result, we do not break from the initiating subject by turning to a reductive objectivism. Objectivism is the correlate, the 'dark side' of the founding subject, which implicitly presupposes the subject that it denies, and from which we are impelled to return to the subject that we have never really left.

To see the initiating subject as something we need if we are to avoid a reduction of human life to objective determinations is thus to put the cart before the horse. Prior to the threat of objectivism is the attempt to make the historical human being into a self-sufficient, transcendental foundation for thought and action, a metaphysical standpoint which turns historical immersion into an objectivism to be overcome. And the humanist subject abstractly lacks a historical context, in the last analysis, because it has been posited in the first place as a metaphysical absolute. By the same token, a concrete historical account of the subject need not amount to its objectivistic dissolution, if we cease to presuppose our selfhood as a metaphysical given and to construe history in terms of it. It then becomes possible to use history to comprehend that about ourselves which we take as given and above history, our subjectivity or essential selfhood, in its historical emergence,
i.e., to examine the historical determinations that positively constitute human beings as subjects. And this is a critical exercise, revealing the historical contingency of what appears as given or essential in human existence.

2.3 Foucault's Historical Critique of Humanist Metaphysics

A perspective is thus made available for a different reading of what Foucault is about. I see him as pursuing an anti-subjectivistic, historicising strategy that cannot be equated with a reductive objectivism. He seeks at every stage to break from the foundational humanism, the 'anthropology', that descends from Kant. This is a radical break insofar as it is not a further move within the framework of subject and object, but an escape from the framework itself. Foucault suspends the privileged role and status claimed for the subject by humanism and the correlative conception of history as that which simply denies the subject, in order to investigate the historical conditions through which human beings come to take themselves as subjects capable of grounding and explaining social and historical practices. He does not deny or dismiss the notion of subjectivity, but questions its absolutisation as a foundational metaphysical principle, subjecting it to a historical reflection that is no longer encumbered by transcendentalist presuppositions. By freeing historical analysis from the grip of the founding subject and from the latter's correlative objectivism, Foucault is able to articulate something that is unthinkable in humanist terms - a history of the subject, of its production as a cultural and social reality.

So understood, Foucault's position does not necessarily preclude the possibility of critique or freedom per se, only their specifically humanist versions in which they are grounded in the autonomous, meaning-giving subject. His project can be seen as that of a historical critique of metaphysics, specifically of the humanist conception of the subject as the transhistorical foundation of thought and action. The project has affinities with Rorty's notion of philosophy as 'therapeutic' rather than 'constructive'. As therapeutic, philosophy no longer seeks in a Kantian fashion to establish an ultimate context or legitimation for thought and action, or to criticise actual practices from this basis, but rather to break free from the outworn vocabularies in terms of which we proceed. Such an approach takes history seriously. A historicist sensibility is necessary if we are to avoid eternalising a
particular language-game, social practice or self-image in terms of a foundationalism that claims to escape from history. Broadly speaking, Foucault is engaged in such an anti-foundationalist, historicising project, working to free thought from its dependence on a foundational subject by comprehending the subject in its historical emergence. In so doing he is able to call into question those practices that derive their legitimation by reference to an underlying humanist subject, and to thereby open up the possibility of thinking and acting differently.

A brief overview of Foucault's work will fill out this picture.

2.4 Foucault's 'Trajectory' and his Relation to Modernity

Archaeology and Discourse

Foucault's historicising strategy initially takes the form of an 'archaeological' analysis, a historical analysis that suspends the idea of the human being as the foundational subject of knowledge. The conditions of knowledge are to be found in a historically emergent, contingent and anonymous system of discourse, an 'episteme' or 'archive', which governs the truth or falsity of statements that can be uttered in a particular discourse. Far from the subject determining what can be said or known, it is the discursive order that permits human beings to assume certain 'subject functions' or 'speaking positions'. This is not an objectivism that undermines and compromises a sovereign subject but a 'positive unconscious' which makes speech and speaking roles possible. Foucault thus passes beyond the effort within humanist discourse to make the human being the foundation or ground of discourse and knowledge, and the narrow alternatives of founding subject versus reductive objectivism. He radically 'decentres' the sovereign subject in favour of an analysis of the anonymous rules governing discourses in which the subject figures.

This however raises a further question - where does Foucault himself stand? And at the archaeological stage of his thinking this is quite problematic. He seems to be suggesting here that modernist thought is entirely governed by the humanistic system of discourse, and that to escape from humanism requires the invention of a wholly new way of thinking and behaving. This also implies that Foucault has nothing in common with the key thinkers of modernity - not only Kant but also Hegel and the Marxists. They are wholly caught up in the 'warped and twisted'
forms of reflection that constitute humanist thinking, and all their efforts must come to naught. But is Foucault's position as a 'radical outsider' tenable? In fact, archaeology's very detachment from the practices that it analyses is a source of difficulties.

The archaeological viewpoint is detached from humanist discourse, free from the background that governs it, and makes its statements the object of disinterested investigation or pure description. But this freedom leaves archaeology itself unable to make serious truth or meaning claims. Statements are true, false or meaningful against a background framework that is naively presupposed by the speaker. Archaeology fully articulates this background, no longer taking seriously the claims to truth and meaning made within the discourse but relativising them to a contingent discursive framework. The position has been described as one of 'nihilistic non-seriousness'. Yet if archaeological discourse escapes the influence of any horizon of intelligibility or presupposed context, how is Foucault himself able to make any claims to meaning or seriousness?

This detachment produces problems not only at the epistemological level but also in relation to the political and critical force of archaeology. The critical effort is directed towards showing the historical contingency of apparently eternal humanistic categories. But this is not yet a politically useful exercise. Archaeology cannot be partisan, engaged social critique, since this implies entering into the realm in which problems and conflicts emerge, taking them seriously. At the same time Foucault cannot account for his own opposition to humanism, which motivates his archaeological analysis. Humanism is as valid, which is to say as arbitrary, as any other discursive framework. And why should any framework be better or worse than any other, if archaeologically they are all of the same status?

Does this then preclude the strategy of a radical break with humanism, and require us to return, however reluctantly, to the fold? In fact it can be argued that the problem here is not that Foucault has broken too radically with humanism, but that he has not made a sharp enough break. Dreyfus and Rabinow make a strong case for the idea that the initial archaeological formulation of Foucault's historicising strategy remains caught in a form of the very humanism it wants to question. It goes beyond the attempt to ground possible knowledge in a transcendental human subject, positively locating the subject in a discursive context; but it also supposes
that archaeological discourse can exempt itself from historical situatedness and articulate the background conditions of all possible discourse. Archaeology's own lack of an orienting historical background is thus analogous to that of the existentialist subject, which wholly objectifies the background in terms of which it chooses and acts, detaches itself from all historical influences, and as such has no reason to choose any one direction rather than any other.(9)

Genealogy and Power

Foucault's subsequent reformulation of his position can thus be seen as a self-critique engendered by and consonant with his overall anti-humanistic and historicising strategy. The 'decentring' of the subject as the ground of knowledge in favour of a historically contingent body of discourse does not go far enough. Thought remains caught in a 'linguistic idealism', seeking to grasp an entire social reality in terms of a unifying discursive framework. The 'genealogical' formulation of Foucault's strategy drops the idea of a discursive framework and radicalises the historicist approach by locating discourse itself in a wider context of non-discursive practices. The episteme is replaced by the more heterogeneous ensemble of practices, the 'dispositif'. Humanist discourses are now found intelligible as part of a larger set of practices, particularly practices of power exercised over people, which discourse functions to perpetuate and extend. It is in the context of historically developing practices of power, interwoven with forms of knowledge, that human beings are constituted as subjects, and can assume a 'subject function' in the network of power-knowledge. The critique of the humanist subject is now politically relevant. The historico-critical project becomes one of showing the pinicemal, anonymous development of power-relations which underpin the rise of humanist discourses, and at the same time showing the historical contingency of the formations of knowledge and power in which we figure as subjects.(10)

With this, Foucault no longer sees himself as detached from the social practices he analyses. Genealogy is a historical analysis that recognises its own standpoint to have been produced by the historical developments being studied. Foucault effects a partial archaeological detachment from the historical situation in which he finds himself, stepping back from involvement in specific practices in order to genealogically trace their emergence, and putting this knowledge to work in subverting those practices. Genealogy is called for when something in one's
situation has become problematic, a focus of power struggles; and works to unsettle accepted ways of thinking concerning it, to make it appear fragile, contingent and changeable. This applies in particular to conceptions of subjectivity that are taken for granted in various practices and institutions. Historical analysis thus becomes a political weapon, shaped and directed by the historical context of power, conflict, and resistance that it seeks to comprehend. Far from being 'outside', for Foucault there is no neutral position outside the field of historical practices. On the contrary, it is the humanist subject that aspires to a privileged position outside of or above the course of events - the subject that Foucault wants to bring into question in historical and political terms.

From a humanistic point of view, the critical analysis of the subject in terms of practices of power suggests a pessimistic resignation to objective processes as the only alternative. This picture seems to preclude freedom, and so make political struggle and critique meaningless. By 'humanism' now is meant the humanist conception of politics, referred to at the outset of this chapter. However, insofar as Foucault's anti-humanist politics pursues the project of a break with humanism, it cannot be automatically read as a politically quietistic objectivism, a capitulation to structures of power. Rather, it is opposed to both the alternatives that humanist politics presents, to the notion of power it puts forward as well as its picture of political freedom. Foucault does not see historical practices of power as destroying, absorbing or objectifying subjects, but as positively producing forms of subjectivity. By the same token, he does not see freedom as residing in a subject that can stand apart from history, or bring it completely under its control. It is precisely such a picture that precludes a serious political and critical analysis of the subject, and its positive involvements with power, insofar as this appears to raise the threat of falling into an uncritical objectivism.

But what then is Foucault's understanding of freedom? For what end is the labour of historical critique undertaken? What is its relevance for a subject that resists, that tries to transform the real? There is ultimately an absence in Foucault's picture as long as its ethical dimension remains unspecified. Yet there seems no room for such a dimension, for the notions of subjectivity and the free subject have become objects of critical suspicion, as effects and instruments of discourse-power. The subject is viewed as synonymous with subjection. Are we still forced in the end to return to some version of the humanist subject, preceding historical practices, if we
are to have any normative basis for resistance, critique and freedom? Foucault, however, pursues a consistently anti-humanist strategy. He aims instead to articulate the notions of freedom and the ethical in a way that does not presuppose a humanist subject but is appropriate for the confrontation with a power that constructs it, and for the struggle not to become but to escape from this subject. A different conception of 'free subjectivity' is called for. This becomes possible when Foucault no longer views the subject solely in terms of power and subjection.

Ethics and Modernity

With the final and most complete reformulation of his anti-humanist strategy, Foucault no longer concentrates directly on the role of power in the constitution of the self. He turns his attention to distinguishable 'practices of the self', to the procedures through which the subject actively constitutes itself. These self-forming practices occupy the field of ethics. On the one hand, this extends the account of the formation of the self through power. The humanist subject constitutes itself as a 'positive self' by interiorising the self that is made available through discursive and political regulation. Thus emerges the 'inward' self of humanism, the 'conscience' that governs acceptable thought and action, whose seeming self-sufficiency obscures its worldly sources. On the other hand, it opens up the possibility of a different kind of ethical practice, a work of self-dispossession. Critical activity can be understood as a form of this ethical work, turning back to history in order to question our identification with the positive self. The historico-critical project becomes one of determining what is historically contingent in what we take ourselves to essentially be, a history of ourselves in the present or 'critical ontology of ourselves'. This critical work is an expression of our freedom understood as the permanent capacity to 'detach ourselves from ourselves', to resist those forms of power that would tie us to a fixed identity, and to experiment with new possibilities of thought and action.\(^{12}\)

From Habermas's humanistic perspective this late focus on subjectivity and selfhood looks like the final return to a humanism Foucault thought he could escape; and thus as reaffirming the enlightenment 'project of modernity' as Habermas understands it.\(^{13}\) Indeed, Foucault now locates himself within a tradition of critical thinking that derives from the enlightenment and is central to our modernity. But this is in fact his most decisive break from humanism, for it
embodies the recognition that modernity is not identical with humanism. It is only in the archaeological form that anti-humanism seems to reject modernity as a whole, to be an entirely new way of thinking, because it presumes to stand outside social reality and to grasp it in its totality as a humanism. In leaving behind archaeology, a more complex and differentiated understanding of modernity emerges. The aim remains that of a break with humanism, but this is no longer tantamount to a complete rejection of existing modernist thought and traditions. Rather, the modernist sensibility is now understood to include historico-critical awareness. In Foucault, this awareness is expressed as a historical critique of what we have come to take as necessary and indispensable for the existence and continuation of modernist culture, and of critical activity itself. Above all, he questions the idea that we cannot proceed without the autonomous, meaning-giving subject. What is being contested is not modernity per se but the subordination of modernist thought to the hegemony of humanism.

When thought is in the grip of humanism, it is constrained not only by dependence on the foundational subject but also by the idea that we cannot critically question this subject in its historical and political role without falling into an uncritical objectivism. As we have seen, this picture is problematic on its own terms, because the aforementioned subject appears as abstractly unconditioned, lacking any concrete historical context. And if the ideal of autonomy reveals itself to be unreasonably abstract, this has serious consequences for the notions of critique and freedom to the extent that they depend on it. The enlightenment tradition itself is in danger of becoming an empty project. In the light of this, the importance of Foucault lies precisely in his not being 'post-modernist', in his making possible the continuation of the enlightenment aspiration to critique precisely insofar as he detaches critique from humanist autonomy.

More positively, Foucault takes up the modernist aspiration to a historico-critical reflection on metaphysical absolutes. In so doing, he frees historical reflection from its subordination to the hegemony of the foundational humanist subject. From the standpoint of the subject conceived as a metaphysical given, immersion in history appears as an objectivistic denial of subjectivity and critique, and an extrahistorical subject seems to be indispensable for the possibility of critique and freedom. In this context, it is not possible for thought to comprehend the subject socially and historically, i.e., to do justice to its own historico-critical awareness.
By breaking from the subject-object framework, Foucault's anti-humanism is able to continue the project of a historicist critique of metaphysics that is arguably also present in Kant, Hegel and Marx, but frustrated to the extent that their thought is subordinated to a metaphysical subjectivism.

2.5 Historical Awareness in Modern Thought: Kant, Hegel and Marxism

For the later Foucault, who no longer sees modernity as identical with humanist thought, Kant and the thinkers who follow him need no longer be seen simply as victims of an all-embracing humanism, caught up in the interplay of subject and object, to be rejected along with it. They can enter into more complex and affirmative relations with Foucault's work. The later Foucault returns to a consideration of Kant, who remains the key figure of modernity, but not merely as the gateway to an era of anthropological discourse. It is true that Kant articulates what can be called the humanist conception of critique, with the idea of critique as an analysis of the transcendental, subjective conditions of all possible experience. But Foucault argues that this does not exhaust Kant's thinking or the notion of enlightened critique. Kant also introduces a second critical tradition which runs counter to his humanism, and with which Foucault can identify to locate his own project of a critique of humanism and of the humanist subject.

At the same time, if it is indeed the case that Kant introduces a second critical tradition, one which involves a historico-critical awareness that opposes metaphysics, it also seems that this aspect of his thought has been suppressed or subverted by Kant to the extent that he espouses a metaphysical humanism. I will argue that Kant, as well as the thinkers who follow him, both open up thought to history and retreat from history into a renewed metaphysical absolutism, in the form of the foundational subject of humanism. In so doing, they construe history in terms of an objectivism that undermines subjectivity, and which it is necessary to rise above. And having done so, they are no longer able to do justice to their own historical awareness. This will give more substance to the contention that the humanistic concern with the interplay of subject and object is itself the outcome of a more fundamental attempt to preserve a metaphysical standpoint in the face of history. It will also allow me to further specify Foucault's place, as a historicist
critic of metaphysics, in relation to modernist thought.

Kant

So far, what has been emphasised about the Kantian-style subject, particularly in the discussion of existentialist subjectivism, is its abstract detachment from the world and exterior determination. In this context, what comes to the fore in Kant is the negative aspect of rational autonomy, the 'declaration of independence' from all natural desires, and the strange abstractness of the moral subject that acts in supposed abstraction from concrete needs and motivations. But Kant is doing more than simply reacting to a threat of determinism, making a move within the humanistic subject-object framework. This strangely empty subject is the outcome of a more positive project, the attempt to ground human action, and not only moral norms but also truth-claims, by means of a transcendental subject. And this is an effort which goes on against the broader background of a breakdown of the authority of religion and metaphysics, what Horkheimer calls 'objective reason', that had hitherto grounded and legitimated human activity.

Dreyfus and Rabinow point out that for both Foucault and Kant, modernist critical thought begins with the move away from dependence on universal, eternal, metaphysical justifications of human activity. What is required is that we become 'mature'. Broadly speaking, maturity consists in our relinquishing dependence on dogmatic authority and in taking responsibility for the use of critical reason, which means fearlessly examining one's deepest assumptions and presuppositions. With this, it is necessary to face anew the question of how to act and relate to each other, to confront our situation without metaphysical 'props'. And with this, the historical situation enters into the field of philosophical reflection. (14)

What is involved here is a shift away from the idea that philosophy's concern is with the true and eternal, with a metaphysical reality above the transient and historical, to a worldly notion of philosophy as an analysis of its historical situation, and of those features of the present that make us who we are as thinkers. Foucault sees Kant's essay, 'What is Enlightenment?', as a linking of philosophical activity with the historical moment, as philosophy reflecting on the nature of its situation and on its place therein. (15) As Dreyfus and Rabinow put it, it represents 'a philosopher qua philosopher realising for the first time that his thinking arises out of and is an attempt to respond to his historical situation'. (16)
For Foucault, this is also the beginning of a peculiarly modern interrogation of rational thought as to its history and its geography; as to its immediate past and present actuality; as to its moment and place. It represents the emergence of an attitude, an 'ethos', a mode of relating to contemporary reality, that is definitive of our modernity. It is a philosophical ethic that requires us to reflect on our historical situation, and to constantly put what seems essential, eternal and autonomous in our thought to the test of history.

But if Kant breaks from the vision of a metaphysical order and brings his thought to bear on the present, he also restores a form of ahistorical metaphysics. Whilst calling into question reason's claims to determine transcendent reality, he also wants to preserve the normative role of reason in the face of the collapse of metaphysics. He maintains the possibility of universal, ahistorical, normative judgements by regrounding human action in epistemology. The project of investigating the universal structures of existence is preserved and transformed into the search for the foundations of forms of thought and action in the human beings who participate in them. 'Man' emerges as the organiser of the spectacle in which he also appears. As a result, the space opened up by the collapse of metaphysics is filled by the organisational power of the transcendental subject and the subject-object framework of foundational humanism. Thought falls back into a dogmatic slumber, only now ironically enough in the form of Kantian anthropologism.

The break from metaphysical dogma thereby becomes subordination to a new form of metaphysical foundationalism, of 'First Philosophy', and the opening out of philosophy to the historical situation is reversed into an analysis of the ahistorical, transcendental conditions of possible experience. Critical activity becomes the search for formal structures of universal value, which are understood to be given in and deduced from our ahistorical nature. They constitute the conditions for the legitimate use of reason, the limits which reason must renounce transgressing if it is not to fall into dogmatic metaphysics and illusion, if it is to be used maturely. Kant thus articulates a negative understanding of critique and maturity, which is bound up with the project of re-establishing a ground for thought and action, and with the perpetuation of philosophy understood as providing such foundations. Enlightened independence from metaphysics is itself given a metaphysical basis, and is thus subverted by the retreat into a renewed foundationalism.
Foucault's approach can be viewed as a 're-reversal', a turn back to the historical situation, to the question of what we are in the here and now, and a rethinking of what is involved in being mature. It means a renewed questioning of our metaphysical presuppositions, which now take the form of the dogmatic postulation of a transcendental subjectivity or constitutive anthropology. Whereas Kant posits the timeless transcendental subject in order to ground human activity, Foucault asks how we come historically to be constituted as subjects which are seen as explaining the world. He aims not to ground thought and action, but to question the forms under which they currently take place. Critique no longer asks the negative question of what limits thought must renounce transgressing, but rather asks what place is occupied by the historically contingent in what is given to us as necessary, universal and obligatory. Rather than deducing, from what we are, what it is impossible for us to know and do, it asks what is contingent about what we are, and opens up the positive possibility of transgression, of no longer being, doing and thinking what we are, do or think. A revised notion of maturity emerges, one not paradoxically dependent on an essential, metaphysical self but manifest in our capacity to refuse what we are.\(^{(20)}\)

It should be stressed that this 're-reversal' is not a move within the humanist framework that is generated by the attempt to comprehend the historical human being as the foundation of thought and action. It is not a turn to an objectivism that can be rightly criticised as 'one-sided', and which invokes the need to reaffirm the founding subject. Rather, it relates to the wider conflict between metaphysics and history. The alternatives here are not freedom versus determinism, autonomy versus heteronomy, but dogmatism versus a critical awareness of the historicity of thought. What is at issue is the attempt to legitimate thought and action by means of a philosophical grounding, in particular through humanist foundationalism, which needs to be brought into question through a historico-critical reflection. Thus Foucault's move extends, rather than abandons, the critique of absolutist presuppositions, whereas Kant paradoxically reinstates metaphysics at the heart of critical activity. By the same token, it does not entail a turn from maturity to heteronomous immaturity. On the contrary it is Kant who has lapsed into immaturity by positing the transcendental subject. And Foucault aims to articulate a concept of maturity not grounded in the privileged subject precisely in order to continue the Enlightenment's break from metaphysics.
Hegel and Marx as Humanists.

To the extent that post-Kantian thinking pursues the Kantian project of grounding thought and action in the subject, it remains constrained by anthropologism. There are however two ways of interpreting developments after Kant. On the one hand we can see Hegel and Marx as simply developing and expanding on the theme of the foundational subject, and as working within the humanistic framework of subject and object. This gives more content to the idea of a 'political expression of humanism', with which this chapter commenced. On the other hand, to the extent that modernity is not considered synonymous with humanism, these post-Kantian thinkers need not be portrayed simply in terms of an all-embracing humanist problematic. As we saw, Kant introduces a second critical tradition, the notion of philosophy as bearing on, and comprehending itself in relation to, its historical situation. He also subordinates it to a renewed metaphysics embodied in the transcendental subject. What needs to be examined is the way in which subsequent thought takes up anew the theme of history through a historical reflection on the subject, whilst at the same time perpetuating the Kantian tendency to subordinate historical reflection to a metaphysical subjectivism.

As an example of the first kind of interpretation, Taylor sees a line of thinking stretching from Kant to Hegel and Marx, which builds on the Kantian notion of freedom in terms of the autonomous, meaning-giving subject. As a free subject, my action is not determined by the merely given, the facts of history or nature, including inner nature, but by my own agency as a self-legislator. This stream of thought 'refuses to accept the merely "positive", what history, or tradition, or nature, offers us as a guide to value and action, and insists instead on autonomous generation of the forms we live by out of our own self-activity'.

Kantian autonomy subsequently develops into a vision of total liberation, rational self-determination, complete control over our own history, which is at the heart of the revolutionary political enterprise. In the process, we pass beyond the limitations of Kantian autonomy itself, its detachment from the world, whilst preserving the foundational role of the human being.

The theme of Kantian-style autonomy through detachment from an objective world is familiar from the first chapter. Kant establishes the human being as an autonomous subject in the face of heteronomous determinations by rigidly
separating the transcendental self from concrete human involvements. Epistemologically, this involves the distinction between sensual perception, in which objects are simply given to us and we passively undergo their effects, and the rational activity of understanding, in which the inexplicably contingent perceptual data are organised in accordance with the necessary forms of judgement. This split between the individual as part of the natural order and as a rational, active being, a transcendental subject, lays the basis for Kant's ethics, in which the rational, active subject becomes the free agent of moral action. Theoretical reason's world-constituting 'legislative' activity gives way to the 'self-legislative' activity of practical reason. Reason is active in morality insofar as the maxims of action one gives oneself are in accordance with reason, i.e., one is autonomously following laws of one's own making. The duality now is between contingent, empirical, given desires and the necessary forms of the moral law.(22) In this way Kant fills out his picture of the autonomous subject of enlightenment.

The result of this dualism, however, is that the free, rational agent is abandoned to and beset by an irrational, alien, meaningless, contingent reality, and itself only exists in an introverted, self-contained, abstract form. In existentialist thought this subjective isolation reappears as authentic human existence in a meaningless world. But if this move resolves the conflict between subject and object only at the cost of an abstract detachment of the subject from an alien world, there seems on the face of it to be a more satisfactory form of resolution which involves the reconciliation of subject and object. It is then no longer a question of detaching the subject from objective determinations but rather of the human agent's ability to recognise itself in what constrains and limits it, to reclaim an alien reality as its own, and thereby to overcome its own limitations. Subject and object, reason and reality, are no longer conceived as exclusive opposites, but in terms of a dialectical picture involving both poles in an inextricable relatedness.(23)

In other words, we go beyond the bounds of the abstractly detached, Kantian-style subject, relocate it in the world, but not in such a way that the notion of autonomy is lost, the subject simply dissolved in favour of objective determinations. Certainly, human beings lose themselves in their involvements insofar as their words and deeds take on a life of their own, and human activity produces a world of things. This thing-like 'positivity', the objectified product of human activity, in turn impinges on and constrains actors, subjugating them to influences that are not
consciously designed or comprehended by them. But this is a self-estrangement, an alienation that can be overcome. The world which we have produced but which is no longer ours can be restored to us. Autonomy, no longer an immediate possession, remains as a reflective achievement in the form of a higher subjectivity, in collective autonomy and control over social life-processes, in the vision of 'total liberation'. Human beings thereby retain central place in the scheme of things. The world is a human world.

This reading is consistent with the earlier Foucault's archaeological interpretation of modern thinking as synonymous with humanism, as wholly caught up in the interplay of subject and object. The effort to construe the human being as a determined object that is also the subject of knowledge, initiated by Kant, now takes the form of the interrogation of what limits and obscurely determines us, our 'unthought', in order to discern our own presence therein. The apprehension of this unthought is at the same time an imperative towards self-knowledge, towards 'thinking the unthought'. As Foucault puts it in The Order of Things - 'in Hegelian phenomenology, it was the An-sich as opposed to the Für-sich... for Marx it was alienated man... in every case, the inexhaustible double that presents itself to reflection as the blurred projection of what man is in his truth, but that also plays the role of a preliminary ground upon which man must collect himself and recall himself in order to attain his truth'. Modern thought is imbued with the necessity of clarifying this unthought, of 'reflecting the contents of the in-itself in the form of the for-itself, of ending man's alienation by reconciling him with his own essence'.

In terms of this broadly sketched picture of humanist freedom not as Kantian detachment but as Hegelian reconciliation, it is possible to identify a number of differences in the related notions of knowledge and power. In terms of detachment, knowledge can be seen primarily as knowledge of the external world, as natural-scientific. For Kant, ethics and freedom fall outside the scope of scientific knowledge of the world, and Murdoch speaks of the Kantian-style existentialist subject as 'the individual marooned upon a tiny island in the middle of a sea of scientific facts'. Reconciliation brings into prominence the idea of self-knowledge, and links freedom with attainment of the truth about ourselves as subjects. Freedom is no longer the immediate possession of an isolated subject that enjoys rational self-possession, wholly transparent self-understanding. For
the human being involved in the world there is the possibility of self-misunderstanding, limited self-awareness, ideological mystification. Here, irrational belief stands between us and our 'true' desires and interests. Instead of acting in full self-awareness, we willingly participate in forms of life that are unfulfilling and self-alienating. Both consciousness and forms of life are distorted.

This distortion can be conceptualised in terms of social domination. That is, power is no longer straightforwardly compatible with freedom, as it was in the detached subject's unproblematic manipulation of an external world, the Baconian picture that Hampshire presented. Rather, it can now be understood as separating us from ourselves and from a truly human form of life. Repressive social arrangements preclude the satisfaction of desires and interest, and distort our own awareness of them and hence of the adequacy of those arrangements. In turn, current social arrangements are not those that participants would have rationally, consciously and freely designed in full self-awareness. Thus, instead of power being exercised by subjects over objects, it now manifests itself as an objectification of subjects, which is itself ultimately self-imposed. Human beings do not autonomously generate their own way of life, but are constrained, limited and transformed into compliant objects by structures that are the outcome of human activity but which have taken on a life of their own.

All of this bears on how critique is to be understood in the new context. For Kant, critique brought to light our transcendental role, ourselves as distinct from the empirical world and objective determinations. Now, critique is the process of 'thinking the unthought', by which we actively dissolve objective determinations and come to assume the status of sovereign subjects. It takes the form of the self-knowledge that breaks down the constraints of false and limited consciousness, restores to ourselves that which is proper to us but which we were unable to recognise as our own, and re-establishes self-possession and conscious control over our existence. Critical self-reflection is at least a necessary condition for the overcoming of power relations that separate us from ourselves in practice. In revealing our true desires and interests, it also makes apparent the power relations behind apparently adequate and necessary social arrangements, which deny their satisfaction. It consequently opens up the possibility of autonomy in the form of a conscious, rational reorganisation of society.
Hegel and Historicism

It is not however possible to remain content with this account as a wholly adequate interpretation of Hegel or of Marx. The assumption is that they simply build on and develop Kant's foundational subject; or alternatively, that modernity is wholly identifiable with Kantian anthropologism and the subject-object framework, and subsequent reflection is no more than a series of variations on this theme. If the earlier Foucault tends to take this view, the later Foucault does not. He no longer characterises and dismisses modernity as humanism through and through. From a less totalising perspective, it becomes apparent that there are elements in Hegel, as well as Marx, which go beyond this humanism, and which have affinities with what Foucault is doing. And this anti-humanistic aspect of modernity relates to the historical awareness that Kant introduces into modernist thought. If Kant also suppresses this awareness and restores a foundationalist metaphysics, Hegel goes beyond Kant by once again opening thought up to history.

To begin with, Hegel brings the question of knowledge and rationality explicitly into connection with socio-historical experience and historical practices. He views truth and reason sociologically and historically, as subject to time, development and change. Rational thought has a history and not simply in the external sense of a standard history of ideas. Hegel comprehends reason historically as an exercise of philosophy. Philosophy looks to the history of thought in order to understand the forms of reason it employs. Hegel's historicisation of reason stands in opposition to a foundationalist First Philosophy. Kant maintains a philosophy of ultimate origins in epistemological form, positing a self-sufficient rational subject above the movement of history. For Hegel nothing, not even an 'a priori concept', is immune from cultural historical development, and forms of thought which dogmatically claim absoluteness have to be comprehended in the process of their emergence. After Hegel, as Habermas himself notes, a philosophy of origins is no longer defensible, even in an epistemological guise.

The historical understanding of reason also means that reason has to be understood as figuring in human life, that it cannot be conceived in narrowly epistemological terms. Kant's picture remains theoreticist and asocial. He reflects in a disinterested way on the presuppositions of theoretical knowledge, only subsequently proceeding to a consideration of human beings as actors. Practical
reason thus has a subordinate status. Modelled on theoretical reason, the practical is reduced to an inward rational volition, abstracted from the socio-historical world. Hegel in contrast gives priority to the practical over the theoretical. The practical is restored as the living mass of concrete human activities, and reason always exists as embedded in actual social, moral and historical practices. Philosophical reflection takes a social turn, and the critique of knowledge now takes in the socio-historical experience of humanity as an internal part of the enterprise. Moreover, reflection is no longer a disinterested reconstruction of static theoretical structures. It is an 'activist condition' that enters into the process it is analysing in order to challenge and transform forms of thought and action. (28)

With the linking of knowledge to social practices, and the historical questioning of the notion of absolute origins, Hegel opens up themes for reflection that are of importance to Marxism and also, it seems to me, find their echo in Foucault. As Hoy points out, Foucault is amongst those who 'take Hegel and history seriously'. (29) Foucault consistently pursues the idea of a historical comprehension of forms of reason, breaking away from foundationalist claims in order to comprehend the frameworks out of which we proceed in the process of their emergence. And if this initially takes the form of an archaeological reflection that still considers thought in primarily epistemological and theoretical terms, he breaks out of the limitations of archaeology precisely by expanding the focus to concrete social and historical practices. Finally, in the last phase of his work, Foucault explicitly locates his work as part of a tradition of historico-critical reflection that goes back to Hegel, and ultimately to Kant.

As already noted, this is not the ahistorical, transcendental Kant who initiates foundational humanism, but rather Kant understood as introducing a conception of philosophy as the analysis of our historical situation, and of ourselves in the present. Philosophy opens up to the historical dimension in order to enlighten us about our present, and particularly the present actuality, status and role of the reason we use. Hegel also turns away from the esoteric concern with an eternal order, a changeless ideal structure, in which the historically transient and contingent is considered as meaningless, in order to comprehend his historical situation. He is in no doubt that forms of reflection are inseparably bound to the historical situation out of which they arise. For Hegel - 'every individual is a child of his time; so too is philosophy its own time apprehended in thoughts. It is just
as absurd to fancy that a philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as it is
to fancy that an individual can overleap his own age... (30) This awareness of the
historical nature of reflection informs his thinking from the outset. (31)

All the same, Hegel does not abandon the traditional conception of philosophy as
the concern with that which is unchangeable and eternal, with the truth that
transcends change and history. He resolves the conflict between this and the
modern 'sense of the historical' by affirming the overarching rationality of history.
Though reason exists as embodied in actual, concrete, shifting historical practices,
these practices are construed as manifesting an unfolding, unified reason, which
actualises itself in the course of history. History is now subordinated to the
process of the self-actualisation of reason or spirit, humanity's dispersion in
history and its return to itself out of alienation. Practice is absorbed into an
overwhelming theoretical vision. Hegel thus remains the metaphysician, grasping
the essential structure or meaning of being that persists amidst change, not now as
something subsisting in a transcendental realm but as the telos of the historical
process. From this point of view he is the great anti-historicist systematiser,
capturing all thought and history in a comprehensive picture. (32)

In the end, then, Hegel repeats the Kantian reversal, turning away from history in
order to preserve the traditional project of a foundationalist philosophy, rather than
confronting an open and uncertain historical situation. It is at this point that Hegel
can be seen as picking up on the Kantian theme of the free, autonomous, rational
subject, transforming it into the vision of a total, rational self-determination in
which humanity is the supra-individual subject of history. Enlightenment becomes
the historical progression of the species towards this ideal state which is the truly
human form of existence. And in this context, historical immersion appears as
opposed to human subjectivity and freedom. To the extent that humanity is under
the sway of history, it is in a state of pathological alienation or objectification that
needs to be overcome. Historical awareness is caught up in the overarching process
of overcoming alienation and attaining rational autonomy, as 'reflection on a
system of constraints which are humanly produced: distorting pressures to which
individuals, or a group of individuals, or the human race as a whole, succumb in
their process of self-formation'. (33) The ideal state of self-realisation in turn
provides the standards for the critique of existing social and political institutions.
There is however the question of the 'abstractness of autonomy', to which Hegel qua humanist is susceptible. This does not occur in relation to a Kantian-style subject that stands apart from all objective determination, but rather insofar as the absolute, self-determining Hegelian subject contains all reality and history within itself and is itself ahistorical, beyond concrete determination. It may be argued that insofar as human beings are seen as externally determined, freedom is diminished and the possibility of criticising their existing situation is undermined. The autonomous subject then seems indispensable; the alternative appears to be our abandonment to an alien objectivity. But it remains the case that the state of freedom is untenably abstract, lacking concrete determination. Humanity may attain its essence in an absolute mind, but in so doing its finite, empirical character disappears without a trace. As Kolakowski puts it - 'in the Hegelian system, humanity becomes what it is, or achieves unity with itself, only by ceasing to be humanity.' (34) Humanist freedom remains inhuman.

But Hegel's work is not merely a continuation of the anthropological theme, a further move within the humanist framework of subject and object. I have suggested that Hegel reopens reflection to history, going beyond the self-contained Kantian subject not in order to embrace objective determinations but to historically comprehend forms of subjectivity and reason that claim absoluteness. In this, he takes up the idea of philosophy as a historically self-conscious analysis of the contemporary situation and of ourselves therein, the second critical tradition that Kant introduces and also denies in the process of restoring metaphysics as a foundational humanism. If Hegel, having reopened thought to history, himself subordinates historical reflection to a new form of ahistorical metaphysics, it would be more appropriate to see him not so much as remaining within anthropologism and its subject-object framework but rather as effecting a renewed 'closure' in terms of it. Hegel accepts the mass of social, political and historical matter as part of philosophical reflection, and also reduces history to an objectification or alienation of the subject, and its return to itself out of alienation.

The Hegelian effort to overcome historical objectification, to transcend history, is thus the outcome of the subordination of history to a renewed foundationalism. Once again, history is organised in terms of a metaphysical standpoint, a foundational subject. It is in terms of this subject that immersion in history appears as an objectivism to be transcended, though not now as an external
determination which the subject must rise above but as a self-imposed constraint which is to be seen through and overcome, restoring the subject to itself. For Foucault, a history that carries the promise that the subject will one day reap appropriate all that eludes it, all that denies its sovereignty, and assume conscious control over history, is itself the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject. Thought thus turns to the historical only insofar as history points back to the sovereign subject, which is the realisation and completion of the historical process, and so remains within the closed circle of humanism.

For Foucault it is not so much modernity that is in question, and especially not the modern 'sense of the historical', but rather this 'colonisation' of thought by humanism. History and historico-critical awareness have been taken up in a humanist context, but they are only comprehended therein to the extent that their anti-metaphysical force is subverted and turned to the service of metaphysics. Historical awareness points beyond humanism because humanism, in the last analysis, is unable to do justice to history. Hegel qua metaphysician is no longer able to take seriously his own historical awareness. From the point of view of the absolute mind, immersion in history appears only as the self-objectification or alienation of the subject, to be overcome in order to restore the subject to itself. By the same token, the social and historical comprehension of reason and subjectivity takes us beyond Hegelian metaphysics.

**Marxism and History**

This seems to be borne out by Marx, who goes beyond Hegel precisely by once again making the historical dimension central to his thought. With this he passes beyond the closure that Hegel effects by subordinating history to a metaphysical subject, and beyond the idealistic interpretation of history as the self-movement of the absolute mind, in order to reaffirm the priority of social and historical practices. Hegel's supraindividual subject gives way to concrete, historically located human beings and groups of human beings, participating in specific, historically developed social organisations. Forms of thought are grounded in the material conditions and historical forms of social life, and critical reflection once again involves the interrogation of thought as to its history and its place in social and historical practices. History is no longer the unfolding of a metaphysical reason. Instead, rationality is socially and historically embodied, inseparable from human
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practices and struggles. Marx decisively reaffirms the importance of historical understanding for
philosophical thought. He rejects the pretension of First Philosophy to
comprehend ultimate principles of thought and action independently of the actual
conditions of existence. He recovers what Hegel loses in his overpowering
metaphysical system, the comprehension of the historicity of what we think and
do. Marx's intention is not to abolish philosophy but to reopen thought to the
historical dimension. Forms of rationality are to be interrogated as interwoven
with the historical situation and existing social practices. And detached
contemplation gives way to an activist understanding of philosophy, of thought as
entering actively into the historical situation and the realm of practice. The aim is
not merely to comprehend the existing situation but to challenge and transform it.
As Poster puts it - 'More than anyone before him Marx opened philosophy to the
world, bonded theory to practice, intertwined reason and history.'(36)

It is not my intention to directly consider Marx's work at length in order to
establish the details of his relationship to Hegel, and his ultimate relationship to
Foucault. This is too large a task to be undertaken here, and is not really necessary
for my purposes. The key issue is not the vexed question of the 'true Marx' but
rather humanism and the way in which it has 'colonised' thought, in such a way
that it seems impossible to proceed without it. Here it is more useful to look at the
way in which Marx has been appropriated and interpreted, i.e., to concentrate on
Marxism. And by way of introduction, it seems clear that, broadly speaking,
historico-critical reflection since Marx has once again become entangled with
humanist metaphysics and its subject-object framework.

What has become evident in Marxism is a split into what Gouldner has called the
'two Marxisms', i.e. the 'Critical' or 'Hegelian' versus the 'Scientific' form (to be
understood as ideal types).(37) Critical Marxism is voluntaristic, treating society
and history as capable of change through the will and action of social actors. The
subjects in question tend to be viewed as a collective agent of social change, and
critique is designed to motivate them to undertake the struggle. For Scientific
Marxism, subjects are subordinated to and tend to disappear under the weight of
social structures. Society and history are governed by 'iron laws', understood on
the model of the natural sciences, working 'behind the backs' of subjects. The


former may be seen as closer to the Hegelian theme of active consciousness and
the coming-to-be of the subject in history, whilst the latter puts forward an
objectivistic, 'structuralist' picture in which actors are propelled by historical laws.

Both Gouldner and Giddens note that this divergence is, in Gouldner's words,
'the expression within Marxism of a larger condition common to social theory'
(38), the tension between agency and structure, voluntarism and determinism. The
two positions represent the familiar alternatives that humanistic thought makes
possible, the one stressing the transcendental, active role of the human subject, the
other seeing the human being as a determined object. (39) More precisely, they can
be understood to represent two different ways of resolving the tension between
subject and object, the one positive and reconciliatory, the other negative and
reductive. Hegelian Marxism deals in the currency of alienation and reification, in
which human beings are oppressed by an impersonal reality which they have
produced but which has taken on a life of its own. This is a pathological situation
that needs to be overcome, so that humanity can take active control of its history.
On the other hand, Scientific Marxism doggedly reduces subjects to epiphenomena
of social structures, and human beings are viewed primarily as objects shaped by
natural, objective forces. In keeping with the history of humanistic thought in
general, the history of Marxism is characterised by the persistent movement
between these two positions, between a 'rationalism based on enlightened
subjectivity and a positivism stripped of any reference to subjectivity'. (40)

In this context there are two quite divergent, competing interpretations of Marx. (41)
Critical Marxism stresses the continuities between Hegel and Marx. Marx is seen
as extending the idealist notion of active consciousness into that of creative and
self-creating praxis. Consciousness is no longer an enclosed realm of pure
thought, but it is an essential component of the fuller notion of productive human
activity, an aspect of the integral human being. Humanised nature, nature
transformed by human work in the process of satisfying needs, is the counterpart
of purposive activity, of practical human intentions. And the work process
reflexively forms and transforms human beings and the social organisation of
productive activity. It transforms human needs and the range of possible human
consciousness, in a dialectical interplay of 'making' and 'self-formation', of
externalisation and self-comprehension.
The notion of alienation has its place here, not as the alienation of absolute mind but of labour, in which human beings no longer realise themselves through their work. When labour is alienated, the product contradicts the intention of purposive activity and takes on a life of its own. More generally, history is not made as actors would consciously wish. Rather, human beings confront a world which is alien, irrational, and seemingly 'given'. Social conditions deform productive activity and ideologically distort consciousness. Social being determines consciousness, but this relates only to ideological consciousness. Here, the notion of critique of ideology preserves and transforms the Hegelian conception of liberating self-reflection. It aims to break down constraints on consciousness that are seen as bound up with specific forms of socio-economic organisation, to expose the historical power relations that are hidden behind distorted consciousness, and to reveal our true desires and interests.

Critique continues to refer to an ideal, final state of truly human existence. The attainment of true consciousness is an essential moment in the practical overthrow of alienating conditions. With the revolutionary overcoming of economic alienation, via the free self-conscious practice of the proletariat, humanity will attain its true function as a conscious historical subject, in control of the productive process. The course of history will be completely governed by conscious human will. This constitutes the realisation of philosophy, of the ideal of rational self-determination, the autonomous generation of the forms we live by out of our own activity, that is the essence of the truly human for idealism.

From this perspective, the idea of a Scientific Marxism, of the interpretation of history in terms of a scientific objectivism, is radically untenable. As Hypollite puts it, this would represent 'one of the most extreme forms of the alienation of man as a living and active being'.\(^{(42)}\) Scientism explains humanity in terms of nature, but this fails to register that science is a human creation. Nature, insofar as it is for human beings, cannot be detached from its human significance. There is only nature at the human level, insofar as it is worked on and transformed by human beings, and constituted as 'nature-for-us'.\(^{(43)}\)

For Scientific Marxism, on the other hand, Marx, or the 'mature' Marx at least, is seen as breaking with Hegelian metaphysics and the idealist theme of active human subjectivity. Rather than extending consciousness, he provides a reductive
treatment of consciousness in favour of material forces and conditions. Marx provides the basis for a scientific account of history, an understanding of history in naturalistic, natural-scientific terms. This involves a non-idealistic notion of productive activity - that is, the notion of labour in the economic sense of a technological process of exchange between humans and nature, which in turn promotes a 'technological' interpretation of history. The economic base objectively determines the course of history independently of the will of subjects, creating and transforming social relationships. The primacy and autonomy of the economic base is asserted, and socio-cultural phenomena, consciousness and ideas, belong to the superstructure that is generated and determined by the material base.

Now social being, the socio-economic conditions, determines consciousness in a strong sense. The life of the mind is an epiphenomenon of the conditions of production, conditioned and determined by the particular stage of the evolution of the material conditions. Ideology refers not to a distortion of consciousness, which is to be overcome by a critique of ideology, but to the superstructural, subordinate and false character of consciousness as such. Whereas previously the picture could be seen as a preservation of the heritage of philosophy, which is to be realised in practice, now philosophy itself is merely a component of the ideological superstructure, and is to be sidestepped in favour of science. In terms of this materialist objectivism, the scientific study of the impersonal laws of development of capitalism, and its objectively predictable collapse is the task that presents itself. Human beings are to trust or resign themselves to the objective tendencies of history.

From this perspective, Hegelian or Critical Marxism, which views history in terms of active consciousness, as reducible to a creator-subject, and as the continuous unfolding of this subject, is anathema. In idealistically asserting the priority of the creative human subject, it fails to grasp the extent to which the subject is a construction, produced by objective historical forces operating behind the backs of individuals. It hypostatises the subject as an absolute standard, and as an unexamined premise, in the face of all historical circumstances. And it tends towards a 'revolutionary Messianism', to push for change even in the absence of the requisite objective conditions, without regard to material realities.
Scientific Marxism, however, finds itself in the diametrically opposed position of being unable to account theoretically for the revolutionary project, unable to grasp the notion of the transcendence of historical circumstances. It suffers, as Smart puts it, from the difficulty of extrapolating from theoretical analysis to social and political practice once the subject, individual or class, is conceptualised in terms of a subordination to the determining forces of history (in whatever form, first or last instance, direct or indirect). Along with the erosion of revolutionary subjectivity, capable of changing the world, Scientific Marxism has no room for the values that might inform practice. Hence, it is unable to justify its own commitment to socialism. Finally, it lacks a notion of critique, understood as promoting autonomous subjectivity and as an essential moment in the practical overthrow of prevailing conditions. It is a revolutionary doctrine that paradoxically engenders uncritical passivity.

Scientific Marxism imagines itself to be breaking from the Hegelian subjectivism embodied in Critical Marxism. But if Marxism as a whole can be seen as caught up in a version of the subject-object problematic, Scientific Marxism, whilst it may reject the Hegelian theme of active consciousness, does not ultimately break from humanism. Rather, it is a form of 'humanist anti-humanism'. It refers back to the theme of active consciousness as precisely that which it denies and seeks to expunge, as 'philosophical' and 'idealist', from its hard-headed 'materialist' approach. If it conspicuously lacks a concept of freedom and a normative standpoint, this is because it still implicitly links freedom and morality to the humanist subject that it rejects. And it is no accident that the typical response to Scientific Marxism has been to try to restore Marxism as a 'critical theory of society' by recovering the Hegelian elements of the tradition.

What I want to pursue in subsequent discussion, however, is not simply the idea that 'Marxism is a humanism', that it manifests the subject-object problematic and occupies itself with the dispute between two untenable alternatives. Marxism in general has effectively colonised political thought and discourse, and it does not seem possible to pursue a politically oriented socio-historical analysis without it. Yet is it able to do justice to history? It seems to me that although Marx reopened thought to history and profoundly challenged the sovereignty of the subject, Marxism has once again subverted and subordinated history and historico-critical reflection to metaphysical humanism and the workings of the subject-object
Within Marxist discourse it does not seem possible to concretely and historically comprehend human existence without falling into a reductive objectivism and losing our grip on the notions of liberating critique and freedom; and it does not seem possible to critically comprehend our historical situation except in terms of an ahistorical, transcending subjectivity. Under these circumstances, the subject continues to elude comprehension in historical and materialist terms.

2.6 Taking History Seriously

The import of Foucault's radical break from humanism is that he goes beyond both the alternatives that humanism in general, and Marxism in particular, presents, and beyond the interminable interplay between them. In so doing, he is able to question the notion of autonomous subjectivity in terms of history, without simply lapsing into a reductive objectivism, a resignation to objective historical forces in the manner of a Scientific Marxism. It is precisely the threat of this uncritical objectivism that prevents Marxism from carrying through its historicist and materialist intentions, and invokes the need for a transhistorical standpoint. What Foucault brings into question, I would suggest, is the humanist foundationalism, the metaphysical subjectivism, that generates these complementary alternatives in the first place. And with this, Foucault seeks not to dismiss modernist thought per se but to recover the concept of historico-critical reflection that has been caught up in and subverted by the hegemony of humanism. His position is a departure from, but also in a crucial sense, a continuation of the Marxist tradition - and more broadly, that of the Enlightenment.

In these initial chapters, I have sought to bring out two themes that will be important in the subsequent discussion. Firstly, the 'abstractness of autonomy', which is the problem internal to humanist thought. As long as we proceed in terms of subject and object, a concrete, historical account of human existence seems to destroy the possibility of critique and freedom; but the subject which overcomes objective determinations suffers from a lack of orienting background or historical context. Secondly, there is the 'hegemony of humanism', which underlies the subject-object framework. Humanist metaphysics has colonised modern thought, and the subject-object framework seems to define all possible options. Yet it is not
possible for modern thought to do justice to its own historical awareness in terms of this framework. Faced with the threat of history as a reductive objectivism, thought persistently reaffirms the necessity of a historically transcendent posture.

In the light of this, and before turning to a more detailed discussion of Foucault, I want to proceed to a closer consideration of Marxism and the question of history through a discussion of the Frankfurt School. I want to show how the School is prevented from doing justice to its own historico-critical awareness, to the extent that it proceeds in terms of the humanistic subject-object framework. This will lead us to a consideration of the School's contemporary representative, Habermas. And it will then be possible to see clearly how Foucault eludes the humanistic criticisms put forward by Habermas. A form of thought that is unable to take history seriously is unable to properly grasp Foucault's work.
CHAPTER THREE
Critical Theory and the Question of History

3.1 Critical Theory, Humanism and History

The neo-Marxism developed after the First World War by Horkheimer and Adorno, and to a lesser extent by Marcuse (the 'Frankfurt School' or 'Critical Theory'), illustrates the problems that the notion of history poses for thought insofar as it proceeds in terms of the humanistic subject-object framework. Broadly speaking, critical theory seeks to save the autonomous subject, the possibility of critique, and ultimately the aspiration to enlightened freedom, in the face of forms of social theory and practice that would reduce human beings to the status of determined, unfree objects, mere instruments of external forces. The form of life proper to human beings is the organisation of our history in accordance with reason. Yet critical theory also has an acute sense of the historical, which calls into question any attempt to legitimate forms of thought and practice in terms of timeless metaphysical categories or essences. But to the extent that the alternative to controlling history appears to be a subordination to objective historical forces, critical theory is forced to itself assume an ahistorical standpoint that in other contexts it finds entirely unacceptable.

The Frankfurt School can in the first instance be located as a reaction to Scientific Marxism, and thus as part of the broader movement of ideas known variously as critical, humanist, Hegelian or Western Marxism. After the death of Marx, the scientific interpretation of Marxism gained ascendency and became enshrined as orthodoxy. Marxism was construed as a deterministic science of the iron laws of social development, in which objective conditions of themselves would generate revolution. The revolutionary failures of the post-war period, particularly in Germany, made this a problematic position. The key claim of the Western Marxists was that, whatever the objective historical tendencies of the present, the possibility of revolutionary change depended on the conscious and self-conscious actions of human subjects. And moreover that the 'scientistic' form of social thought was itself becoming the central form of legitimation of a regenerated, post-liberal capitalism, and the major contemporary threat to the possibility of liberation.
The Frankfurt theorists (along with others) embarked on a reformulation of Marxism in order to come to grips with the changed historical situation; and to preserve the possibility of conscious revolutionary change within it. This reformulation involved moving away from the crude materialism of the orthodox position, with its mechanically reductive treatment of consciousness, ideology and culture. It represented a revival of interest in the subjective conditions of revolution, the question of ideological blockages to the formation of revolutionary subjectivity, and the role of ideology-critique. Marxism was to be recovered as a 'critical theory of society' and as the critical self-consciousness of revolutionary struggle. (1)

This entailed a rethinking of the relationship between Marxism and philosophy. In the face of the overtly anti-philosophical character of Scientific Marxism, the Frankfurt School looked back to the philosophical tradition, and particularly to the concept of reason as it developed in German idealism, with its links to freedom. Marcuse expresses a strong commitment to a basically Hegelian conception of reason as 'the fundamental category of philosophical thought, the only one by means of which it has bound itself to human destiny. Philosophy wanted to discover the ultimate and most general grounds of Being. Under the name of reason it conceived the idea of an authentic Being in which all significant antitheses (of subject and object, essence and appearance, thought and being) were reconciled'. Reason represents the highest potentiality of human existence, and is linked to freedom understood as the human being's capacity to 'act in accordance with his insight and bring what confronts him into accordance with reason'. (2)

The realisation of reason, in the form of the enlightened, rational society, is the task and normative ideal that infuses the work of the Frankfurt school and orients its 'critical theory'. Yet the school cannot be seen simply as advocating a Hegelian Marxism, and Marcuse's statement is not entirely representative of the main thrust of the theory. Horkheimer in particular, whilst maintaining the notion of the rational society as a critical ideal, is nonetheless critical of the elevation of reason to a metaphysical, transhistorical status. With this, critical theory begins to move away from the first generation of Western Marxists, notably Lukacs. For Lukacs, Hegel's absolute subject unfolding in the course of history is preserved in the idea of the proletariat as the privileged agent of history, the embodiment of reason.
therein. From its perspective it is possible to grasp the totality, to apprehend truth, and to criticise existing reality. The proletariat realises the meaning of history in establishing a truly rational society.

Horkheimer, though influenced by Lukács, is never entirely happy with the idea of a Marxist meta-subject. He questions the subjectivistic vision of ‘history as a uniform unfolding of human nature’. For critical theory is also acutely aware of history, of the historical locatedness of thought, which stands in opposition to metaphysical claims of completeness, ahistorical truth, immunity from historical change, and static conceptions of human nature. Horkheimer engages in a historical and political reflection on reason, the interrogation of which, as Foucault notes, ‘it is necessary to address to a rationality which claims universality whilst developing itself in the contingent’. Behind the metaphysical facade, Horkheimer discerns a history of social struggles and conflicts. In this, Foucault sees German critical theory as giving expression to the modern sense of the historical, calling into question reason’s claims to universality, unity and sovereignty by examining its historical development and role. For its own part, critical theory refuses to assume a standpoint outside of history, considering itself to be part of the societal process being studied. It thus distances itself from the absolutist and totalising tendencies of Hegelian metaphysics and its Hegelian-Marxist expression, while at the same time taking up a historicising impulse that it also understands to be central to the thought of Hegel and Marx.

Despite this, however, critical theory never entirely avoids falling back into the affirmation of a transhistorical standpoint, into a quasi-Hegelian metaphysics. It opposes all that ‘mutilates mankind and impedes its development’, estranging it from a ‘truly human existence’ in which humanity would shape its destiny in accordance with its potentialities. A normative conception of reason remains central to this destiny, as the critical tribunal that judges and ideally governs social life. Critical theory takes itself to need such a transcending, normative conception of reason insofar as the alternative is perceived to be the uncritical subordination of thought to the prevailing historical situation, the reduction of reason and human existence to mere functions or instruments of the existing order. This finds theoretical expression in positivistic thought and social theory, and in the scientific variant of Marxism, embodying the ‘fatalistic formula that the course of events is dominated by necessity independent of Man’.
But now critical theory itself comes into question on the basis of its own historical awareness. History undercuts reason's traditional pretensions to be a normative arbiter of reality, and this extends to critical theory's own attempts to preserve a normative conception of reason and the notion of a 'truly human existence'. How can it justify its critical standpoint without claiming ahistorical truth? And yet to abandon such a standpoint seems to mean falling into an uncritical objectivism, a subordination to the prevailing historical situation. Critical theory still seeks to do justice to history within the framework of these alternatives. It struggles to articulate a substantive, normative standpoint for critique within the horizon of history. In this spirit it attempts to articulate a conception of immanent social critique. In the end, however, it is unable to avoid taking an extrahistorical standpoint, using a notion of ahistorical truth, in order to underpin its critical activity. The question of history remains unresolved.

My general contention is that the inability of humanism in general and Marxism in particular to do justice to history takes the specific form here of critical theory's inability to do justice to its own historical awareness. History cannot be properly grasped within a framework in which the alternative to a normative conception of reason is uncritical subordination to history, in which history appears as a threat to critique and freedom; and in which the possibility of critical social analysis depends on a normative conception of true subjectivity that rises above historical distortions and is itself ahistorical. Critical theory is constrained by its humanistic presuppositions, caught up in a subject-object framework that takes the form of the opposition between Hegelian subjectivism and reductive objectivism, between transcendence of and resignation to history. With this in mind I want now to examine the initial formulation of the theory, which aims to secure the validity of critical social analysis in opposition to scientistic social thinking, before turning to the later phase in which the focus becomes broader and the issue becomes the preservation of the Enlightenment itself.

3.2 Normative Rationality and the Critique of Instrumental Reason

The Hegelian ideal of the realisation of reason, and along with it the realisation of human potentiality, is manifest in the early Horkheimer. He speaks of critical
theory as the heir of German idealism, and indeed of 'philosophy as such'. Critical theory makes its own the concern for the rational organisation of society, in which human beings will be restored to central place in social evolution as the 'producers of their own historical way of life in its totality'. Accordingly, it is concerned not only with the goals already imposed by existing ways of life but with 'men and all their potentialities'. The social function of philosophy lies in its criticism of what is prevalent, the aim of which is to prevent humanity from losing itself in those ideas and activities which the existing organisation of society instils in its members. Criticism expresses the demand that human beings should know what they are doing, and shape their own destiny.

Horkheimer seeks to recover the concept of 'critical-substantive' or normative reason, reason as capable of bringing into question existing forms of life and ideally of directing social reality, in order to counter the contemporary reduction of reason to instrumental, 'means-end' rationality. That is, the identification of rationality with the natural sciences, knowledge with scientific knowledge and practice with technology. This is exemplified by the 'scientism' or empiricist positivism characteristic not only of Scientific Marxism but also of the bourgeois scientific community. Here, to be rational is to disentangle thought from all distorting values in order to be neutral and objective - the positivistic fact-value distinction. Values and goals are seen as incapable of rational justification, as purely private, matters of 'choice and predilection', and are sharply separated from scientific judgements which are confined to the recording and prediction of 'facts'.

For the Frankfurt School, the issue is not merely a theoretical one but has serious social and political ramifications. In the form of instrumental reason, thought is incapable of questioning the existing order. It 'relinquishes its claim to exercise criticism or to set tasks'. Science interpreted scientifically is indifferent to the rules, goals and values that it administers and implements, regarding them as external to its operations. But this representation only obscures the socio-historical context, the social division of labour, in which science and technology operate nonetheless. It conceals the manner in which the established order and the socially powerful within it determine the directions of scientific investigation and the uses made of it. Without critical self-awareness, science passively reproduces and perpetuates the existing order. It is a mere 'handmaiden' of the powers that be and
Scientism thus functions as an ideology, concealing and perpetuating existing relations of social domination. It is an especially dangerous form of mystification in that it precludes any sense of reason as substantive and capable of critique. Rational thought is reduced to what is required for the efficient running of the existing social organisation. It is incapable of seeing through the 'veil of technology' to question the power-based interests that underly the social order. Critical theory aims to preserve the possibility of such a critical awareness, and calls into question what currently passes for reason. Its 'critique of instrumental reason', of scientific ideology, is not an indictment of science per se, which as an expression of human productive activity provides the material conditions for the progressive transformation of social relations. Technical thinking itself is necessary for the development of the productive forces. But scientific ideology obscures the human, social basis of science and thereby ensures that productive activity and the social wealth it produces remain in the service of the existing order and powerful groups. In a substantively rational society, by contrast, the direction and uses of scientific activity would be determined by humanity as a whole, in the light of common needs and interests. Scientific activity would be a component of rational human self-determination.

Horkheimer sets out the alternative position in his essay 'Traditional and Critical Theory'. Here, he criticises the 'objectivist illusion' of positivism, i.e., the idea that there can be perception without a perspective from which it takes place, and that natural and social facts are simply 'there', to be passively recorded. Rather, the object of perception is a 'product of the activity of society as a whole', of collective human praxis. The subject of perception is also shaped by human activity, as the forms of social praxis develop and change through engagement with the world. But in the present order the role of human activity in the formation of perceived objects and the categories of perception is obscured. Individuals are estranged from their social activity and its products, seeing themselves as 'passive and dependent', while 'society, though made up of individuals, is an active subject, even if a non-conscious one, and to that extent, a subject only in an
This split comes about because the social order is not yet the result of 'conscious spontaneity on the part of free individuals' but has hitherto 'either been founded directly on oppression or been the blind outcome of conflicting forces'. Society is not yet 'transparent' to itself, its productive activity not yet governed by a self-conscious, general human will.

Accordingly, social activity and its products appear to the individual as comparable to non-human, natural processes, a pure factuality independent of human consciousness. And by regarding the social as external to itself, knowledge is unable to comprehend the social context out of which it nonetheless emerges, and in terms of which knowable reality is constructed. Knowledge assumes the positivistic form of a passive, seemingly perspectiveless recording of natural and social facts. So conceived, thought unreflectively plays out the functions allotted to it by the goals and categories of the prevailing social organisation, working within the limits imposed on it to support that order. The role of human activity in constructing, and potentially transforming that order, disappears from individual perception. Horkheimer sees this situation as obliquely reflected in the Kantian split between passive sense-perception and the supra-individual activity of understanding.

Critical theory, although it also emerges from the existing social structure, does not have the function of maintaining it or making it run more smoothly. Unlike scientistic thought, it refuses to accept the prevailing division of labour as natural and inevitable, as an unscientific presupposition about which nothing can be done. It is overtly self-reflective, seeking to go beyond the parameters prescribed for thought in order to comprehend and ultimately help transform society as a whole. Hence - The separation between individual and society in virtue of which the individual accepts as natural the limits prescribed for his activity is relativised in critical theory. The latter considers the overall framework...to be a function which originates in human action and therefore is a possible object of planful decision and rational determination of goals. Critical theory aims to overcome the alienation between individuals and an irrational social world, and 'has a concept of man as in conflict with himself until this opposition is removed.'

In general, critical theory seeks to reflectively bring to light the social processes that historically condition forms of thought such as scientism, to reconstruct the
formation of forms of thought that misrepresent and perpetuate existing relations of social domination, blocking the formation of critical opposition to the prevailing order. In revealing the social constraints and determinations, mediated through false consciousness, that operate on individuals, it opens the way to the practical overcoming of domination. It is in this context that psychoanalysis comes to be incorporated into Horkheimer and Adorno's work during the thirties. A psychoanalytic social psychology is developed in order to examine in detail the relationships between socio-economic conditions and the forms of individual consciousness and character. The family is given special attention here as the key institutional mediator between individual and society, through which the socially required 'character types' are produced.\(^{(20)}\)

At every stage of this activity, critical theory seeks to avoid the crudely reductive economism characteristic of Scientific Marxism. Subjectivity and culture, whilst not simply autonomous and self-sufficient, are not to be reduced to mere epiphenomena of material processes. It is precisely their reduction to a mere function, carrier and support of depersonalised social structures that is fast precluding the possibility of critical resistance and the rational reorganisation of society. Here the incorporation of psychoanalysis has another function for critical theory. As will become apparent, it is through Freud that the claims of the subject will be maintained in the face of the increasingly objectivistic tendencies in theory and practice. Critical theory also distances itself from traditional sociology of knowledge. While the latter similarly sees thought as linked to the social position of the thinker, it proceeds to consider forms of consciousness as no more than the subjective expressions of social location. The consequence is an uncritical relativism. A 'critical sociology of knowledge', on the other hand, understands thought to have a degree of autonomy, and as capable of bringing into question the prevailing order. Social reality is not understood as pure factuality but as a product of human activity and as in principle capable of being brought under conscious human control.\(^{(21)}\)

3.3 Normative Critique and the Problem of History

Horkheimer's picture draws strongly on the themes of Hegelian Marxism, and there are those who are ready to see critical theory as no more than a variant of
'Marxist humanism'. The situation is however more complicated than that. Horkheimer also expresses a certain ambivalence with respect to Hegelian thinking. On the one hand he clearly wants to restore and defend a Hegelian concept of reason, reason as capable of grasping and organising the totality, against the empiricists and positivists. He appeals to the idea of human beings as producers of the social world, from which they have become estranged. They 'experience the fact that society is comparable to non-human natural processes, to pure mechanisms, because cultural forms which are supported by war and oppression are not the creations of a unified, self-conscious will'. Reason 'cannot become transparent to itself as long as men act as members of an organism which lacks reason.' Consequently, the subordination of thought to historically imposed goals, and of human beings to the dictates of existing ways of life, represents a distortion of thought and humanity. For 'the characteristic mark of the thinker's activity is to determine for itself what it is to accomplish and serve, and this not in a fragmentary fashion but totally. Its own nature, therefore, turns it towards a changing of history and the establishment of justice among men.' And - 'if activity governed by reason is proper to man, then existent social practice, which forms the individual's life down to its least details, is inhuman...'. Critical theory draws on the idealist heritage in its understanding of what is 'proper to man'. It is a 'remembrance' of the true nature of thought and humanity, of an underlying human essence, in the face of historical distortion. This provides the normative basis for social critique.

On the other hand Horkheimer, in other writings of this period, explicitly distances himself from a Hegelian Marxism, from a metaphysical humanism and the Hegelian vision of humanity as a totalising, self-determining meta-subject. Though critical theory is the heir of German idealism, it also remains critical of idealist metaphysics, which is taken to exemplify metaphysical thought in general. And this critique of metaphysics gives expression to a historicist sensibility, which I have spoken of as the 'modernist sense of the historical'. In this spirit Horkheimer stresses the historicity and inhumanity of thought and human existence. He rejects any metaphysics that finds an original and normative structure in the world or in human beings, or relates historical, particular human beings and purposes to a reality not subject to historical change and therefore unconditioned.
Metaphysics clothes particular interests and historical practices with the appearance of eternity, obscuring their contingency and the possibility of changing them. History in general cannot be seen as the progressive 'unfolding or manifestation of a unitary principle', in which 'an intellectual force whose essential traits are antecedently fixed is the originator of events'. Horkheimer thus distances himself from the idealistic notion of humanity as the creator-subject of history.

Metaphysical thinking only emerges in specific historical contexts, but characteristically tends to exaggerate its own knowledge and to claim autonomy for itself. It claims to know the totality of things without restriction, to capture all reality under a conceptual scheme. For Horkheimer this is bound up with the contention that the whole world is the product of reason, for reason knows only itself perfectly. The 'secret of metaphysics generally' is to be found in the immanent motif that dominates German idealism from Kant onwards, namely that 'nothing in a priori knowledge can be ascribed to objects save what the thinking subject derives from itself'. Critical theory refuses to enhance reason at the expense of the world and history. It 'always understands thinking to be the thinking of particular men within a period of time. It challenges every claim to the autonomy of thought'. Mind cannot be separated from historical being, cannot assume absolute priority.

Horkheimer thus brings into question the idealist contention that we can know the world because we have made it, and insists on the finite, historically limited character of knowledge. He notes that Hegel also rejected the idealistic effort to 'make the whole content of the world disappear in some conceptual generalisation and declare all specific differences unreal as opposed to such attributes as the infinite, will, experience, absolute indifference, consciousness, etc.' Instead of searching some absolute behind the scenes, Hegel saw what presents itself as absolute and eternal in development and flux. Yet he ultimately falls back into a metaphysical absolutism, the attempt to comprehend the totality, and the pretension to a final and eternally valid knowledge. Horkheimer draws back from this side of Hegelian thought in order to re-emphasise the social locatedness and historical mutability of all standpoints. In this he sees himself as taking up a materialist, Marxian critique of Hegelian idealism.

Horkheimer shares this distrust of metaphysics with positivist empiricism, which
denies the reality of universal concepts and points instead to existing reality. But he also sees positivistic empiricism as a metaphysics which construes its viewpoint exempt from historical modification, claims immediate experience to be the true, independent and unconditioned reality, and purports to provide a principle in terms of which all else is derived. (34) Positivist thought also obscures the socio-historical context that informs it. Recall, however, that Horkheimer used the historical in relation to positivism to counter the 'objectivist illusion', to recover a sense of the social and ultimately human context of apparently inhuman facts, i.e., the active role of human beings in the formation of reality. Empiricist positivism simply reproduces and perpetuates existing social reality, and obscures the possibility, bound up with active subjectivity, of transforming that reality. It is in reacting against positivist and empiricist thought that Horkheimer sounds most Hegelian and idealist. At the same time, we can now see that the historical contextualisation of thought also works to undercut any idea of a transcending, active subjectivity, bringing into question the idealist notion of human beings as implicitly or potentially the source of their own history. All standpoints, including that of critical theory, are part of the movement of history. And here Horkheimer self-consciously distances his historical materialism from Hegelian idealism.

The result however is a real tension in Horkheimer's picture, between the anti-metaphysical stress on the historical contextuality of thought, and the idea of freedom understood in terms of the transcendence of our historical situation, in order to criticise it and actively organise it in accordance with our potentialities. Critical theory is the theoretical expression of this latter hope. But, as Held notes, to posit a benchmark against which to measure existing society, an 'uncoerced ego' that appears to embody the heritage of idealist philosophy, comes into conflict with critical theory's stress on the historicity of thought and human existence. For Kolakowski there is a tension between the idea that knowledge and theory are conditioned by social life, and the autonomy that critical theory claims for itself. Critical theory regards itself as a product of society, and yet seeks to grasp society as a whole, which seems to imply a position outside of it. This conflict between critical theory's historical awareness and its aspiration to a socially transcendent critical standpoint is also pointed out by Jay, McCarthy and Poster. (35)

Why does critical theory try to transcend history? It espouses a notion of critique understood in terms of reason as a 'critical tribunal', capable of judging and
directing the social order. Horkheimer draws on the metaphysical tradition, particularly in its idealist form, in order to preserve a normative conception of reason, a 'critical-substantive' rationality. And why? In order to oppose the positivistic reduction of reason to a mere instrument and prop of the prevailing order. For Horkheimer the alternative to a transcending, normative conception of reason appears as the subordination of thought to the existing historical order. In this context, critical theory's own historical awareness is problematic, threatening to bring about the same unfortunate result as the positivistic reduction of reason. Once again, thought seems unable to transcend the existing historical situation in order to stand in critical opposition to it. It is rooted in and conditioned by the material conditions and historical forms of social life - which seems to undermine the possibility of critique.

It is still necessary for Horkheimer qua historicist to distinguish his own position from that of a reductive materialism, a Scientific Marxism, as well as from a relativistic sociology of knowledge. He wants to avoid the threatened subordination of thought to the historical situation, to hold on to the notion of humanity as an active subject, in order to preserve the possibility of critique and freedom. At the same time he cannot straightforwardly return to a metaphysical position to justify critique. This stance is also problematic insofar as it involves taking up a position outside of the historical process. The problem becomes one of articulating a standpoint for critique whilst remaining within the horizon of history, i.e., of holding on to a normative conception of reason whilst still taking history seriously.

3.4 Immanent Critique

It seems to me to be in response to this problematic that Horkheimer puts forward his notion of critique as immanent social critique. Even when attacking idealist metaphysics, pointing to its historical locatedness, Horkheimer does not simply reject it. As he puts it - 'Harmony and significant existence, which metaphysics wrongly designates as true reality as against the contradictions of the phenomenal world, are not meaningless.' Metaphysics is not simply false, but contains truth insofar as it embodies a utopian vision of fully realised human potentiality. What has to be questioned is the premature and mystifying representation of the
world as harmonious, the idea that it is already rational. Hegel's identity theory, in particular, embodies this claim. To the extent that metaphysics portrays the world as a timeless rational system, it mystifies the world and functions as an ideology. Nonetheless it also expresses a vision of true human existence in an ideal form, and thereby the possibility of bringing a less than ideal reality into question.

Through immanent critique, Horkheimer aims to avoid both the positivistic subordination of thought to the world and the metaphysical subordination of the world to systematising conceptual thought. Instead he stresses the tension between concept and object, word and thing, as interdependent but irreducible moments of the societal process, neither of which is fixed or complete in itself. Hegel's 'completed dialectic', his absorption of the object into an absolute subject, becomes for Horkheimer an open-ended, 'uncompleted' dialectical tension between subject and object. Critical theory explores this tension, comparing society's own claims about itself to its actuality. Critique is not metaphysically or transcendentally grounded but can still proceed from within society, in terms of normative standards that are themselves culture and time-bound. Critical reflection reveals the particular sociohistorical context conditioning forms of consciousness which ideologically claim absoluteness and universality; but it also measures reality against the ideals expressed in these ideologies. In this way normative ideals are no longer hypostatised as extrahistorical absolutes, but can nonetheless become moving forces, the basis for critique and the struggle that turns critical ideals into reality. (37)

Yet this is not entirely adequate, for the issue is not simply whether or not thought is realised in practice. This does not account for critical theory's commitment to the ideals in the first place, the sense in which they are more than pragmatic proposals but point towards a true form of existence. If, as claimed, metaphysics is not simply ideological but contains truth in terms of which reality can be brought into question, what is the nature of this truth? If truth is understood neither in terms of positivistic criteria nor in relation to an absolute subject or privileged agent of history, the standpoint of critique remains elusive and unclear. (38) In fact Horkheimer seems ultimately to justify the standpoint and hopes of critical theory not directly in terms of a Hegelian or proletarian meta-subject but on the basis of a more diffuse, quasi-Hegelian force operating in history, i.e., a drive towards rationality inherent in the historical process. (39)
The standpoint that critical theory 'derives from the historical analysis of the goals of human activity, especially the idea of a reasonable organisation of society that will meet the needs of the whole community' is said to be 'immanent in human work'. The thrust towards a rational society, the interest that critical theory makes its own, is 'innate in every man'. Accordingly, although mind is essentially resistant to external coercion, and tends towards autonomy, 'it is not cut loose from the life of society; it does not hang suspended over it. Insofar as mind seeks autonomy or man's control over his own life, no less than over nature, it is able to recognise this same tendency as a force operative in history.' The socio-philosophical ideals that appear as components of ideology, which represent its 'truth-content', can be seen as expressions of the basic 'emancipatory interest' manifesting itself in history. However this means that despite the emphasis on the historical mutability of human existence, Horkheimer ultimately returns to the notion of a unitary human essence or tendency 'immanent in work', which despite the distortions of history remains the basis for critique and hope. In this conception of a truly human form of existence, the heritage of idealist philosophy and the possibility of critique are preserved, but at the cost of history.

The subsequent pessimism of critical theory about the prospects for revolutionary change has been seen to reflect an increasing lack of confidence in the existence of any historically embodied movement towards rational, enlightened existence. Certainly the dark turn European history takes in the thirties and forties makes any optimistic, Hegelian-style picture of history as a march of reason difficult to sustain. Reason increasingly appears as an instrument of technological barbarism. Yet to completely reject the historical possibility of liberating reason and rational existence would seem to imply a wholesale capitulation to the existing state of affairs. Critical theory still wants to avoid this, to preserve what fragments of critical reason and human freedom remain.

But critical theory cannot really be understood without reference to the question of history. As has become evident, the notion of a historically transcending reason is also problematic for critical theory insofar as it rejects ahistorical perspectives on the historical process. To the extent that it conceives the alternative to be uncritical subordination to history, as exemplified by positivist empiricism, critical theory cannot simply abandon a normative conception of reason. It seeks to leave
metaphysical First Philosophy behind without losing its grip on substantive ideals and the capacity to question existing reality. At the same time it has to preserve substantive ideals and values that might orient critique without simply lapsing back into a transcendental, extrahistorical stance. Hence critical theory's persistent efforts to put forward a historically grounded conception of transcending rationality.

3.6 Later Critical Theory: The Enlightened Critique of Enlightenment

Against this background it is possible to come to grips with the later phase of critical theory. Here, the name of Adorno becomes prominent along with that of Horkheimer, though my interpretation will still concentrate on the latter. Faced with the wholesale degeneration of reason into an uncritical instrument of social power, critical theory's interrogation of reason turns to the Enlightenment itself, as the event that is central both to modernity and to critical theory's own hopes and aspirations. The effort to preserve a conception of normative, substantive-critical reason becomes the effort to preserve a 'positive notion of enlightenment', and the critique of reason in its uncritical, purely instrumental form becomes a critique of the Enlightenment itself as it is party to its own destruction as a movement of liberation.

Horkheimer and Adorno see the Enlightenment in the first instance as an empiricist, nominalist, sceptical reaction to the dogmatic world-views of religion and traditional metaphysics. These systems of thought tend to function as ideological masks for social hierarchies, justifications for authority. At the same time, the enlightened critique of metaphysical mystification proceeds with the overriding substantive aim of clearing the way for an 'age of reason', for the autonomous, rational organisation of everyday life. However, the Enlightenment's empiricist scepticism proceeds to the point where metaphysics is entirely discredited, and with it any substantive conception of reason as capable of ordering human existence. Only empiricist thinking remains, bereft of substantive goals, a mere instrument of the prevailing order. The Enlightenment project of liberation through progress in knowledge and the critical overcoming of dogmatic authority is thus itself implicated in the rise of compliant instrumental reason, as
well as with the spread of capitalist relations of domination to every aspect of life. The fully enlightened earth 'radiates disaster triumphant'.(44)

Accordingly, for Horkheimer and Adorno, the Enlightenment as a movement of anti-authoritarianism and social emancipation is not eroded from without, but undergoes a self-destruction. It contains the seed of its own reversal, frustrating its own aspiration to human liberation and autonomy. In the course of what the critical theorists term the 'dialectic of enlightenment', critique metamorphoses into its opposite, affirmation, and reason into a mere means at the disposal of the existing order. Yet Horkheimer and Adorno do not simply reject the Enlightenment project. For - 'We are wholly convinced - and therein lies our petitio principii - that social freedom is inseparable from enlightened thought'. But they hold that 'the notion of this very way of thinking, no less than the actual historic forms - the social institutions - with which they are interwoven - already contains the seed of the reversal universally apparent today'. Enlightenment needs to critically examine itself, to reflect on its own 'recidivist element', in order to 'prepare the way for a positive notion of enlightenment which will release it from entanglement in blind domination'.(45)

Critical theory thus maintains its commitment to a normative conception of reason. This needs to be stressed. Critical theory does not simply abandon the Enlightenment project, understood as the rational organisation of everyday life. It does not shift to a wholly pessimistic picture in which reason as such is identified with domination and compliance. On the contrary, it seeks to uphold enlightening critique and the normative ideal of a rational society in the face of the Enlightenment's own betrayal of itself, its reversal into uncritical affirmation. This picture maintains the idea that the alternative to a normative, transcending conception of reason is uncritical subordination to the existing world. The Enlightenment undergoes self-destruction because it wholly dismisses metaphysics as fraud and consequently undermines its own motivating ideals. Traditional metaphysics, which articulates substantive ideals that go beyond existing reality and provides a normative basis for human self-determination, cannot simply be rejected. Saving the Enlightenment from itself, preserving its aspiration to liberating critique and rational self-determination, depends upon preserving the substantive content of metaphysics, which Horkheimer now calls 'objective reason'.
3.7 Objective and Subjective Reason

For Horkheimer and Adorno it is Bacon who makes explicit the programme of the Enlightenment as a movement of empiricist 'disenchantment'. Enlightenment aims to dissolve myths and substitute knowledge for fancy. The human mind is to overcome all forms of superstition, in order to 'hold sway over a disenchanted nature'. Rationality is here defined as scientific knowledge, and scientific knowledge is power, the instrument through which nature can be mastered. The emergence of the modern Enlightenment is one with tremendous advances in material culture, in the forces of production. Scientific, empiricist thinking, henceforth referred to by Horkheimer as 'subjective reason', is now seen by critical theory as bound up with the struggle for self-preservation through the mastery of a hostile nature. It is not just a feature of the modern Enlightenment but of the civilizing process in general. In order to survive it is necessary to become calculating, manipulative, rational in the instrumental sense, and in this form the subject emerges from enclosure in nature. Enlightenment in general refers to the differentiation of subject and object, self and world, reason and nature. To that extent, enlightenment, rationality and autonomous subjectivity are bound up with the instrumental domination of nature. Immaturity is 'the inability to survive'.

'Superstition' refers to mythical, religious and especially metaphysical systems. This sort of thinking, which Horkheimer now refers to as 'objective reason', aims at 'evolving a comprehensive system, or hierarchy, of all beings, including man and his aims'. The objective rational order provides the normative standards for human thought and action, ends which go beyond the requirements for individual self-preservation. Such thinking is represented by Plato, Aristotle, the Scholastics, and German Idealism. The problem with objective reason is that it tends to establish a static, closed, dogmatic system of thought, indifferent to historical change and working in practice as an ideological legitimation of the traditional social order.

Movements of enlightenment, which appear in reaction to these systems, criticise such thinking as an anthropomorphic projection of the subjective onto nature.
They tend to be pragmatic, calculating, 'realistic' in the face of metaphysical fantasy and speculation. Yet in the past they have also articulated concepts which they regarded as adequate and so formulated a normative objectivity of their own. But with the complete breakdown of the notion of a normative world-order, in the face of the modern Enlightenment's radical 'demythologisation' of the world, reason ceases to refer to any overriding, supra-individual purposes, and becomes wholly a question of means, an instrument of self-preservation. Rationality and the subject become subordinated to the requirements for the social mastery of nature, which appears as an end in itself, the only legitimate task. Positivism, scientistic ideology and the absolutisation of 'the facts', emerges as the new form of dogmatic constraint, the new form of superstition that works to perpetuate the existing order.

At this point the Freudian themes that critical theory has taken on board start to become evident. For Horkheimer, traditional metaphysics gives expression, albeit in a distorted form, to human desires, needs, potentialities and hopes that are precluded by the existing order for the sake of social self-preservation. The dissolution of objective reason reflects a destructive process of self-impoverishment. At the core of the dialectic of enlightenment is the self-destructive consequence of the subject's efforts to preserve itself. The mastery of nature involves the denial of nature within, the renunciation of desires, needs and potentialities in order to become a 'reality-adjusted' rational ego. The process is self-defeating - this very denial, the nucleus of all civilising rationality, is the germ cell of a proliferating mythic irrationality; with the denial of nature in man not merely the telos of the outward control of nature but the telos of man's own life is distorted and befogged. As soon as man discards the awareness that he himself is nature, all the aims for which he keeps himself alive - social progress, the intensification of all his material and spiritual powers, even consciousness itself - are nullified. The very substance that is dominated and repressed for the sake of self-preservation is 'none other than that very life as functions of which the achievements of self-preservation find their sole definition and determination'.

This self-restriction for the sake of mastery is seen as manifesting itself in Kant's picture. The detached, Kanian-style subject is the correlate of the instrumental objectification of the world - 'world domination over nature turns against the thinking subject himself; nothing is left of him but that eternally same I think that
must accompany all my ideas.\footnote{51} The self is stripped of all natural residues and sublimated into the transcendental or logical subject, the locus of scientific knowledge. Kant's moral philosophy bears the mark of this self-denial. The denial of desire results in a highly formalistic ethics, in which morality is divorced from an assessment of human wants, goals and passions. Substantial goals are anathematised as the power of nature over mind, the erosion of its self-legislation. The result is a vacuous, empty authority that, in its very formality, is at the service of every natural interest.\footnote{52}

Not that Kant is wholly caught up in this self-destructive process. Horkheimer and Adorno see in Kant the attempt to preserve the traditional normative conception of reason, capable of establishing universal ends and embodying the ideal of 'utopia'. But Kant's concepts are ambiguous - 'As the transcendental, supraindividual self, reason comprises the idea of a free, human social life in which men organise themselves as the universal subject and overcome the conflict between pure and empirical reason in the conscious solidarity of the whole. This represents the idea of true universality: utopia'. At the same time, however, reason constitutes the court of judgement of calculation, which adjusts the world for the sake of self-preservation and recognises no function other than the preparation of the world from mere sensory material in order to make it the material of subjugation.\footnote{53} The latter aspect comes to supplant the former. To the extent that Kant's picture goes beyond scientific reason and preserves a concept of utopia, he is in turn condemned by the Enlightenment as dogmatic, and scientific thought is fully affirmed as the only form of truth.\footnote{54}

Critical theory wants to preserve the enlightened aspiration to autonomy, the utopian ideal of rational human self-determination. It's when subjective autonomy is pursued purely through instrumental domination, the mastery of nature and scientific rationality, that it loses its own orienting content and undergoes dissolution. Human beings are thus reduced to mere instruments in the project of mastering the world, which proceeds without any reference to human needs and desires. Reason becomes a mere tool of domination and manipulation, no longer articulating substantive ends. Enlightenment has to reflect on its own self-destructive path, to restore a reference to human needs, and thus can only come to realisation if it preserves the normative ideals of metaphysics that give expression to these needs.
Implicit in Horkheimer and Adorno's picture, it seems to me, is a criticism of what I have referred to as the 'abstractness of autonomy'. Autonomy, conceived in terms of detachment from all worldly influences in order to master them, means that the self is separated from all that might orient its activity. By objectifying all substance, including its own, the subject undergoes self-dissolution. This is not to say, however, that they radically reject the idea of autonomy, of freedom as the capacity to ground and determine thought and social practice. They look to a Hegelian-style reconciliation with our alienated substance in order to preserve the aspiration to autonomy.

At the same time Horkheimer and Adorno do not seek to return to an ahistorical metaphysical standpoint. As we have seen, critical theory has a strong sense of the historical, and calls into question any thinking that forgets the historical context out of which it emerges. Thus, although the utopia of rational self-determination derives from the idealist tradition, critical theory questions the idealist - particularly Hegelian - tendency to inflate the subject at the expense of the world. In the present context this means a recognition that the subject and reason emerge historically in the very process of mastering nature. For Horkheimer, spirit is 'inseparably related to its object, nature', emerging in the context of the struggle for self-preservation and conditioned by the material requirements of existence. But the more that spirit, released from all constraint, tries to claim as its own product not only the forms of nature, as in Kantianism, but also its substance, the more does spirit lose its specific substance and the more do its categories become metaphors of the eternal repetition of natural sequences. A closed, static system of thought and social practice emerges, resistant to historical change. Here, the breakdown of objective reason, under the pressure of enlightenment scepticism, represents historical progress.

Metaphysical thought has to recognise the historical conditions for its emergence. But as always, Horkheimer does not simply reject metaphysics. Thought is more than a mere function of the historical struggle to survive. In its substantive content, metaphysics represents thinking that goes beyond the struggle for self-preservation. It gives voice to those desires and needs that have been repressed and denied for the sake of the social mastery of nature. In short, it articulates the ideals for the sake of which one keeps oneself alive. Surpassing the
repression of inner nature, the self-destruction of the subject, and the subordination of human life to the productive process, its ideals point towards a future reconciliation of humanity with its instinctual substance and a substantively rational organisation of the social order. They thus provide the basis for the critique and transformation of the existing historical situation, in the name of a 'truly human existence'. As before, Horkheimer sees metaphysics as possessing a truth-content in terms of which to measure and oppose the distortions of history. Only now this truth is not understood on the basis of an interest 'immanent in work', but has a basis in biology, in a quasi-Freudian instinctual substance.

Overall, the issues remain the same as they were for the earlier phase of critical theory - to save the ideal of a substantively rational, enlightened society, which involves a normative conception of reason, in the face of the reduction of reason to its compliant, instrumental form, whilst recognising the historical contextuality of thought in the face of the historically transcendent claims of traditional metaphysics and idealism. The modern Enlightenment is seen as too one-sided in its critique of metaphysics, the result being uncritical subordination to the prevailing historical situation. Critical theory aims to go beyond both the subordination of thought to the world and the subordination of the world to systematising thought, in order to preserve the possibility of transcendence within history. Normative ideals are not timeless absolutes but emerge from within the historical process; yet they possess a transcending truth-content and are capable of acting as a 'corrective' to history insofar as it distorts and falsifies human existence. Whether the quasi-Freudian standpoint now adopted as the basis of critique is not a renewed form of ahistorical absolutism is, however, another question.

3.8 Reason, Subjectivity and Domination

It is important to articulate as clearly as possible the picture that Horkheimer and Adorno are presenting. As will become apparent in the next chapter, it is commonly misconstrued. I will now examine critical theory's account of the historical emergence of the subject and forms of rationality, and the inherent tendency towards their self-destruction; the corresponding transition in the modern period from liberal to late capitalism; the decline of the potentially resistant individual as a cultural 'type'; and their account of twentieth-century fascism.
Finally, the Frankfurt School's own critical approach, which remains a form of immanent social critique, will again be considered.

The Emergence of the Subject

Horkheimer and Adorno's account relates not only to modernity and the emergence of the self-preserving 'bourgeois individual' of liberal capitalism, but to the course of history as a whole. The history of civilisation is a 'history of renunciation', of the repression of instinctual nature in the process of escaping from and mastering the natural environment. The self emerges as the pragmatic, coldly calculating locus of control. Human beings 'had to do fearful things to themselves before the self, the identical, purposive and virile nature of man was formed', a process of renunciation that is to some extent repeated in every childhood.

The emergence of the self from nature is interwoven with social domination, the mastery of nature with that of other human beings. The 'distance between the subject and object' is 'grounded in the distance from the thing itself which the master achieved through the mastered'. The ruler survives through the subordination of others to that end, whilst the ruled preserve themselves by submitting to the rule of the master. In ensuring the master's survival they effect their own. Thus the 'dictatorial minority', by self-interestedly subjecting the whole of life to the demands of its maintenance, 'guarantees, together with its own security, the persistence of the whole'.

The hierarchical organisation of command and obedience, cooperation and subordination - in short, the social division of labour - effects the survival of society in general in the face of nature.

The subject, then, has its origins in the system of social domination that mediates its survival in the face of nature. For Horkheimer, the 'ego-principle' is already manifested in 'the outstretched arm of the ruler, directing his men to march or dooming the culprit to execution'. It emerges in an age of caste-privilege, marked by the cleavage between intellectual and manual labor, conquerers and conquered. And it cannot properly be ascribed to the 'amorphous mass at the base of the social pyramid'. The principle of domination, originally based on brute force, acquires in the course of time a more spiritual character - 'The inner voice took the place of the master in issuing commands'. The leader and the elite bring about the continuity and coherence required in the social productive process, and the ego within is the internalisation of social command, of the requirements of organised
The mastery of inner nature is the individual self-denial and instinctual renunciation required by the social process of production. Horkheimer is following Freud in holding that the renunciation of desire is the crucial condition for the development of organised society. As a system of self-preservation, society enforces the prohibitions of instinctual needs that transcend the available possibilities of satisfaction. Individuals have to do violence to themselves in order to maintain the whole and reap the benefits of civilisation. The rationality of this self-denial is more apparent to those at the top of the social hierarchy than to those lower down, who are more likely to be made sociable by force.

In a civilisation characterised by renunciation, the struggle to maintain the self is accompanied by the constant temptation to lose it, the desire for self-abandonment in pleasure. As Horkheimer and Adorno put it: 'The dread of losing the self...is intimately associated with a promise of happiness which threatened civilisation at every moment.' Pleasure represents the ever-present threat of regression to a state of nature and a subversion of the established order. As such it is social, in the sense that it presupposes denial of desire on the part of those enmeshed in civilisation; but also 'nature's vengeance' for its subjugation, which proceeds at the cost of self-denial.

Horkheimer and Adorno at no stage reject the need to master nature. The growth of economic productivity 'furnishes the conditions for a world of greater justice'. Technology per se is not the problem. It is the social structure in which it is deployed that needs to be transformed. And even here, social domination and the repression of internal nature are historically necessary aspects of the escape from external nature. The critical theorists are not advocating a primitivist 'return to nature' as an antidote to social domination. What is in question is the circumstance that although the development of the productive forces have provided, as never before, the material conditions for surpassing social domination and self-denial - something that is only possible within the context of civilisation - what has eventuated is rather the intensification of social domination and repression, for the sake of ever-greater mastery of nature. There is a link between technological progress and social regression, although it is not one of inescapable logical necessity.
What is required is that humanity break out of the cycle in which the mastery of nature proceeds at the cost of the denial of inner nature. The resulting impoverishment of subjectivity, thought and experience means that whilst the objective conditions for the liberating transformation of social relations are present, the subjective conditions are lacking. The rulers restrict themselves to the functions of organisation and administration, and 'ossify into the condition of the commanding self'. The workers have no advantage over the immobile master. They can see no alternative to continued adaption to the system, and the persistent denial of pleasure in order to continue their toil. In general - 'Mankind, whose versatility and knowledge become differentiated with the division of labour, is at the same time forced back to anthropologically more primitive stages, for with the technical easing of life the persistence of domination brings about a fixation of the instincts by means of heavier repression. Imagination atrophies...the curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression.' But even though reason itself is profoundly implicated in this cycle, Horkheimer and Adorno see it as also capable of going beyond it.

Whilst reason emerges in the context of humanity's mastery of a hostile nature, it is not restricted to subjective reason. The subject can transcend its entanglement with power. Horkheimer writes - 'On the one hand, the social need of controlling nature has always conditioned the structure and form of man's thinking, and thus given primacy to subjective reason. On the other hand, society could not completely repress the idea of something transcending the subjectivity of self-interest, to which the self could not help aspiring.' Escaping from the immediate pressure of nature has at times given human beings the freedom to be able to think about nature and reality without directly or indirectly planning for their self-preservation. These 'relatively independent' forms of thinking, which Aristotle describes as theoretical contemplation, were particularly cultivated by philosophy. Through them a reality was conceived other than that structured by domination, by the requirements of self-preservation - the order of being that is articulated in metaphysical systems of objective reason.

At the same time, speculative thought was a luxury that only a class of people exempt from hard labour could afford. The leisure to indulge in speculation was made possible only through a system of class domination, from which intellectuals
tried to emancipate themselves intellectually. Contemplation 'was always the
privilege of certain groups, which automatically built up an ideology hypostatising
their privilege as a human virtue; thus it served actual ideological purposes,
glorifying those exempt from manual labour.' In articulating the great ideals of
human existence as external, universal, absolute principles, objective reason
mystifies the social order from which it emerges. Its theoretical harmony 'is given
the lie on every hand by the cries of the miserable and disinherited', by a social
reality far from harmonious. Its universal motifs are used in practice to justify the
privileged position and particular interests of ruling groups, to mask and legitimate
social domination.

Yet as always Horkheimer does not simply reject traditional metaphysics. Whilst it
emerges from within the historical process and is conditioned by the prevailing
social organisation, it is not merely false. In articulating substantive ideals,
objective reason 'gives voice' to the nature that subjective reason only denies and
represses, i.e., to our own instinctual needs and desires. These ideals point
towards a future overcoming of repression, an ultimate 'self-realisation' and at
least give meaning to the mastering of primitive urges. In this, metaphysical
systems are the heir of religion, which tries to 'turn blind resignation into
understanding and hope'. Horkheimer seems to have in mind Freud's notion
of 'illusion' - collective fantasies that compensate for the renunciations imposed by
civilisation, the system of self-preservation. They are elaborated into religious
world-views and rites, ideals and value systems, styles and products of art.

In this light, it is possible to understand Horkheimer's description of philosophy
as 'the voice of all that is dumb', as endowing nature with 'an organ for making
known her sufferings'. In objective reason, nature insofar as it enters into us -
inner nature - has a chance to speak through the minds of human beings, even if in
the 'distorted language of privileged groups'. The modern dissolution of
reason's substantive content, its reduction wholly to self-preserving subjective
reason, closes even this avenue for the expression of desires that go beyond
self-preservation. The repression of desire for the sake of mastering nature is
carried to its furthest extreme.

The two forms of reason, subjective and objective, have always existed historically
in a relation of conflict. Objective thinking tends towards a static, eternalistic
system that is often an ideological mask for social hierarchy. It engenders movements of enlightenment, of the sceptical empiricist thinking that aims to destroy conceptual fetishes, dogma, mythology. As Horkheimer puts it - 'The subjective faculty of thinking was the critical agent that dissolved superstition'. Though in denouncing mythology as false objectivity, i.e., as the creation of the subject, it had to use concepts that it recognised as adequate. Thus it always developed an objectivity of its own. It replaced the old mythology with a new, though enlightened one. The radicalness of the modern enlightenment however is that it proceeded to the point where 'thinking either became incapable of conceiving such objectivity at all or began to negate it as delusion.' Reason was stripped of all substantive content and has become wholly 'subjectivised'.

The escape from subservience to dogmatic systems of thought represents necessary historical progress, but the abstract negation of objective reason throws the baby out with the bathwater. Traditional metaphysics, embodying socially transcendent desires in its normative ideals, implies at least the possibility of passing judgement on existing ways of life. Purely subjective, empiricist reason is no more than an instrument of the system of self-preservation, unable to transcend social reality. The initial stages of the Enlightenment still operated with substantive ends, with an objective concept of reason as capable of organising human relationships, and in which the ideals of freedom, justice and truth derived their justification. The destruction of mythology was to open up an era of reason, free from subservience to dogmatic authority. But ultimately, Enlightenment cannot tolerate any human aspiration that has no place in the context of self-preservation, and that includes its own substantive aims.

The progress of Enlightenment sees reason, which asks authority to justify itself, turn this challenge against itself and come to regard its own claims as part of the myths it seeks to dissolve. Accordingly - 'The philosophers of the Enlightenment attacked religion in the name of reason: in the end what they killed was not the church but metaphysics and the objective concept of reason itself, the source of power of their own efforts.' Purged of substantive content, reason metamorphoses from critique to affirmation and subservience to the existing order. It 'has become completely harnessed to the social process. Its operational value, its role in the domination of men and nature, has been made the sole criterion.'
The Decline of the Enlightened Individual

This development is seen as interwoven with the rise of liberal capitalism and the era of bourgeois individualism, and its transformation into late (state interventionist, post-competitive) capitalism in which the individual is all but assimilated into the prevailing social system. The bourgeois individual emerges in the wake of the breakdown of the static hierarchical order of feudal society, an order legitimated by a spiritualistic ontology. Emancipation from this 'eternal collectivity' is undoubtedly a progressive step. "Insistence upon any immutable order of the universe, implying a static view of history, precludes hope of a progressive emancipation of the subject from eternal childhood in both community and nature. The transition from objective to subjective reason was a necessary historical process." (81)

In the era of free enterprise, atomistic individuality emerged as a function of self-preserving subjective reason. The idea of individuality 'seemed to shake itself loose from metaphysical trappings and to become merely a synthesis of the individual's material interests'. The individualistic pursuit of self-interest was at the heart of the ideology of liberalism, 'which sees society as progressing through the automatic interaction of divergent interest in a free market economy'. (82) Substantive values of freedom, justice and happiness were not abandoned but were seen to be best realised through the unconstrained pursuit of self-interest. If this ideology obscured the unequal distribution of economic power which in fact determined social relations, for the entrepreneurial class at least it was not entirely illusory. Under liberalism the citizen 'could within limits develop his own potentialities; his destiny was within limits determined by his own activity.' (83)

In this situation, however, are the seeds of the decline of the bourgeois individual. The independent, self-interested subject was destroyed by the development of the very pragmatic, instrumental logic of self-preservation that had initially served it. The 'social content' of instrumental reason is 'profitable efficiency', and 'rationalisation is at the same time monopolistic standardisation and concentration'. (84) Survival in competition depends on efficiency and demands ever-greater mechanisation and rationalisation of enterprises, which in turn generates increasing concentrations of economic power. In the end, only the 'great combines' survived competition. Monopolistic mass production takes over, society is increasingly planned by powerful organisations and administrators in the
name of maximum productive efficiency. The self-sufficient entrepreneur is replaced by the 'cartel lord and administrator', and the struggle between competing individuals by 'national and international struggles among the colossi of power'.

Having lost their economic basis, small-scale capital, individuals are increasingly subordinated to the technical requirements of maximum productive efficiency, and to the social groups that administer the apparatus of production. They become mere functionaries of planned capitalist accumulation. Survival depends on submitting to the requirements for the preservation of the system and the power structure that sustains it, all of which appears as the form of organisation that is 'technically necessary' and, in the instrumental sense, entirely rational. Freedom is relinquished to the dictum of reason itself, and 'the apparatus to which the individual has to adjust and adapt himself is so rational that individual protest and liberation appear not only as hopeless but as utterly irrational'. Individuals become indistinguishable from their function in the prevailing system, integrated into the wholly rationalised totality.

The Individual and the Family
This, then, is the wholly enlightened world that radiates disaster triumphant. Thought, wholly instrumentalised, is reduced to a mere handmaiden of the existing order. Critical theory remains opposed to this instrumentalisation, and seeks to preserve the substantive normative ideals articulated in traditional metaphysics. Metaphysical systems are understood to have given expression, albeit in a mystified form, to the desires and needs that were denied in the course of our achieving self-preservation. The role of instinctual nature as the basis for normative ideals, and thus for the possibility of critique and resistance, is most clearly indicated in Horkheimer's account of self-formation in the bourgeois family. Though the bourgeois family had a key role in integrating individuals into the existing social order, it also allowed the possibility of substantive individuality, capable of critique and resistance.

The process of self-formation involves the painful renunciation of immediate gratification, as the child confronts, in the parental admonition, the 'fundamental postulates of civilisation'. The child is forced to resist immediate urges, to effect a differentiation from the environment, and 'in short, to borrow Freud's
terminology, to adopt a superego embodying all the so-called principles that his father and other father-like figures hold up to him. The notion of the superego is ambiguous - both the intrapsychic extension of authority and the vehicle of the 'ego ideal'. Conflict between the individual and civilisation centres on the ideals for the sake of which renunciation is enforced. The adolescent 'feels the gap between the ideals taught to him and the expectations they arouse in him on the one hand, and the reality principle to which he is compelled to submit on the other', i.e., the conflict between civilisation's ideals and its actual practices.

There can be two outcomes to this. On the one hand individuals may resentfully submit to social reality, accepting the identity of reason, the ideal, and domination. These people 'willingly embrace or force themselves to accept the rule of the stronger as the eternal norm', giving up the hope of 'ultimate self-realisation'. They are never rationally reconciled to civilisation, and their natural impulses lead a devious undercover life within them, generating unconscious hostility. The resistant individual on the other hand revolts against the prevailing reality - 'He is at least successful in the process of internalisation to the extent of turning against outside authority and the blind cult of so-called reality. He does not shrink from persistently confronting reality with the truth, from unveling the antagonism between ideals and actuality'. Denied or frustrated needs do not express themselves in hostility towards civilisation but in a conscious critique of the constraints presented by social reality. The resistant individual 'remains loyal to his superego, and in a sense to his father-image, in the light of which reality is 'untrue'. Later, Horkheimer will speak of philosophy as the 'memory' and 'conscience' of humanity, which rather than simply dismissing ideology as fraud seeks to do justice to the images and ideas that once dominated society as absolutes.

The decline of the resistant individual is understood to be bound up with the decline of the bourgeois family and in particular of the authority of the father. The development of capitalism and the disappearance of small-scale capital means that the material basis of paternal authority is undermined, and with it the process of internalisation. The child is increasingly susceptible, from an earlier age, to outside forces. Internalisation is replaced by direct conformity to outside pressure, as obedience is enforced less by individuals than by groups. Thus - 'The change in the role of the parents, through the increasing transfer of their educational
functions to school and social groups as brought about by modern economic life,
accounts to a great extent for the gradual disappearance of individual resistance to
prevailing social trends. (91)

Under late capitalism, the subjugation of nature within goes on purely in order to
adapt to the overwhelming pressures brought to bear by society on the individual.
It has no meaningful motive, no goal transcending industrial society. As
Horkheimer puts it - 'The impact of existing conditions upon the average man's
life is such that the submissive type...becomes overwhelmingly predominant.
From the day of his birth, the individual is made to feel that there is only one way
of getting along in the world - that of giving up his hope of ultimate self-realisation. (92)
At the same time, social power over the individual has
become direct - 'Instead of the internalisation of the social command which not
only made it more binding...but emancipated it from society and even tuned it
against the latter, there is an immediate and direct identification with stereotyped
value scales. (93) The mediating process of internalisation is bypassed and social
control operates directly on the instincts themselves. The functions of ego and
superego are expropriated, taken over by external authorities. This is the
psychological expression of the integration of the individual into the totality under
late capitalism. Nonetheless, Horkheimer insists, 'the victory of civilisation is too
complete to be true. Therefore adjustment in our times involves an element of
resentment and suppressed fury', which is nature's persistent revolt against
civilisation. (94)

Fascism and the Revolt of Nature
There is no question, however, of embracing the instincts in order to oppose the
civilisation that represses them. It should be stressed once again that such a
primitivist, anti-rationalist response is not what Horkheimer and Adorno are
advocating. Indeed such primitivism is linked by them to the excesses of fascism.
In their account of anti-Semitism, Horkheimer and Adorno see the 'hatred felt by
the led', the rebellion of repressed nature against domination, made directly useful
to domination. (95) The revolt of nature involves socially unacceptable and hence
potentially revolutionary traits and desires, but at the same time 'such rebellion,
though "genuine", always involves a regressive element' and 'is from the outset
suitable for use as an instrument by reactionary ends'. Instincts are not inherently
destructive or aggressive, but under the pressure of labour through the centuries,
'pleasure has learnt self-hatred'. Having treated their own inner nature 'brutally and spitefully', when the masses give it reign 'their actions are as warped and terrible as the excesses of slaves become tyrants'.

In fascism, rationality has reached the point at which it is no longer satisfied with simply repressing nature; rationality now exploits nature by incorporating into its own system the rebellious potentialities of nature. Fascism used the revolt of nature to its own advantage, with its pseudo-naturalist ideology of 'blood and soil', and the result was lawlessness and brute force in the service to the powers that be. The revolt of nature is a potentially emancipatory force, but the abdication of reason and the regression to more primitive stages leads from 'historically reasonable' to 'utterly barbaric' forms of social domination. The ego, despite its repressive role, alone represents the possibility of parlaying the revolt of nature into a rational critique of society - 'The sole way of assisting nature is to unshackle its seeming opposite, independent thought'.

Only through reason can humanity overcome its self-destructive antagonism towards nature, of which fascism is an extreme expression. A regressive return to nature, indeed any naturalistic reduction of spirit, only exacerbates the problem by embracing the subjugated nature that is the counterpart of instrumental reason. Reason is able to articulate desires and needs into substantive ideals, as demonstrated by the systems of objective reason that transcends self-preserving rationality. The way forward is to reconcile the need for self-preservation in the face of a hostile nature with the claims of inner nature as expressed in the ideals of objective reason. That is, to reconcile spirit which only emerges through the domination of nature, with its own substance, the inner nature that is repressed in the process, through the realisation of the normative ideals articulated in objective reason. The pathway between instrumental reason and traditional metaphysics once again takes the form of an immanent critique of ideology.

3.9 Immanent Critique in the Later Phase of Critical Theory

Traditional metaphysics gives expression to such a reconciliation of spirit and nature, but in the mystifying, ideological form of a harmonistic spiritual ontology that obscures the continuing conflict between humanity and nature, and the
persistence of antagonistic social relations. Nonetheless, even if 'the traditional affirmative doctrines have an affinity with ideology and lies', they are the expressions within the historical process of something transcending the subjectivity of self-interest. Subjective reason, by itself, destroys the subject and tends towards vulgar materialism and cynical nihilism. The task of philosophy is not to play subjective against objective reason, for untruth lies precisely in the hypostatisation of one against the other, but rather 'to foster a mutual critique and thus, if possible, to prepare in the intellectual realm, the reconciliation of the two in reality'.(100)

The two concepts of reason are interlaced. On the one hand 'only a definition of the objective goals of society that includes the purpose of self-preservation of the subject, the respect for individual life, deserves to be called objective'. On the other - 'The conscious or unconscious motive that inspired the formulation of the systems of objective reason was the realisation of the impotence of subjective reason with regard to its own goal of self-preservation. These metaphysical systems express in partly mythological form the insight that self-preservation can be achieved only in a supra-individual order, that is to say, through social solidarity'.(101)

Philosophy achieves its task of reconciliation through immanent ideology-critique. The 'great ideals of civilisation', articulated by objective reason, cannot be understood as absolute or eternal principles. When a metaphysical system does so it exposes their historical relativity. Yet - 'Again and again in history, ideas have cast off their swaddling clothes and struck out against the social systems that bore them'. 'The contradiction between the existent and ideology 'spurs all historical progress'!(102) The basic cultural ideals have truth values, and philosophy has to measure them against the social background from which they emanate. It opposes the breach between ideas and reality, confronting the existent, in its historical context, with the claims of its conceptual principles, in order to criticise the relation between the two and thus transcend them. The process of critique is thus a double-edged negation - 'a negation of the absolute claims of prevailing ideology and of the brash claims of reality' - from which it derives its positive character.(103)

The notion of immanent critique thus reappears, as a form of substantive critique
distinguishable from the abstractly negating scepticism of the French Enlightenment, which simply dismisses the ideological stages of the past as 'stupidity and fraud', to its cost. Yet, as before, immanent critique ultimately presupposes something ahistorical that underpins the truth content of the cultural ideals and thereby provides the ultimate basis for critique. For the early Horkheimer it was a human essence or tendency 'immanent in work', which critical theory sought to promote in the face of the distortions of history. As a historically embodied force, expressed in cultural ideals, it preserved something of the Hegelian notion of a historical tendency towards rationality and self-realisation.

Now it takes the form of socially transcendent biological needs and desires, which undergo repression in the course of history, and which find expression in the cultural ideals. In the fulfillment of inner nature lies the 'unacknowledged truth of all culture'. The realisation of cultural ideals is bound up with humanity's overcoming of its self-estrangement and attaining its truth. Critique is a 'remembrance' of nature in the subject, standing in opposition to the historical domination that estranges us from ourselves, our needs, desires and potentialities. Hegelian metaphysics is preserved through Freud.

In the end, then, there remains a tension between the normative standpoint, the idea of a 'true human existence', which underlies critical theory's concept of critique, and its own historical awareness. Critical theory wants to avoid the absolutist, ahistorical claims of traditional metaphysics, while still preserving a substantive notion of critique in order to counter the subordination of reason to the prevailing historical situation. Though reason emerges from the social structure, it is also capable of going beyond it and turning against it, of criticising and ideally organising it. But critical theory cannot fully articulate this notion of substantive critique without reintroducing a historically transcendent standpoint into the picture. Whilst countering the threat of an uncritical objectivism, it comes into conflict with its own sense of the historical.
4.1 The Limits of Critical Theory

As we have seen, Horkheimer wants to make a break from dogmatic, absolutist metaphysics, and to stress the historical contextuality of thought, whilst preserving the ideals of metaphysics in order to maintain the possibility of critique and freedom. The notion of biological needs and desires allows the preservation of the substantive content of metaphysics, and of a normative conception of reason capable of orienting thought and action. The 'true order of the cosmos' has been replaced by the 'true needs of self and society'.

With this, critical theory effectively posits an ahistorical human essence in terms of which to counter the distortions of, pass judgement on, and potentially organise social life. This means, however, that it remains troubled by the question of history. It flies in the face of its own historicist critique of metaphysics.

Horkheimer is constrained in his historicism, and continues to invoke a metaphysical standpoint, because he sees the complete rejection of metaphysics as leading only to vulgar materialism and compliant uncritical positivism. The Enlightenment is said to 'self-destruct' as a critical movement because the Enlightenment philosophers completely dismiss the metaphysics that is the 'source of power of their own efforts'. Something of metaphysics needs to be retained in order to underpin the activity of critique and the possibility of freedom. My contention is that because critical theory proceeds in terms of the humanistic subject-object framework, it is unable to do justice to its own historical awareness.

In this context the alternatives are either control over our history or uncritical resignation to it. To the extent that immersion in history appears to threaten the very uncritical objectivism Horkheimer wants to oppose, critical theory continues to affirm a historically transcendent standpoint.

On this interpretation, the apparent need to preserve the substance of traditional metaphysics, in order to counter objectification in thought and life, is itself based on reading a humanism back into the traditional forms of metaphysics. As we saw in the previous chapter, critical theory understands traditional metaphysics as an
expression of the subject's alienated substance, its orienting needs and desires, albeit in a mystified form. And the subject-object framework is taken to be the characteristic form of all thought up to now. Horkheimer speaks of 'that opposition between two ways of thinking which runs through the whole history of philosophy...the opposition between idealism and materialism' (3) This interpretation in turn informs critical theory's understanding of the Enlightenment's clash with traditional metaphysics, as the latest stage of this interplay. The complete rejection of traditional metaphysics by enlightened thought is accordingly seen as entailing a fall into a one-sided objectivism. Traditional metaphysics as 'the voice of the subject' has to be preserved in some measure, in order to hold on to the possibility of enlightenment understood as rational control over our history.

Horkheimer still wants to do justice to history, to call ahistorical perspectives into question, within this context. He attempts to conceive of both subject and object as aspects of an ongoing historical process. With this, critical theory hopes to articulate a concept of transcendence within history, a historical notion of transcending subjectivity. The possibility of critique and the transformation of the historical situation is preserved, but it takes a wholly 'immanent' form. Ultimately, however, this immanent critique still requires an extrahistorical standpoint, a notion of 'truly human existence' from which we are historically alienated, in order to underpin the capacity to judge and transform the existing situation. The potentially central role of human beings in their social and historical life is preserved, but once again at the expense of history.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Eclipse of Reason*, transcending subjectivity or critical reason is held to emerge in the historical context of the process of mastering a hostile nature, through the work-process and the division of labour that facilitates it. This is not simply a Scientific Marxism. If the subject becomes wholly subordinated to, a mere function or epiphenomenon of the production process, this comes about insofar as the subject, though dependent for its formation on the technological mastery of nature, is simultaneously alienated from its own substance and impoverished in the very process of its emergence. Metaphysics points towards the subject's reconciliation with its instinctual nature, although in its traditional form it claims an unconditioned autonomy, subordinating all existence to an ahistorical standpoint. It forgets that thought and 'spirit' only emerge in the historical context, in the context of the mastery of nature. Yet in
giving expression to a historically alienated inner nature, metaphysics also points towards an overcoming of the alienation that cripples subjectivity and reduces human beings to a mere function of the productive process.

In this way critical theory attempts to both give a concrete account of human existence, stressing its historical locatedness, and to preserve the idea of freedom as a transcendence of the historical situation in order to determine it in accordance with our potentialities. It can equally be said however that the historicity of human existence is only embraced by critical theory insofar as it also involves a process of alienation, a falsifying separation of human beings from their essential nature. And it is this extrahistorical essence which provides the basis for the critique and transcendence of the prevailing historical situation. Whilst countering the threat of reduction to objective processes, it also means that critical theory takes up a standpoint that comes into conflict with its own historical awareness. And it is driven to do so precisely to the extent that immersion in history appears to undermine the human subject, to falsify human existence, and to raise the threat of uncritical subordination to the existing world.

There are at least two possible directions that can be pursued at this juncture. On the one hand we can build on and radicalise the idea of the historical critique of metaphysics, and in particular of the humanist subject that supposedly provides the grounds for thought and action. This points us towards Foucault. The radicalness of Foucault's position lies in escaping not only from the humanist subject but also from its objectivistic alternative, i.e., from the humanistic framework as such, in which the only alternative to a transcending subject appears to be a subordination to the existing situation, an uncritical objectivism. The problem with critical theory's historical awareness is that it does not go far enough, that it remains constrained by humanistic metaphysics. Nonetheless, to the extent that critical theory gives expression to a historico-critical awareness, it points forward to what Foucault is doing.

There is however another strand of criticism of critical theory, which points towards the 'second generation' of critical theory, and above all to Habermas. Here the charge is not that critical theory is too humanistic and subjectivist from the point of view of history, but that it is too anti-humanistic and reductivist from the point of view of the humanist subject. That is, it undermines the subject by
participating in a reductive objectivism. And it is not surprising that the Habermasian camp also stands in sharp opposition to Foucault, who appears to radicalise the tendency towards reductive objectivism in Horkheimer and Adorno.

4.2 Humanist Criticisms

For this second, humanistic strand of criticism, critical theory's attempt to give a historical account of the transcending subject is seen only as manifesting a reductive tendency, a secret complicity with the very objectivistic materialism that critical theory wants to oppose. What is problematic here is not that a historically transcending subject appears in critical theory but rather the way in which the theory works to undermine the humanist subject. Horkheimer and Adorno are said to undercut their own hopes for freedom and social enlightenment through a reductive treatment of subjectivity. What is required is an unequivocal reassertion of the humanist subject, in order to counter the threat of objectivism, including that which has crept into critical theory itself. In this reading, the problems of critical theory are understood entirely in terms of the contestation between subject and object, in terms of the humanistic framework. The sense of the historical that Horkheimer and Adorno remain open to, even though it comes into conflict with their own humanistic commitments, is obscured. Their secret complicity with a reductive Scientific Marxism becomes the only issue.

From the humanistic point of view, Scientific Marxism represents the extreme form of reductive objectivism. There, the course of events is entirely dominated by a necessity independent of human beings. They are the objects of impersonal historical processes. Such an objectivistic and deterministic interpretation of the historical process is bound up with an emphasis on 'material production', on the technological interchange with nature, as the real basis for the creation and transformation of social relations and forms of thought. History in general is given a 'technological' interpretation, as a field of objective processes independent of will and consciousness, whose developmental laws can be discerned. For humanistic thought an objectivistic account of society reflects the extension of technological forms of domination from the natural to the human realm, and the consequent reduction of human beings in theory and practice to mere instruments and functions of the productive process. The objectivist denial of any role for
active, autonomous subjectivity and consciousness reflects the real loss of freedom brought about by the oppressive process of objectification.

For the humanist critics, critical theory, whilst promoting the subject and conscious, rational social existence in the face of the objectification and instrumentalisation of life, fails to adequately separate the realm of human subjectivity from that of technological production processes. The latter's instrumental logic reappears in the heart of subjectivity, woven into the process of its emergence, even though it also distorts and objectifies that subjectivity. As a result, the positivistic dissolution of the enlightened subject, and the oppressive objectification of human life, in which reason and subjectivity are reduced to mere functions of the production process, cannot be unequivocally rejected by critical theory as a corruption or distortion of enlightenment. There is a degree of theoretical complicity in the very phenomenon they want to criticise. More specifically, there is an apparent lack of an intersubjective perspective in critical theory. In Habermas's terms, there is no categorial distinction between 'interaction' and 'work'. The subject which is the locus of resistance and freedom cannot be unambiguously distinguished from processes of instrumental domination. It is dependent for its emergence on the very phenomenon that works to destroy it.

At the same time, the Habermasian response is not to straightforwardly re-embrace an idealistic, self-contained subject. Habermas wants to preserve not only the critique of objectivism but also that of idealism. Such a critique is implicit in the move away from a philosophy of consciousness towards one of intersubjectivity, particularly in the form of a philosophy of language. However, this move is designed not to undermine but to preserve and enhance the claims of subjectivity, the ideal of rational self-determination. It is in the realm of intersubjectivity that human beings are directly subject to social domination and alienation. But because this realm is categorically distinct from that of the material forces of production, there is no intrinsic link between subjectivity and instrumental domination. Domination within the dimension of interaction can be entirely surpassed and collective social autonomy achieved.

Ultimately, Habermas sees critical theory as falling into a form of objectivism because of its attachment to an idealistic philosophy of individual consciousness.
Such a philosophy, articulated in its classical form by Kant and Hegel, turns on the relationship between subject and object. It can only conceive of reconciliation, of the overcoming of alienation, in the extravagant form of a subsumption of object into subject. Horkheimer and Adorno distance themselves from this inflated Hegelian-style subject, insisting on the subject's locatedness in an objective context. But in so doing they lose their grip on the possibility of reconciliation. They are unable to go beyond the instrumental subject-object relations from which alienating domination is held to emerge. There is no category of subject-subject relations in which objectifying domination and alienation can in principle be overcome. The notion of intersubjectivity allows us to go beyond the idealist subject and conceptualise the subject's locatedness in an external context. But since this context is made up of other subjects, it is also possible to envisage a reconciliation of the subject with its other, a non-antagonistic mutuality, and the establishment of a collective social subject.

From this perspective it also seems as if Habermas is better able to do justice to history than Horkheimer and Adorno. Insofar as critical theory's analysis overemphasises subject-object relations of domination over nature, it makes the instrumental mastery of nature the root of all historical evil. If critical theory is able to conceive of freedom at all, it is indeed only in the extravagant form of a reconciliation with, or 'resurrection' of, nature in general. The instrumental mastery of nature itself has to be radically surpassed or transformed. But now it seems that the required break from existing historical reality, the transformation of human existence called for, is too extreme. The Habermasian picture in contrast sees history as involving both instrumental relations with nature and intersubjective relations. We are thus able to conceive of the overcoming of domination and alienation, the process of reconciliation, and the attainment of integral human freedom as proceeding within intersubjectivity, i.e., without entailing a rejection of the mastery of nature that goes on at the level of work. The ideal of conscious social self-determination is thereby restored as a realistic historical possibility, as achievable within the existing historical process.(7)

Wellmer, who as a member of the 'second generation' of critical theory takes an explicitly pro-Habermasian line, speaks of the anthropological and epistemological 'monism' of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* - Here "instrumental reason" becomes the category by which both dimensions of the world-historical process of
civilisation are conceived, namely the transformation of external nature (technology, industry, domination of nature) as well as the transformation of internal nature (individualization, repression, forms of social domination'). Consequently even if the transformation of external nature creates the objective possibility of a liberated society, the simultaneous transformation of internal nature is likely to destroy the subjective possibilities of emancipatory practice. Liberation can then only be conceived, if at all, as a radical break through the continuum of instrumental reason, the 'negation' of instrumental reason, and the 'resurrection' of internal and external nature. Integral reconciliation takes an extravagant form, and becomes an 'eschatological' category, involving an excessively sharp break with previous human history.

For Wellmer, what is really required is an adequate distinction between the dimension of technological control and that of intersubjective relationships, as two historically interdependent but categorically distinct spheres. Such a distinction would allow the preservation of critical theory's insight that emancipation from the pressure of nature via a cumulative process of technological development is not in itself politically liberating, without the pessimistic conclusion that it leads inevitably to self-alienation and the destruction of subjectivity. Both human alienation and its overcoming are located in the distinct dimension of intersubjectivity. Freedom in the political sense involves the overcoming of social domination and repression through an emancipatory process of critique and class struggle. In this state, alienated inner nature will be rehabilitated and a 'truly human life' achieved. This does not entail the quasi-romantic denial of science and technology, the resurrection of external nature. Human liberation at the level of intersubjectivity is compatible with technological progress and no longer implies a radical break with previous history.

Connerton similarly sees Horkheimer and Adorno as failing to do justice to intersubjectivity, though he sees their reductivism in starker, more direct terms. For Connerton, in critical theory 'social reality is subsumed under one category; it is to be understood as the product of work'. Properly speaking however, the interplay between human beings and nature, the work-process, takes place in the context of the 'dimension of intersubjectivity in which social life is organised'. What makes the mastery of nature a problem is the way in which it is organised, the specific social context in which it takes place. But critical theory makes the
dimension of work the 'primary process'. It thus sees social domination as arising directly from the mastery of nature, irrespective of what social arrangements predominate at any given time. Domination appears as unavoidable and irremediable, and the dialectic of enlightenment becomes a process from which there can be no exit.\(^{(14)}\)

In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Connnor argues, social evolution is reconstructed abstractly as the history of the subject in its relationship with nature. The subject establishes its identity by distancing itself from enclosure within surrounding nature, at the cost of doing violence to its own inner nature and establishing social domination. For civilisation as a whole, superiority over nature is only achieved at the cost of a strait-jacket of social and psychic coercions. However the derivation of social domination directly from the interplay between self and nature involves a conflation of self and society which reflects critical theory's lack of an intersubjective dimension. For Connnor, domination in fact involves variable forms of social structures. The confusion of self and society also means that critical theory loses sight of the idea of the self as intersubjectively produced, viewing self-definition purely in terms of the subjugation and exploitation through which nature is mastered. On the contrary, Connnor argues, self-formation can really only take place in a social context, and necessarily involves those aspects of communality, mutuality and sharing that are absent from critical theory.\(^{(15)}\)

Benjamin\(^{(16)}\) concentrates on the restrictive account of self-formation that is engendered by critical theory's lack of a dimension of intersubjectivity. Horkheimer and Adorno see the ego as developing not primarily in the context of subject-to-subject relations or societal interaction, but out of the conflict with the external world. The basis of ego-development and of the emergence of reason is always self-preservation, the reaction of the external world. In the process, the struggle between ego and outside world, reason and nature, is transposed within the subject as a process of controlling its own inner nature. The social requirements of survival, consolidated into socio-historical forms of authority and discipline, are internalised as self-control over internal nature. Reason and civilisation are thus constituted as control over nature, with the ego as the internal agency of civilised authority.\(^{(17)}\)
The result, Benjamin argues, is a paradoxical situation - 'reason, the very possibility of resistance, is implicated in domination'. The critical reason that Horkheimer and Adorno require to counter dominating instrumental reason is also supposed to emerge from the conflict with outer and inner nature. The rational ego both perpetuates social domination over inner nature, and is the only avenue for resistance. The aspects of consciousness where resistance might be located are tied to the process of internalising authority. What is lacking in this picture is the intersubjective dimension. Reason is analysed solely in terms of ego and outside, subject and object, and Horkheimer and Adorno 'are unable to overcome the subject-object dualism from which, in their view, domination ultimately springs'.

For Benjamin, the reliance on opposition to outer and inner nature for ego-development could be countered by the supposition of a subjective need for mutual recognition, an intersubjective notion. Might not the possibility of resisting authority be grounded not in that aspect of the subject that once accepted authority but in that aspect that seeks mutuality? That is, in 'an intersubjective theory of personality, rather than an individual psychology of internalisation'.

4.3 A Qualified Defence of Critical Theory

These related criticisms of critical theory, centreing on the charge of a reductive focus on work at the expense of social relationships, are both true and false. On the face of it, the idea that Horkheimer and Adorno have a reductivist tendency is a little strange. Critical theory originally emerged as a reaction to the reductive materialism of Scientific Marxism, in order to provide a more adequate account of consciousness, ideology and culture. Far from making work the 'primary process', as Connerton claims, Jay points out that Horkheimer and Adorno deliberately distanced themselves from the orthodox Marxist stress on the labour-process - 'Although they did not deny the special role of the economy, and by extension the labour-process, in capitalist society, they never de-historicised labour as man's "ontological" activity'. Whilst never minimising the influence of socio-economic factors on cultural phenomena, they always avoided reducing the latter to a mere epiphenomenon of the former. Indeed, Jay notes, Habermas's recent systematisation of this insight into the separation of the two dialectics of labor and symbolically mediated interaction owes much to the Frankfurt School's earlier qualms about the traditional Marxist interpretation of the labour process.
And this is a much more positive picture of the relationship between critical theory and Habermas than Wellmer’s understanding of critical theory permits.

Nor is it a matter of a reductive tendency appearing only in the later phase of critical theory. It seems wrong to argue, as Connerton does, that Horkheimer shifts from an earlier faith in the potentially liberating capacities of science and technology - where the humane function of science depends on its humane application - to a later position in which scientific and technological control of nature is itself the problem. In the later works such as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Eclipse of Reason*, Horkheimer and Adorno are just as insistent as before that the growth of economic productivity furnishes the conditions for a 'world of greater justice'. It is not technology, not production per se, that is responsible for the 'decline of the individual', but 'the forms in which it takes place - the interrelationships of human beings within the specific framework of industrialism'. Under ideally harmonious social conditions, it is still claimed, progressive historical changes would flow from scientific progress.

The intention is clearly not, as Connerton would have it, to paint a picture of the mastery of nature as leading inexorably and inescapably to social domination and a 'technological inferno'. Critical theory takes itself to be more than a mere post-mortem. It remains the case that what is required is the transformation of the social relationships that make the mastery of nature a problem. By the same token, it is not possible to accept the claim by Wellmer that liberation, if possible at all, entails for critical theory a radical rejection of technology. Horkheimer and Adorno do not yearn for a quasi-romantic resurrection of external nature, a primitivist rejection of science and technology. The mastery of nature provides the material conditions for the transformation of social relationships, for the rehabilitation of inner nature within the social context.

In opposition to both Connerton and Wellmer, Horkheimer and Adorno are making the less strident claim that whilst the technological mastery of nature is a necessary component of human liberation, it is not sufficient in itself. It is insofar as scientific progress comes to be regarded as progress per se, as an end in itself, that the problems arise. The hypostatisation of science as the only form of respectable knowledge, the glorification of technology as itself capable of solving all problems, and the elevation of scientific progress to the status of a supreme ideal,
are all aspects of a 'veil of technology' that mystifies and perpetuates continuing social domination. The coercive social structures within which technological development takes place are obscured, and technology remains in the service of the powers that be. It is the 'blind development' of technology that strengthens social oppression and exploitation, threatening at every stage 'to transform progress into its opposite, complete barbarism.' Critical theory aims to go beyond the limitations of purely instrumental, technocratic thinking, to critically reveal and overcome the nexus of technological progress and social domination. It will be critical thought, not technological progress alone, that ultimately transforms the social order in a progressive direction. Critical theory thus promotes the harmonious social order in which technology will be a positive force.

All the same, these criticisms are not entirely wrongheaded. Whilst it is true that for critical theory the mastery of nature only takes place in the context of social relationships, social relationships themselves are understood as in the first instance deriving from the process of the mastery of nature, from the requirements of the productive process. Through the division of labour, the hierarchy of command and obedience, humanity effects its survival in the face of nature. In this way the relationship of instrumental domination also becomes the principle of social organisation. Furthermore, the requirements of survival, consolidated into socio-historical forms of authority, condition the form of subjectivity that emerges. The subjectivity appropriate to the mastery of nature and the social hierarchy that facilitates it is the individualistic, self-preserving subject, the locus of dominating instrumental reason. This subject represses its own inner nature for the sake of the mastery of external nature, a process enforced by the structures of social authority. The relationship of instrumental domination thus enters into the very heart of subjectivity and self-formation.

The central explanatory role of the mastery of external nature in critical theory's analysis means that even if it is not technology per se that is the problem but the antagonistic social context and our blind faith in technology, it is the mastery of nature that ultimately gives rise to these social arrangements and forms of consciousness. Critical theory certainly holds that purely instrumental thinking and blind technological progress do not in themselves lead to an overcoming of social domination, but in fact legitimate and intensify it. We need to go beyond technocratic thinking and practice if social arrangements are to be transformed in a
progressive direction. But it is also the case that for critical theory the instrumental mastery of nature is the decisive element in accounting for the development of social structures and consciousness. The relationship of domination is consequently implicated in every aspect of society, and humanity has to 'go beyond' something in which it is very deeply implicated. The thinking and social practices that go beyond instrumental domination have to emerge from the same source as the thinking and practices that multiply and perpetuate it. Benjamin is right to speak of the paradoxical character of this picture, in which only the struggle with nature can in the end elicit critical reason and the human potential for conscious social existence. (27)

So on the one hand critical theory does not aim to present a straightforwardly reductive picture, in which reason and subjectivity are reduced to means of domination and ultimately to functions of the work-process. Horkheimer and Adorno still look towards the transcendence of domination, which distorts the subject and relations between individuals. The instrumentalisation and objectification of human life is a denial of humanity, which under late capitalism assumes a 'demonically distorted' form. (28) Critical theory works against domination in the name of undistorted humanity, of a 'truly human existence'. Far from writing off subjectivity and reason as instruments of power, Horkheimer and Adorno aim to promote them, to articulate a 'positive notion of enlightenment' free of domination. (29)

On the other hand, instrumental domination is not understood by the critical theorists simply as corrupting subjectivity, but appears in an ambivalent light, as both something to be opposed by subjectivity and reason and as playing a positive role in their emergence. Reason and subjectivity develop in the context of the mastery of external nature, in the process of dominating it. If this domination distorts human existence, engenders self-alienation and corrupts subjectivity, the subject is also positively implicated in the very phenomenon that works to undermine it. And if the subject is the avenue for opposing and transcending domination, it is also dependent for its emergence on that self-same domination. Critical theory thus exhibits a systematic internal tension, which comes out in a series of paradoxical formulations - the subject can only emerge out of the domination of internal and external nature, but the process is also self-alienating and self-destructive; critical reason opposes instrumental, dominating reason, but
both emerge out of the process of mastering outer and inner nature; the family both perpetuates social domination and is the site of possible autonomy; the internalisation of authority both perpetuates domination and is necessary for the constitution of the reason that can alone oppose it. (30)

An interesting example of this dependence on the very domination to be opposed is to be found in critical theory's account of the family and self-formation. Reference is made to maternal love, to the 'instinctual love' on which the child's development depends. It is said that women in the bourgeois family foster 'human relations', i.e., presumably non-antagonistic, progressive ones. (31) Yet it is in fact paternal authority, representing social power, and the conflict between the (male) child and this authority, that are seen as essential to the formation of the autonomous, potentially resistant individual, capable of working towards non-dominating social relations. Whilst both the nurturing maternal function and the authoritive paternal one are under siege in the modern world, it is the erosion of the father's authority that is the decisive factor in the decline of resistant individuality. This is not so much a perpetuation of Freud's patrocentric bias as an illustration of critical theory's dependence on domination, which is conceived as a male principle, in its account of the formation of potentially resistant subjects. (32)

The response of critical theory's humanist critics is, as we have seen, to distinguish the realm of subjectivity and critical reason from that of objectifying domination and dominating rationality, to distinguish intersubjectivity from work. On this basis it is possible to affirm the claims of subjectivity and to oppose domination in an unambiguous way. Social domination and repression in the dimension of intersubjectivity can be seen as unequivocally alienating and distorting, as wholly negative in their effects. Social critique in the name of undistorted, wholly self-conscious social existence can proceed on the basis of a standpoint of intersubjective social mutuality that is essentially above power, distinct from the dimension of instrumental domination over external nature. What this approach obscures, however, is the full reason for Horkheimer and Adorno's tortured and seemingly self-defeating picture. And this, it seems to me, is critical theory's awareness of the historical, which requires the critical theorists to give a concrete historical account of the emergence of subjectivity and reason.

History, for critical theory, is understood in terms of the technological process of
mastering external nature. Horkheimer and Adorno refuse to hyponstatise critical reason, subjectivity, and culture as autonomous and independent of the historical. Social relationships do not take the form that they do on the basis of any abstract spiritual principle. It is the material exigencies of survival in the face of nature, the requirements of the production process, that bring about social relations of command and obedience, and which condition the form of subjectivity to be found therein. History cannot be interpreted idealistically on the basis of categories like freedom and justice, as Hegel does. The most sublime spiritual conceptions and cultural achievements arise on the basis of concrete historical violence and domination - 'The serum which a doctor gives to a sick child is obtained by attacking defenceless animals. The endearing words of lovers and the holiest symbols of Christianity contain traces of the pleasure felt in devouring the flesh of a kid...' (33)

The positive role that domination plays for critical theory in the formation of subjectivity and reason can be interpreted as reflecting its insistence on the historical contextuality and emergence of thought. When reason claims autonomy, critical theory looks for a history of violence and despotism. At the same time, Horkheimer and Adorno also want to say that whilst thought and subjectivity emerge in a historical context they are also capable of going beyond their origins in order to oppose power and bring history under rational control. This, I would suggest, reflects the humanistic framework within which they articulate their position, in which history appears as a threat to critique and freedom, the threat of reduction to external, objective processes. Thought and subjectivity need to be more than mere products or functions of social power, subordinate to the historical situation. It is here that Horkheimer and Adorno see historical relations of power in negative terms, as distorting subjectivity and reason. Freedom means disentangling ourselves from coercive social practices, transcending historical domination. And here the critical theorists invoke an ahistorical standpoint, an essential human nature from which we have been historically alienated and which underpins our capacity to criticize prevailing historical practices.

The straightforwardly humanistic interpretation imposed on critical theory by its humanist critics, as entangled in a self-defeating reductivism, thus fails to do justice to the complexity of the critical theorists' position. Their paradoxical picture of a simultaneous dependence upon and opposition to power can be seen as
reflecting critical theory's problematic attempt to both remain within the historical horizon, to give a historicist account of reason and subjectivity, and to preserve the notion of freedom as transcendence. That is, it reflects the attempt to do justice to history within a humanistic framework in which the alternatives are either control over our history or resignation to it.

At this point in the discussion it will be useful to briefly compare critical theory with the work of Foucault. As a number of commentators have noted, there are some analogies between critical theory's treatment of reason and power and that of Foucault, although there are also crucial differences. More specifically, it seems to me, Horkheimer and Adorno are similar to Foucault to the extent that they see positive links between reason and subjectivity on the one hand and power on the other. And they similarly do so in the context of an awareness of the historical, which draws them away from a metaphysical conception of rationality and reveals the complicity of the subject and reason with historical practices of power in the very process of their emergence. As a result, both Foucault and critical theory bring into question the idea of the rational subject as standing in a privileged position outside of or above historical practices of power. They both step back from a straightforward affirmation of the subject and of rational autonomy that is characteristic of humanist discourse. And they both see the social critic as part of and produced by the social and historical practices being studied.

As noted at the outset of the previous chapter, Foucault himself points to the Frankfurt School as giving expression to the modernist sense of the historical. In this it takes up the work of historical reflection that Foucault sees as emerging with Kant and the Enlightenment, the philosophical reflection which departs from metaphysical absolutism in order to question rational thought as to its history, its immediate past and present actuality. Critical theory looks behind the facade of rational unity and harmony to discern a history of violence and despotism, and to oppose this violence within reason. As Foucault puts it - 'in German critical theory, it is a matter at bottom of examining a reason, the autonomy of whose structures carries with it a history of dogmatism and despotism - a reason, consequently, which can only have an effect of emancipation on condition that it manages to liberate itself from itself.'

Where critical theory most clearly departs from Foucault is in its efforts, despite its
historical awareness, to establish a normative conception of reason which is able to
cose and for all transcend historical power, a 'positive notion of enlightenment' that is free of domination. As Hoy puts it, the critical theorists thereby hold out
the traditional hope for progress away from coercive social power by freeing
knowledge and reason from ideologically coerced distortion. (36) I have sought to
show that they need to do so to the extent that they remain constrained by the
humanistic framework, by the ideal of autonomous rational subjectivity and the
idea that the alternative to normative reason and subjectivity is an uncritical
subordination to objective historical processes. For this reason they are unable to
give full expression to their own historic-critical awareness, both turning to
history and ultimately reaffirming an ahistorical standpoint in the face of the threat
of objectivism. Hence their ambivalent understanding of historical forms of
power, which both positively constitute rational subjectivity and deform or distort
an ahistorical 'true human existence'.

For its humanist critics, and Habermas in particular, the historicist side of critical
theory is obscured, for Horkheimer and Adorno are viewed solely as suffering
from a complicity with reductive objectivism. And Foucault tends to be subjected
to a similar criticism. Both critical theory and Foucault are held to suffer from a
reductive and objectivistic treatment of the subject. In each case the main charge is
that the notion of rational subjectivity has been compromised and with it the
possibility of autonomous critique and freedom, of the 'enlightenment project'
itsel Power is said to have become diffuse and all-embracing, a demonic force
that cannot be checked or overcome. Everything in human beings that might
oppose power itself seen as implicated in power, and the result is not so much a
radicalisation of the critique of power as the destruction of the possibility of
resistance, the loss of a normative standard for critical activity, and a consequent
resignation to the very phenomenon that needs to be opposed. This comes about
whatever the protestations of the respective figures to the contrary. They have
undermined their own critical standpoints. (37)

These criticisms make sense in terms of the humanistic framework, and, to the
extent that critical theory continues to operate within this framework, they have
some purchase. Horkheimer and Adorno concur with their humanist critics to the
extent that they similarly seek to save the subject in the face of the threat of
uncritical subordination to objective processes. They do not want to reduce
subjectivity and reason to mere instruments of social power. As a result, it is in one sense entirely legitimate to say that insofar as social power also plays a positive role or is required for the formation of the subject, this undercuts Horkheimer and Adorno's own hopes for freedom, and represents an element of self-defeating reductivism. But this is not a complete picture, for it fails to take into account the dimension of history in their work, their attempts to do justice to history. From the point of view of historical awareness a different form of criticism of critical theory is possible. It can equally be said that insofar as critical theory sees social power as having a negative role, as alienating human beings from their true nature, it introduces an extrahistorical standard that runs counter to its own intention of giving a historical account of thought and existence, of escaping from ahistorical metaphysical standpoints.

And from this second point of view Horkheimer and Adorno can be seen as in fact showing up the limitations of humanist discourse, including that of its humanist critics. What critical theory wants to articulate, a critical, anti-metaphysical awareness of the historical character of thought, cannot be expressed within the context of humanism, where history appears as undercutting the possibility of critique and freedom. It is not possible to do justice to history when the only alternatives are blind resignation to history or conscious control over it. Foucault also wants to give expression to this historico-critical awareness. The crucial difference between Foucault and critical theory is that Foucault brings into question the humanist framework itself. His attention to the historical does not simply destroy the possibility of critique and freedom because he accepts neither the privileged humanist subject nor the complementary alternative of a reductive objectivism, a 'humanist antihumanism'. History does not appear as objectivistically dissolving freedom, and social power does not take the negative form of a domination that objectifies human beings and destroys subjectivity. We do not then require an ahistorical subject in order to preserve the possibility of resistance and freedom. By transgressing the humanist framework, Foucault is able to take history seriously.

4.4 Habermas and Critical Theory

A full discussion of Foucault will come later. First of all, it is necessary to
consider in more detail the work of Habermas, as the central figure of the 'second generation' of critical theory. Generally speaking, Habermas takes up the humanistic criticism of Horkheimer and Adorno, and represents a forceful reassertion of the claims of the autonomous subject. From a Habermasian point of view, as Wellmer makes clear, the earlier critical theory is flawed by a regressive reductivism that undermines its aspiration to enlightened freedom from within. For Habermas, Foucault seems to have gone even further, unashamedly embracing a form of inhuman structuralism and wholly identifying subjectivity and enlightenment with power. Habermas stands against this abandonment of the Enlightenment as a liberating project, as well as improving on the earlier critical theory which undermines its own commitment to enlightened freedom. The history of German critical theory seems to culminate with Habermas. Yet this straightforward story of progress can be brought into question if Horkheimer and Adorno are understood as showing up the limitations of humanist discourse with respect to the question of history. Habermas then appears as regressive, retreating into the security of humanist metaphysics, and at the same time ceasing to take history seriously.

This needs to be qualified, however. There is a sense in which Habermas does indeed go beyond limitations in the earlier critical theory. He distances himself from the traditional Marxist obsession with the technological mastery of nature, the development of the productive forces, which is still present in Horkheimer and Adorno's work. He turns attention in a more decisive way than the earlier critical theorists to social and cultural relations that can be only indirectly related to the work place and to 'hard technology'. Broadly speaking, Foucault also seeks to shift attention away from the natural sciences and the technological control of nature towards the humanities, from the 'paradigm of production' towards other social practices. However, Foucault and Habermas are here engaged in diametrically opposed strategies.

For Foucault the shift of attention is undertaken to provide a more finely-grained historical analysis of subjectivity, and to critically comprehend those forms of knowledge and technologies of power which are bound up with the emergence of human subjectivity. In this he departs from the subject-object framework, which takes the form of the distinction between a human sphere of active subjectivity and a realm of mechanistic technology which is intrinsically alien to the human sphere;
and in which power over human beings is understood in terms of an infiltration of the technological into the human sphere, distorting human relations and reducing human beings to mere objects, bereft of subjectivity. As Horkheimer and Adorno's work suggests, this negative representation works against the attempt to give a concretely historical and political account of the emergence of the subject. Passing beyond humanist presuppositions, Foucault develops a different conception of technological power and of the instrumentalisation of human life—no longer as something essentially alien to socio-cultural existence, but involving techniques and practices of regulation and coercion through which human beings are positively constituted as subjects. In so doing, he is better able to pursue the project of a politico-critical history of the subject and of its involvement with power.

In Habermas's case, by contrast, the intention is to radically reassert the claims of the humanist subject. The subject-object framework reappears in the form of the Habermasian distinction between intersubjective interaction and the technological processes of work. Power is still identified essentially with a technological realm that is external to the human sphere. The establishment of a distinguishable realm of linguistic intersubjectivity is designed to ensure a realm that is in principle free of power relations. If power appears at this level it takes the wholly negative form of a distortion of communication, an alienation which can be entirely overcome in order to restore the essential human capacity for conscious social self-determination. The aim is not to question subjectivity in political terms but to affirm it as unequivocally opposed to power. And whilst Habermas also criticises the idealistic concern with individual consciousness through his turn to communicative interaction, this is not in order to undermine the ideal of rational subjective autonomy but to affirm and amplify it. The Hegelian vision of total rational self-determination is preserved in all its extravagance through the dimension of intersubjectivity.

The idea of a Habermasian 'critique of idealism' is thus misleading. The realm of intersubjectivity in fact serves Habermas as the vehicle for maintaining the utopian humanist vision of a wholly conscious human existence, in which humanity will rationally determine its own existence without constraint. Human freedom is assured, at least theoretically, in the face of all historically distorted forms of life. It is implicit in the very structure of our social relations, or as Habermas argues,
immanent in communicative activity. What is lost in this picture, I will suggest in the following two chapters, is any real sense of the historical, contingent character of human existence. And this is particularly problematic in that Habermas himself also has a sense of the historical, and in that spirit calls absolutist metaphysical standpoints into question. But to the extent that, like the earlier critical theorists, he proceeds in terms of the humanistic subject-object framework, he too is unable to do justice to his own historical awareness. Indeed, his work is marked by the increasingly emphatic affirmation of a transcendental standpoint, the normative basis for critique and freedom supposedly embodied in communication. More decisively than Horkheimer and Adorno, Habermas turns away from history and falls back into an ahistorical subjectivism.

A properly historicist approach has a conception of history as without any fundamental, transcending order and direction, and of humanity as not having a privileged place in the scheme of things. This is the deeply anti-metaphysical sentiment that comes through in Horkheimer and Adorno's work. To the extent that it does, it points them beyond humanist metaphysics and opens thought out to the historical. As Horkheimer puts it - 'The failure of a logically stringent system in its highest form in Hegel, means the logical end of attempts at a philosophical justification of the world, the end of the claim of philosophy to emulate positive theology. All these attempts rest directly or indirectly on the idea of the world as the work or expression of true mind. But if the world, in its essence and in its actual conditions, is not necessarily connected with mind, philosophic confidence in the very existence of truth disappears. In that case, truth can be found only in perishable men themselves and is as perishable as they are'. (39)
CHAPTER FIVE

Saving the Subject - Habermas's Reformulation of Critical Theory

5.1 Critical Theory and the Work-Interaction Distinction

The work of Habermas, like that of the earlier critical theory, serves to illustrate the difficulties encountered by humanistic thought in taking history seriously. These difficulties, I am suggesting, arise when thought proceeds in terms of the humanistic subject-object framework, in which the alternative to a foundational subject appears to be an uncritical subordination to objective forces and processes. Before turning to the question of history in Habermas's work, however, let us examine in more detail his crucial distinction between work and interaction. As noted in the previous chapter, this distinction serves to clearly affirm the ideal of autonomous self-determination and the claims of the subject in the face of any threat of reductive objectivism. And in common with Horkheimer and Adorno, Habermas regards the autonomous, founding subject as indispensable for the preservation of social critique, freedom and very notion of enlightenment.

Rational autonomy or \textit{Mündigkeit} - the autonomous generation out of our own activity of the forms by which we live - is the fundamental value that orients Habermas's project.\(^{(1)}\) This is the ethico-political ideal that motivates critical theory in general, the vision of a rational society in which human beings will exercise fully their capacity for self-conscious control over social processes, and make history with 'will and consciousness.'\(^{(2)}\) And as with Horkheimer and Adorno the preservation of this ideal involves countering the contemporary reduction of reason to its purely instrumental form, which denies the role of active subjectivity in theory and facilitates subordination to existing ways of life in practice. The normative notion of reason as capable of directing social life has to be restored if the subject is to be saved and the emancipatory intentions of the Enlightenment fulfilled.

Yet, as we have seen, Habermas also understands the earlier critical theorists to have entangled rationality and subjectivity too closely with instrumental
domination, and as having thereby undercut their own hopes for enlightened freedom. They failed to adequately distinguish enlightenment as socio-political liberation from enlightenment as instrumental domination. As a result, the one-sided totalisation of instrumental reason could not unambiguously identified as a distortion of the Enlightenment, but also appeared as its inevitable fate. To that extent modernity in general falls under a cloud, and the very aspiration to enlightened emancipation becomes suspect. The problem is that critical theory is caught up in the very objectivistic reductivism it seeks to oppose. This understanding motivates Habermas's meta-theoretical distinction between the two fundamental dimensions of human existence, interaction and work. In terms of this distinction he aims to rescue the notion of enlightenment from the ambiguities the earlier critical theory surrounded it with. The notion of enlightenment, and the modernity that is informed by it, are to be unequivocally affirmed as involving something more than a project of instrumental domination. The interactive dimension of society embodies, in an irreducible way, the ideal of enlightenment as rational autonomy and socio-political liberation.

The dimension of work comprises the scientific-technical dimension of instrumental control over external nature, productive activity oriented towards the effective control of objectified reality. It corresponds to a polarity of subject and object. Interaction is the dimension of symbolic interaction, constituted by reciprocal relations between subjects which are mediated by language. In this, the ethico-political dimension, inner nature is adapted to society via the normative structures of communication, in which needs are interpreted and actions prohibited, licensed and enjoined. The individual is thereby socialised into the norms that regulate social relations. Subsystems of instrumental, 'purposive-rational' activity are to be distinguished from the institutional framework in which they are embedded. The two dimensions of human activity, although interdependent in social practice, are nonetheless analytically distinguishable and mutually irreducible.(3)

In terms of this distinction, Habermas is able to locate the notions of reason, freedom and power. Social systems expand their power over outer nature with the help of the forces of production, of instrumental activity. Enlightened rational emancipation at this level is the overcoming of external natural constraints, through the development of technically exploitable knowledge and its application in
Rationalisation in the technical sense refers to the growth of the productive forces, the extension of technical power. This is to be distinguished from enlightened rationalisation at the level of interaction, which refers to the emancipatory overcoming of constraints on inner nature. Here, power is not open force but social domination that has been institutionalised in the form of structures of distorted communication. Institutionalised power relations, based on social norms, bring about the repression of desires and interests, their exclusion from open communication. Repressed motives for action are directed into channels of substitute gratification, ideological interpretations of the world. These compulsive, dogmatic beliefs are the forces that dominate consciousness by legitimating the existing social organisation.

Socio-political emancipation does not occur directly through the development of technology, although the level of technological development determines the degree to which restrictions on the satisfaction of desires are objectively necessary or have become obsolete. Liberation at the level of interaction, however, involves the process of critical reflection that is carried out in the context of language. Critical insight dissolves the dogmatic inhibitions to consciousness and communication brought about by institutionalised power. Desires and instincts are then freed from their fusion with ideological legitimation in order to inform an enlightened social practice. The emancipatory process succeeds to the extent that institutions based on power and ideological mystification are replaced by 'an organisation of social relations that is bound only to communication free from domination'. Society will then be organised on the basis of rational norms and determined in accordance with a discursively formed rational will.

Let us consider for a moment what the interaction-work distinction allows Habermas to do. It allows him to envisage a distinct human sphere of intersubjective interaction, within which to locate the experience - ultimately Hegelian - of liberating self-reflection, as well as the utopian vision of total rational autonomy. Within intersubjectivity, all constraints to self-awareness and conscious self-determination can in principle be eliminated. To the extent that there are forces that determine us, they are the outcome of relations of power that can be critically overcome. For its part, power plays a wholly negative, distorting role in human relationships, and is entirely alien to an enlightened, rational social order. Reason as positively linked to power belongs to the dimension of work, in which
technically exploitable scientific knowledge is applied to the instrumental manipulation of external nature. Though influenced by the development of the productive forces, the realm of interaction remains irreducibly distinct and relatively autonomous.

In the light of this it is possible for Habermas to clearly distinguish between enlightenment as technological progress in the mastery of nature and as socio-political liberation centering on the idea of rational autonomy. Enlightenment in the dimension of work signifies the growth of productive forces, but at the level of interaction means the extension of communication free from domination. Enlightenment in both its aspects can be acknowledged in Habermas's picture. Moreover, insofar as Marxism is part of the enlightenment tradition, Habermas is also able to appropriate both aspects of Marxist thought in his picture, i.e., the Scientific Marxism that centers on the role of the development of the productive forces, the material conditions of life, and the Hegelian Marxism that centers on the role of active consciousness and the coming-to-be of the subject in history. In so doing, Habermas sees himself as providing a corrective to Marx's own thought, insofar as Marx tends to dissolve the critical, Hegelian side of his thought in favor of a one-sided emphasis on the development of the productive forces.

A new interpretation of Marx appears in Habermas's picture, one that is neither Hegelian nor Scientific. Rather, Marx is now seen as acknowledging both these aspects in his empirical investigations, but as tending towards a reductive materialism at the theoretical level. His social investigations always take into account both the productive activity of societal individuals and the organization of their interrelations. They incorporate the dimension of symbolic interaction, in which can be located ideological forms of consciousness, as well as their reflective critique, the formation of class consciousness and revolutionary practice. Here, Marx 'comprehends the species under categories of material activity and the critical abolition of ideologies, of instrumental action and revolutionary practice, of labor and reflection at once'. However, at the level of his theoretical self-understanding, Marx tends to view social development in terms of productive activity alone, reducing the institutional framework to an aspect of the productive process. The development of the productive forces determines the course of history, which appears as a mechanical process subject to 'iron laws'. As a result, Marx is unable to grasp his work as a critical theory, and cannot show how social
On the Habermasian account, Marx's reductive stress on the logic of technological development, which undermines the critical aspect of his thought, leads historically to orthodox Scientific Marxism. Scientific Marxism optimistically turned technological development into the major social goal which, if met, would lead to human liberation. In practice it leads to the social engineers of bureaucratic socialism, who aim to bring society under control in the same way as nature. Horkheimer and Adorno can be read as having preserved Marx's implicit reductivism, but with 'inverted signs' as Wellmer puts it. That is, technological development is still seen as the primary determinant of social life, but now it is an unconditional evil. The development of the forces of production lead not to human liberation but to social regression, to the 'negative utopia' of a technically manipulated society. From the Habermasian perspective, although Horkheimer and Adorno oppose this regression, they lack a proper theoretical basis for articulating an alternative. They have undercut their own hopes for rational autonomy by identifying the historical process too closely with the process of technological development.

Habermas's categorial distinction between work and interaction allows him to avoid this reductivism and to affirm, at the theoretical level, the themes of consciousness, critique and socio-political liberation. It also allows him to come to grips with the domination of instrumental reason in contemporary society. The oppressive instrumental rationalisation of social life is unequivocally a corruption of the Enlightenment. Reason has lost its socio-politically liberating aspect, rational action has become confused with technical control, and the rational organisation of everyday life has been reduced to technical social administration. The problem, however, is not instrumental reason per se but its universalisation, the illegitimate reduction of the practical to the technical. Armed with the interaction-work distinction, Habermas is able to look afresh at the totalisation of instrumental reason which Horkheimer and Adorno sought to analyse in the *Didactic of Enlightenment*, but without their apparent theoretical complicity in the process. His own position begins to emerge in his Frankfurt inaugural address, and in the early essays collected as *Theory and Society* and *Towards a Rational Society.*
5.2 Normative-Practical and Technical Reason

As in the earlier critical theory, Habermas understands the preservation of the Enlightenment as a movement of socio-political liberation - with freedom understood as the autonomous organisation of our forms of life - to involve the rehabilitation of the traditional substantive concept of reason, capable of providing the normative basis for life. The alternative, to which modernity has succumbed, is the reduction of reason solely to its instrumental, technical aspect. What has been lost is the classical notion of theory as 'providing orientation in right action'.

In pre-modern terms this meant that theory influenced the conduct of life through the soul's likening itself to the order and proportion of the cosmos - the rational world-order of Horkheimer's 'objective reason'. In the modern version, it means the formation amongst theorists of a thoughtful and enlightened mode of life. Here, theoretical insight leads to practical emancipation from externally imposed compulsions, freedom from dogmatic constraints. Reason, active against dogmatism, embodies a commitment to rationality, to autonomy and responsibility in the conduct of life. As Habermas puts it - 'In this kind of practical reason, insight and the explicit interest in liberation by means of reflection converge. The higher level of reflection coincides with a step forward in the progress toward the autonomy of the individual, with the elimination of suffering and the furthering of concrete happiness'.

The normative-practical conception of reason, still present at the outset of modernity, has not survived. Its decline reflects the degree to which the positive sciences have become productive forces in social development. As civilisation becomes increasingly 'scientific', reason loses its 'ethico-practical orientation'. In the process 'the relationship between theory and praxis can only assert itself as the purposive-rational application of techniques assured by empirical science'. Theory no longer provides answers for practical questions, or promotes enlightened action, but only provides technical recommendations for effective instrumental control. With this, reason no longer addresses itself to human existence in order to bring about a good, just or enlightened life. As scientifically grounded social theory, it aims towards technical control over history, through the perfection of social administration.
Ethico-practical orientations or value judgements are now seen as corrupting or distorting the cognitive process. They are elements that have to be rigorously excluded, as 'subjective' and 'irrational', if knowledge is to be achieved. They tend to be preserved only in a voluntaristic, non-cognitive form, as in Sartrean ethics. But this exclusion ultimately works to the disadvantage of positivism. Armed with the fact-value distinction, positivism sets out to demolish pseudo-scientific claims in all their forms. It unmasks the normative basis of those global interpretations of reality provided by traditional metaphysical theory, the dogmatic visions that stand in the way of scientific progress. By bringing to light its confusion of facts and values, positivism reveals the pseudo-scientific character of metaphysics and robs it of its power to blind. The positivist critique of dogmatism can thus see itself as continuous with the Enlightenment tradition, as part of the battle of reason against dogmatic superstition. Yet by wholly excluding orienting values, positivism cannot theoretically justify its own critical activity. That is, 'from what source does this critique draw its power, if reason divorced from commitment must be wholly devoid of any interest in an emancipation of consciousness from dogmatic constraint?'. A purely positivistic critique destroys the basis of its own efforts.

At the same time positivism is not value-neutral, despite appearances. It takes a partisan position in favour of technological rationality. It rejects as dogmatic any theory that relates to practice other than by extending and rationalising control over nature and social processes, whilst dogmatically absolutising the technical orientation as the sole admissible value. Habermas asks whether this orientation is the only possible one, and argues that along with the dimension of technical control over nature there is also that of intersubjective interaction. The ethico-practical theorising of traditional metaphysics was directed towards the consciousness of human beings who lived together, discussed matters together, debated the proper ends of life. In other words it was bound up with the dimension of interaction. Positivism one-sidedly privileges and absolutises the perspective of technical control, and obscures the distinction between interaction and work. Practical questions come to be viewed as technical ones, in what is manifestly a 'category mistake'.

The real problem that arises from the contemporary inability to distinguish the practical from the technical is that 'even a civilisation that has been rendered
scientific is not granted dispensation from practical questions. (16) Though the positive sciences have become productive forces in social development, they continue to raise questions concerning the ends of life that cannot be resolved in purely technical terms. But under the spell of a rationality confined to the technological horizon, no attempt is made to attain a rational, intersubjective consensus on the part of citizens concerning the practical control of their destiny. Through communication human beings can form themselves into a collective subject that is capable of rational action. But a theory that confuses technical control with practical action is no longer capable of recognizing the need for this practical reason - "It understands society as a nexus of behavioural modes, for which rationality is mediated solely by the understanding of sociotechnical controls, but not by a coherent total consciousness - not by precisely that interested reason which can only attain practical power through the minds of politically enlightened citizens." (17)

5.3 The Eclipse of Practical Reason

Habermas traces the reduction of the practical to the technical in a more sociological manner by examining the historical interplay between the institutional framework of society and the subsystems of purposive-rational action. For Habermas, the transition from traditional to modern society has seen a shift from the structural predominance of the institutional framework to that of technically oriented activity. This provides the background for the contemporary loss of awareness of the ethico-practical dimension of reason, bound up with the institutional framework of interaction. Along with the increasing "scientization" of social life, the traditional forms of social legitimation in terms of a normative world-order have given way to a technocratic ideology, in which technology and science function to justify the prevailing power-structure.

The Emergence of Modern Society

In traditional society, the subsystems of purposive-rational action are governed by a socio-political power-structure, a class hierarchy that determines the unequal distribution of wealth and labour. This institutional framework is legitimated by an intersubjectively shared cultural tradition, by mythical, religious or metaphysical interpretations of reality as a whole. These world-views obey the logic of
interaction contexts, of the ethico-practical dimension of existence. They 'answer the central questions of man's collective existence and of individual life history', articulating normative standards for the conduct of life whilst also giving oblique expression to needs and interests which have been suppressed by the prevailing social order.\(^{(18)}\)

Traditional societies exist as long as the development of the technical subsystems stays within the limits of the legitimating efficacy of cultural tradition. With the emergence of the capitalist mode of production, the permanent expansion of economic growth is itself institutionalised. This expansion overturns the traditional superiority of the institutional framework to the forces of production, and undermines the traditional forms of social legitimation. At the threshold of the modern era the rationality of communicative interaction is confronted with that of means-end relations, associated with instrumental action. Permanent economic growth generates a pressure for social rationalisation, and the older forms of social legitimation lose their validity as unquestioned tradition when measured against the new standards of technical reason. At the same time, the released material of tradition is reorganised within a mechanistic framework derived from the natural sciences, according to the principles of formal law and the exchange of equivalents. This provides the basis for the revolutionary struggles of the bourgeoisie against the traditional order, and for a new form of social legitimation, that of bourgeois ideology.

From now on, political domination is legitimated in terms drawn not from the heights of cultural tradition but from the economic base of social labour. The new bourgeois ideology of justice promises that the exchange relations of the marketplace will be just owing to equivalence. By adopting the category of reciprocity, this ideology still employs a relation proper to communicative action as the basis of legitimation, and retains an ethico-practical character. But the principle of reciprocity is now the organising principle of the sphere of production and reproduction itself. In contrast to traditional society, the institutional framework is no longer identical with the system of political domination. Under liberal capitalism, it is only mediatelv political and immediately economic, with the bourgeois constitutional state standing in a 'superstructural' position. Social and political legitimation can thus be derived from the legitimation of relations of production.\(^{(19)}\)
In this context, Marx developed his critique of bourgeois society as a critique of political economy. He was able to identify the locus of the institutional framework of society in the relations of production, and at the same time criticise the legitimating basis constituted by the exchange of equivalents. Critique reveals, beneath the mystification of the free labour contract, the relationship of social force that underlies the wage-labour relationship. But this critique can no longer be applied as it stands. Two developmental tendencies have destroyed the particular constellation of institutional framework and subsystems of purposive-rational action that characterised liberal capitalism. Capitalism has been transformed by an increase in state intervention in order to secure the system's stability, and a growing interdependence of research and technology, which has turned the sciences into the leading productive force. (20)

Late Capitalism and Technocratic Ideology

The tendency towards permanent regulation of the economic process by means of state intervention arises in response to the dysfunctional tendencies which threaten the system when capitalism is left to itself. Capitalism's actual development manifestly contradicted the ideal of a bourgeois society, emancipated from domination. The ideology of just exchange, unmasked by Marx in theory, collapsed in practice. The form of capital utilisation through private ownership can only be maintained through governmental intervention, in order to secure stability and growth. Consequently, the institutional framework has become repoliticised. It no longer coincides immediately with the relations of production, and politics is no longer only a phenomenon of the superstructure. Rather, the economic base has to be comprehended as itself a function of governmental activity and political conflicts. As a result, a critical theory of society can no longer grasp the social in its essentials by focussing purely on the economic. The power structure cannot be criticised immediately at the level of the relations of production, by seeing through the myth of just exchange.

The new-style politics of state intervention differs markedly from the older forms of politics. Oriented towards the elimination of dysfunctions and threats to the economic system, it no longer concerns itself with the realisation of practical goals but with the solution of technical problems. Politics in traditional society, merely because of its form of legitimisation, was forced to define itself in relation to
practical goals. The 'good life' was interpreted in a context defined by interaction relations. The same still held for the ideology of bourgeois society. Modern politics, however, aims exclusively at the functioning of a manipulated system, precluding discussion about practical questions. The solution of technical problems is not dependent on public discussion. Accordingly, modern politics requires the depoliticisation of the mass of the population, the handing over of social problems to technical experts. At the same time, the institutional framework is still distinct from the systems of purposive-rational action. Its organisation continues to be a matter of practice linked to communication, not of technology. The bracketing out of practical questions is not automatic, and the depoliticisation of the masses has to be made plausible to them. The legitimation of contemporary political power is effected by science and technology also taking on the role of an ideology.\(^{(21)}\)

The second development characterising advanced capitalism is the rise of science and technology as the leading productive force, overshadowing the labour of individual workers. Although social interests still determine the direction and pace of technical progress, the latter appears as the autonomous basis of economic growth. There arises a perspective in which the development of the social system seems to be determined by the logic of scientific-technical progress. Such progress appears to generate 'objective exigencies' to which politics must respond. This semblance of autonomous scientific and technical progress can be used to justify the exclusion from politics of public discussion about practical goals. It consequently becomes a 'background ideology that penetrates into the consciousness of the depoliticised mass of the population, where it can take on legitimising power'.\(^{(22)}\) The decisive achievement of this technocratic ideology is to obscure the distinction between work and interaction. Its effect is 'to detach society's self-understanding from the frame of reference of communicative action and from the concepts of symbolic interaction and replace it with a scientific model'.\(^{(23)}\)

The new form of legitimation is not ideological in the traditional or bourgeois sense. The older metaphysical ideologies referred to the dimension of interaction and embodied ethico-practical ideals. In this, they gave expression to suppressed desires, interests and hopes, pointing toward the 'good life'. Even bourgeois ideologies could be traced back to a basic pattern of just interactions, free from
domination and mutually satisfactory. Although these ideologies obscured class domination and the denial of interests in practice, they also embodied normative ideals, in terms of which actual social practices could be criticised. Critical reflection could be undertaken within the context of interaction. In contrast, technocratic ideology reflects not a distortion within the ethico-practical context, but 'the repression of “ethics” as such as a category of life'. The practical can no longer be distinguished from the technical. What is thereby denied is not a particular class interest, but the very interest in critique and practical emancipation, in a society consciously and collectively organised in accordance with the desires and interests of its members.

Accordingly, the critical reflection that the new ideology calls for has to penetrate below the level of particular class interests in order to disclose the fundamental interests of mankind as such. Human existence is fundamentally oriented not only towards instrumental control, but also towards the maintenance of mutual understanding and the extension of communication free from domination. Technocratic ideology or the totalisation of instrumental reason makes this practico-critical interest disappear behind the interest in the expansion of technical control, and a radical critique of instrumental reason is required in order to recover it. Hence Habermas's efforts to assert the distinction between work and interaction. But it can also be said that the onus is on Habermas to justify the categorial distinction between interaction and work that underpins his historical analysis. Whatever its theoretical advantages, the distinction cannot simply be asserted. Habermas's doctrine of 'quasi-transcendental interests' is designed to provide the required justification. The task of bringing them to light is taken up in Knowledge and Human Interests.

The Public Sphere

Before turning to this, one further observation can be made about Habermas's social vision. Habermas envisages the institution of a public dialogue about the ends of life, through which humanity could come to terms with its own technical progress. What is required is the setting in motion of a politically effective discussion that rationally brings the social potential constituted by technical knowledge and ability into a defined and controlled relation to our practical knowledge and will. In this 'dialectic of potential and will', needs and social interests embodied in value-systems will govern the development of new
techniques and will in turn be brought into line with the technical possibilities for their gratification.\( ^{(27)} \) Such a situation presupposes a political decision-making process based on discussion free from domination, to which advanced capitalism, structurally dependent on a depoliticised public realm, puts up a strong resistance.\( ^{(28)} \)

The idea of a 'political public sphere' corresponds to the undistorted realm of communicative interaction. Since this is an irreducible dimension of human existence, the aspiration to unimpeded public discourse and the formation of a public will must always be present, at least implicitly. At the same time, Habermas's utopian ideal draws on a specifically modern experience, that of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century. The situation he has in mind embodies the bourgeois ideals of free speech, autonomy and responsibility, as well as the realm of public discussion that emerged at that time. This was in principle an arena in which citizens could confer in an unrestricted fashion about matters of general interest. Political life could be discussed openly in accordance with reason, not simply by appeal to traditional dogma. Forums for such discussion developed rapidly in Europe, nurturing opposition to the hierarchical forms of feudal authority. The participants in this discourse, the emerging bourgeoisie, confronted a secretive absolutist authority and sought to make it more open, accountable and rational.\( ^{(29)} \)

Of course, this historical form of the political public sphere involved ideological elements. The participants who took themselves to represent the general interest, were in fact property owning, educated and male. But Habermas considers the principle behind the public sphere - discursive will-formation through constraint-free discussion - to be indispensable. The depoliticisation of the public sphere under advanced capitalism has to be reversed. However, a fundamental question arises with the contention that the notion of a public discourse, embodying the ideals of free speech and autonomy, is a recent Western invention, a historically contingent phenomenon peculiar to eighteenth century Europe. Why should it be seen as indispensable? Might Habermas not be trying to absolutise a historically specific mode of thought, and to revive something whose relevance to the present situation is highly questionable?\( ^{(30)} \) Once again, Habermas needs to justify his standpoint; and once again this involves his notion of quasi-transcendental interests.
5.4 Habermas and the Question of History

In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas develops the distinction between work and interaction at the 'quasi-transcendental' level, in the form of a theory of 'cognitive' or 'knowledge-constitutive' interests. The critique of instrumental reason is pursued as the critique of the positivistic identification of knowledge with natural-scientific knowledge alone. Positivist thought represents the abandonment of philosophy as the basis for understanding and assessing forms of knowledge, the dissolution of the Kantian project of critically reflecting on the conditions of knowledge. With this, the constitutive role of the knowing subject is effaced, and the 'objectivist illusion' of positivism holds sway. Habermas aims to revive the Kantian notion of critique, and in the process to reformulate the notion of the transcendental subject. This subject will organise forms of enquiry and cognition through its cognitive interests, and provide the basis for a comprehension of natural science as merely one form of possible knowledge.

The Kantian-style reflection that Habermas seeks to revive is the critical reflection required to counter technocratic ideology. As noted above, the reflection required no longer proceeds within the context of a deformed ethico-practical realm, but seeks to recover the dimension of 'ethics as such'. At the same time this means that the required notion of reflection cannot be straightforwardly revived on the basis of the interaction-work distinction, as the practico-critical knowledge proper to communicative interaction. It seeks to establish the distinction itself, in the face of its effacement by a radically mystifying technocratic ideology. This shift to a higher level of reflection reopens issues concerning the role and status of philosophical activity and reason that could hitherto be held at bay. Philosophy as a Kantian-style reflection on the fundamental orientations of thought and action, reason as the arbiter of claims to knowledge, has to contend not only with the threat of scientistic objectivism but also with the modern sense of the historical. The traditional philosophical attempt to metaphysically ground thought and action, the foundational conception of reason, has been undermined not only by the progress of science but also by philosophy's own historical self-awareness.

On the basis of the interaction-work distinction, the Habermasian perspective has
been able to conceptualise the earlier formulation of critical theory as suffering from a complicity with reductive objectivism, as failing to adequately distinguish the realm of subjectivity from that of material work-processes and instrumental domination. It can see itself as representing a clear advance. The new level of reflection means that Habermas has to confront the deeper problems with which Horkheimer and Adorno were wrestling, particularly with respect to the question of history. Habermas shares with the earlier critical theorists the idea of critical theory as the heir of philosophy, the contemporary voice of reason. In preserving the traditional conception of reason as capable of grounding forms of thought and action, critical theory aims to counter the present subordination of thought to extraneous instrumental purposes, to maintain the ideal of autonomous, rational human existence.

But the threat of instrumental reason is not the only issue. Like Horkheimer and Adorno, Habermas also criticises the ahistorical and dogmatic claims of metaphysical First Philosophy to totality and finality. Traditional metaphysics sought to comprehend the totality of what is from an extramundane position, and to formulate the ultimate principles of thought and action. Kant took up this project in an epistemological form. But, after Hegel and Marx, Habermas recognises, reason can no longer be self-contained theory, aloof from the socio-historical context in which it finds itself. Philosophy has become historically self-conscious. Forms of reason have to be comprehended socially and historically, not metaphysically.

Once again, however, this historical awareness is problematic for critical theory. By undermining the notion of a transcending metaphysical standpoint, it also seems to erode the possibility of a normative social critique and to threaten thought and human existence with the very subordination to objective historical forces and processes that critical theory wants to oppose. Like the earlier critical theorists, Habermas wants to preserve the rational core of metaphysics, embodying the ideals of truth, justice and freedom, in order to counter the reduction of reason to its purely instrumental aspect. At the same time, he does not want simply to abandon history, to return to an ahistorical mode of thought. He similarly attempts to find a middle way, to provide a theoretical standpoint for critique that is also socially and historically located. For Habermas, the 'heritage of philosophy' is embodied in human communication, in the midst of history and yet irreducible to 
material work-processes. Philosophy is surpassed as self-sufficient theory, and concretely realised as autonomous social existence through the critique of ideology. (33)

The most immediate problem with Habermas’s picture is that his preservation of the heritage of philosophy within history, in the context of communication, appears to itself presuppose a quasi-Kantian standpoint. In terms of the theory of cognitive interests, which is reminiscent of First Philosophy in its epistemological guise, Habermas organises history into the dimensions of work and interaction. Habermas thus retains an ahistorical, foundationalist posture, in the face of his own historical awareness. At the same time, he obscures this retreat from history to the extent that he tends to conflate Kantian reflection on the conditions of thought and action in general with the historically situated critique of ideology. He is thereby able to continue to enjoy the benefits of the interaction-work framework without fully confronting the issue of history that the Kantian level of his thought raises.

5.5 History, Metaphysics and the 'Radicalisation of Critique'

Habermas’s understanding of critical reflection develops through a consideration of the ‘radicalisation of critique’ that takes place in the development of thought from Kant, through Hegel, to Marx. Here critical thought reflects on its own entanglement with metaphysical foundationalism on the basis of historical awareness, and turns in a practical, historically engaged direction. For Habermas there is the potential here for the transformation of First Philosophy into engaged critical social theory. But he also wants to show how this opportunity was in fact missed, how Hegel falls back into a theoreticist metaphysical foundationalism, while Marx abandoned philosophy altogether in favour of a reductive scientistic materialism. Habermas’s picture attempts to go beyond both these alternatives, to preserve the heritage of metaphysical thought in the midst of history.

Kant, Hegel and Marx

The awareness of the historical means that Habermas cannot straightforwardly return to a Kantian conception of critique. With the breakdown of traditional metaphysics, philosophy did not abandon its claim to provide ultimate grounds.
but through Kant maintained them in an epistemological form. Whilst seeking to preserve the activity of critique, Habermas takes issue with the ahistorical pretensions of Kant's picture. He endorses the thrust of Hegel's critique, which questions the Kantian notion of reflection as an absolute beginning, and of the knowing subject as an absolute origin, a self-contained unity outside of the movement of history. Hegel radicalises the critique of knowledge by subjecting its presuppositions to reflection, with the intention of questioning First Philosophy. The subject is not an immediate given but the outcome of a historical process. The critique of knowledge is always after the fact, always presupposes something prior out of which critical consciousness emerges. Epistemology reformulated as phenomenological self-reflection proceeds by reconstructing and recapitulating the stages of its own genesis. In so doing, reflection is both theoretical and practical. It surpasses, along with a false view of things, the dogmatic attitudes of a habitual form of life. It is an emancipatory practice that overcomes dogmatic constraints and transforms the reflecting self. (34)

The notion of an emancipatory self-reflection that overcomes constraints on the self-formative process is central to Habermas's conception of critical theory. But he also criticises Hegel for reintroducing a subjectivist First Philosophy. Although Hegel comprehends thought and subjectivity in their historical development, he also subordinates this insight to a philosophy of absolute spirit. The process of phenomenological reflection is understood as the self-movement of an unconditioned absolute mind, and as terminating necessarily in absolute knowledge. The standard that governs reflection does not emerge from the experience of reflection but is dogmatically presupposed from the start as an unconditioned truth. With this, phenomenological reflection is essentially rendered superfluous. The historical comprehension of the development of knowledge has been subordinated to an ahistorical standpoint that is merely asserted. Philosophy no longer understands scientific knowledge critically, but seeks to replace it in the form of a universal scientific knowledge. (35)

Habermas does not however see this denial of history as bringing into question the notion of emancipatory self-reflection per se. Rather, what is required is that the process of self-reflection and the project of attaining selfhood be themselves located in a historical context. This further radicalisation of reflection is taken to be the thrust of Marx's work. In his picture the self-formative process of the species
is historically conditioned. Forms of consciousness are not idealistically through the self-movement of mind, engaged in abstract mental labour, but materialistically, through the self-generation of the species engaged in social labour. The subject of knowledge is no longer transcendental consciousness or absolute spirit but concrete, embodied, labouring humanity. For Habermas, Marx's species-subject is concrete and historical, but it also retains a quasi-transcendental function. Sensuous human activity, the labour-process, is both a factual condition for human existence and plays a transcendental role. It organises knowledge of nature in accordance with the interest in possible technical control over natural processes. Here Habermas introduces the notion of a 'quasi-transcendental' orientation or interest.

Although the technical orientation is invariant, the forms in which nature is comprehended change historically. The development of the forces of production brings about alterations in the societal categories through which the world is disclosed. The species has no fixed essence but develops historically in the process of working on nature. The reflective reconstruction of the self-formative process of the species discloses the structures of social labour that are the product of the activity of past generations. Dogmatic forms of consciousness, in the form of ideologies, are comprehended and surpassed through the comprehension and transformation of the organisation of social labour, the historically specific relations of social power, in which they are embedded. Phenomenological reflection thus takes the materialistic form of ideology-critique, directed against the forms of social power that impede the self-formative process. Philosophical reflection emphatically surpasses its theoreticist form, and passes over into worldly, engaged practical critique. (36)

On Habermas's account, the idea of self-constitution through labour allows Marx to both appropriate and demythologise Hegel. But it also prevents him from adequately comprehending his own work. Marx reveals the material conditions that Hegel's idealism obscured, the forces of production that provide the impetus for the reflective critique of ideological forms of life. In his concrete investigations, however, the self-formative process of the species is understood as being mediated not only by labour but also by interaction. It is in this latter dimension that phenomenological reflection moves. In it appear ideological forms of consciousness and the emancipatory critical reflection that dissolves them. But
at the categorial or quasi-transcendental level, Marx interprets what he does in terms of self-formation through labour alone. Reflection is reduced to labour, which is understood to lead directly to social transformation. And social analysis is no longer understood as critique, but is characterised as a 'human natural science' that uncovers the economic laws of society on the model of physics.\(^{(37)}\)

Habermas's Marx thus misconstrues his own work at the level of his theoretical self-understanding. What is required is that the theoretical framework be expanded, so that the dimension of interaction as well as that of labour becomes part of the 'philosophical frame of reference'. In Habermas's picture, the idea of the self-constitution of the species involves both self-generation through productive activity and self-formation through practico-critical activity. On this basis philosophical reflection can be distinguished from science and preserved in the form of the critique of ideology. That is, the radicalisation of the critique of knowledge effected by Hegel takes the materialistic form of a critical social theory. This is in contrast to Marx who reduces critique to productive knowledge and thereby disavows philosophy. His picture 'only reaffirms what absolute idealism had already accomplished: the elimination of epistemology in favor of unchained universal "scientific knowledge" - but this time of scientific materialism instead of absolute knowledge'.\(^{(38)}\)

**Habermas and the Retreat from History**

Habermas's picture appears to permit a historical, Marxist critique of Hegelian idealism that does not fall into a reductive scientistic objectivism. Philosophico-critical reflection can be seen as concretely located in history without being reduced to labour processes, because historical practice involves not only productive activity but also symbolic interaction. In the context of interaction the idealistic picture of stages of consciousness that are overcome in the self-movement of absolute mind can be reformulated as a concrete, practical project of social emancipation. Here, historical constellations of power and ideology are comprehended as historical and overcome through critical-revolutionary activity. The process is in turn conditioned by the development of the forces of production, which provides the ultimate impetus for the overcoming of dogmatic forms of social life. But the process of critical reflection and emancipation cannot be reduced to productive activity. It belongs to the irreducible realm of interaction, which is only indirectly influenced by technological development.
We must not however be deceived by this construction. Although it seeks to do justice to the historical locatedness of thought whilst preserving critical reflection, the 'heritage of philosophy', it only does so on the basis of an all-embracing theoretical framework, a philosophical frame of reference that organises history into the two dimensions of work and interaction. As McCarthy points out, the theory of cognitive interests that informs this division is strongly reminiscent of First Philosophy in its epistemological guise. It seems to me that in the course of Habermas's discussion there is a disguised reversal, a surreptitious renewal of the very form of philosophy that at the outset was the focus of interrogation. The Kantian claim to articulate the ultimate foundations of thought and action above the movement of history is restored. On this basis the distinction between work and interaction is secured and Hegelian, philosophico-critical reflection can be preserved, within interaction, from the threat of reductive materialism. But this picture leaves unresolved the question of history that Habermas himself raises at the outset with respect to Kant.

Habermas does not follow through the historicising critique of foundationalism, the turning of philosophy to historical engagement, in the movement from Kant to Marx. Instead, he subordinates Marx to a renewed transcendentalism and to the transcendently based distinction between labour and interaction. Habermas imputes to Marx a quasi-Kantian philosophical frame of reference. Since this is restricted to labour, Marx reduces the historical process to a function of production and eliminates emancipatory reflection from history. He is in need of Habermas's categorial revision and supplementation. But emancipatory Hegelian self-reflection is only restored to the historical process by virtue of the Kantian-style theoretical framework that organises history into the two dimensions of interaction and work. The standpoint from which this is done remains above history. It implies a general species-subject underlying historical life, disclosed by a general reflection on the subjective conditions of knowledge. And this general reflection needs to be distinguished from the emancipatory critical reflection that is situated within the historical process, or at least within history conceived in terms of the dualism of interaction and work. Habermas's apparent advance over Marx depends heavily on his return to Kant.

Habermas avoids confronting his return to an ahistorical theoreticism because he
tends to conflate general philosophical reflection on the conditions of knowledge in general with situated ideology-critique. On Habermas’s reading, the heritage of philosophy ‘passes over’ into ideology-critique, finds its proper realisation therein. At the same time the notion of reflection that emerges is understood to extend to the critique of knowledge in general. Reflection in the universal sense is construed as pursuing the same emancipatory project of dissolving false self-understanding as the situated critique of ideology. This maintains the appearance of having transformed philosophy as such in a practical, historically engaged direction, of linking reason with an enlightened form of life, but only at the expense of glossing over the differences between universal and situated reflection. Insofar as these differences remain, the notion of critical reflection that emerges in *Knowledge and Human Interests* is ambiguous.

Certainly, Habermas’s renewed Kantianism is not a straightforward return to the unworldly, self-contained transcendental subject. To a certain extent philosophy has indeed been ‘brought down to earth’, become concretely situated. In reflecting on the foundations of natural-scientific and practical-hermeneutic enquiry, Habermas seeks to uncover an embodied species-subject. In this he develops the notion of a quasi-transcendental interest introduced in connection with Marx. The interests of knowledge are embedded in the structures of everyday life. The reproduction of human life depends both on mastering nature and on preserving reliable intersubjective communication. Interests are ‘the basic orientations rooted in specific fundamental conditions of the possible reproduction and self-constitution of the human species, namely work and interaction.’ The corresponding ‘technical’ and ‘practical’ interests play a transcendental role in the production of various forms of knowledge and are at the same time anthropologically deep-seated, grounded in the natural history of the species. The subject to which they are ascribed combines ‘the empirical character of a species having emerged in natural history’ with ‘the intelligible character of a community that constitutes the world from transcendental perspectives.’

The critical reflection that discloses these interests appears to combine the transcendental reflection on the conditions of knowledge with the more concrete notion of reflection as the rehabilitation of interests which are obscured by a false self-understanding. It critically dissolves the ‘objectivist illusion’ of positivism, i.e., ‘the objectivist self-understanding of the sciences, which suppresses the
Habermas wants to characterise this critique of the conditions of knowledge in general as a form of emancipatory self-reflection, the experience of reflection originally developed by Hegel and adopted by Marx under materialist presuppositions. Reflection on the conditions of knowledge is said to pursue the 'emancipatory' cognitive interest, oriented towards autonomy and responsibility (Mündigkeit). This gives us the Enlightenment notion of 'interested reason', reason per se as committed to enlightened autonomy and liberation, and embodying the emancipatory interest which is also understood to direct the critical social sciences.

But the ambiguous character of critical reflection remains in Habermas's picture. Under materialist presuppositions, the process of emancipatory self-reflection is conditioned. Habermas also refers to the emancipatory interest in critical reflection as 'derivative'. It does not have the anthropological primacy of the technical and practical interests, which represent invariant conditions of life and knowledge. Rather, it depends on the state of mastery over nature and the historically different degrees of repression of communication. As a result it presupposes the more basic interests in possible technical control and communication, which aim at successful actions and interactions. And the general, Kantian-style reflection that discloses these interests cannot then be identified with the emancipatory reflection that presupposes them. Thus, although Habermas has historically and materialistically appropriated Kant in a certain way, in the form of a quasi-transcendentalism, the critique of knowledge in general remains something distinct from a historically situated, Hegelian-style emancipatory self-reflection.

5.6 Psychoanalysis and the Reformulation of Marxism

When Habermas discusses his Hegelian notion of emancipatory self-reflection in an extended way, it is through a consideration of Freud. The incorporation of psychoanalysis into Marxism, initiated by Horkheimer and Adorno, is part of the attempt by critical theory in general to go beyond the orthodox Marxist stress on labour and to secure a place for the subject. Psychoanalysis consistently serves as an avenue for the articulation of subjectivist and idealist themes. Recall that, for Horkheimer and Adorno, instinctual desires served as the substantive content of
the subject, alienated through the repressive self-denial required in the course of the mastery of external nature. And for Habermas also, integral subjectivity involves the reflective overcoming of self-alienation and the appropriation of one's own substance. Where he differs is in clearly distinguishing the dimension of self-repression from that of the technical mastery of nature, on the basis of the interaction-work distinction. The repression of inner nature and its overcoming go on within the realm of communicative interaction. Habermas's reflections on Freud thus proceed against the background of his distinction between interaction and work.

Psychanalysis

For Habermas, psychoanalysis is 'the only tangible example of a science incorporating methodical self-reflection'. However, as presented by Freud, it is subject to a scientific self-misunderstanding. Freud construes psychoanalysis as a natural science, revealing a psyche apparatus and making possible technical control over that apparatus. Yet, Habermas argues, the metapsychological framework of ego, id and superego was first derived from experiences in the analytic situation and the interpretation of dreams. Only subsequently were these conceptual constructions transposed into an objective frame of reference and reinterpreted. Properly speaking they cannot be explicited independently of the context in which they were discovered, the physician's communication with the patient. They belong fundamentally to the dimension of symbolic interaction.

At the same time psychoanalysis has to be distinguished from the hermeneutic or cultural sciences. Hermeneutics also concerns itself with the interpretation of symbolic situations, but remains restricted to a language in which conscious intentions are expressed. If it has to reconstruct faulty texts, the omissions and distortions it seeks to eliminate are purely accidental and do not call conscious self-understanding into question. Initially psychoanalysis appears as a special form of interpretation. Freud always patterned the interpretation of dreams after the hermeneutic model of philological research. However, psychoanalytic interpretation is directed at corrupt texts in which the mutilations have meaning as such, a meaning that is inaccessible to the author. It is a critical or 'depth' hermeneutics, that aims to comprehend and overcome a systematic self-misunderstanding. The aim here is to restore the priority of conscious self-understanding in the conduct of life, a priority which ordinary hermeneutics...
The object domain of depth hermeneutics comprises all places where the 'text of our everyday language games are interrupted by incomprehensible symbols. The non-pathological model of such a text is the dream, and through the interpretation of dream-texts Freud came upon the mechanisms of defence and symptom formation. On Habermas's reading, socially undesirable motivations are defended against by removing from public communication the corresponding interpretations, i.e., representations and symbols. With repression, the 'privatised' language of unconscious motives is rendered inaccessible to the ego, and the subject's communication with itself is interrupted. A portion of its life history has been lost to it. To the extent that unconscious wishes nonetheless urge towards consciousness they are expressed in a compromise language that combines public and privatised language. Hence the distorted and mysterious dream text, as well as symptoms that are the corresponding phenomena of waking life in the pathological situation.

The undoing of repression takes the form of the analyst instructing the patient in reading their own texts, which they themselves have distorted, and in translating symbols from a mode of expression deformed as a private language into the mode of public communication. This translation 'reveals the genetically important phases of life history to a memory that was previously blocked, and brings to consciousness the person's own self-formative process...the act of understanding to which [psychoanalysis] leads is self-reflection.' The notion of critical self-reflection is fundamental to analytic treatment. Through it, blockages to self-consciousness are overcome, what was repressed is restored to the subject, and a miscarried self-formative process is brought to completion. For Habermas, the outcome of this 'process of enlightenment' is the restoration of a 'virtual totality' that is represented by the model of pure communicative action. According to this model all habitual interactions and all interpretations relevant to life conduct are accessible at all times.

As reflection, the analytic process of 'making conscious' is not only a cognitive process but also dissolves resistances on the affective level. As Habermas puts it - 'The dogmatic limitation of false consciousness consists not only in the lack of specific information but in its specific inaccessibility. It is not only a cognitive
deficiency; for the deficiency is fixated by habitualised standards on the basis of affective attitudes. Analytic insight is a critique which dissolves dogmatic attitudes and transforms the motivational basis of false consciousness. It could not have the power to do so if it were not impelled by a 'passion for critique', an interest born of suffering and desperation in assuming the burdensome condition one is afflicted with. This interest is not only the occasion for the inauguration of therapy but the presupposition of the success of the therapy itself. Analytic knowledge is impelled forward against motivational resistances by the emancipatory 'interest in self-knowledge'.

The moment of emancipatory self-reflection is excluded from the structural model of the psyche, as articulated by a scientifically conceived psychoanalysis. Habermas restores it through his linguistic reading of Freud. On this basis psychic determinism can be approached as a derivative phenomenon. The concept of the unconscious is derived from a specific form of the disturbance of communication, in which the ego's self-awareness is purged of representations of the undesired instincts. The denied part of the self is reified for the ego as an id or it. Scientism hypostatises this reification as an objective causality, forgetting its source. Similarly the notion of the instincts as prime mover forgets that the concept of impulse is only derived 'privatively' from language deformation. Only in the medium of language do we encounter the heritage of our natural history, the 'plastic impulse potential' in the form of interpreted needs. It is true that psychoanalytic interpretation involves causal explanations, for split-off symbols and repressed motives exert a causal influence over language and behaviour. This, however, is a result of our self-deformation. Causality here relates not to nature but to a sphere that has become 'second nature' through objectification, the unconscious. Psychoanalysis does not grant us a power of technical control over a natural process, but through analytic insight dissolves the causality of unconsciousness itself.

Freud and Social Theory
Freud's thought, interpreted in this very Hegelian manner, has the potential to provide an account of power and ideology which surpasses that of Marx. Marx's categorical framework is restricted to that of instrumental action, a framework which cannot account for reflective knowledge and is not suited to the reconstruction of power and ideology. In contrast, Freud has 'acquired in
metapsychology a framework for distorted communicative action that allows the conceptualisation of the origins of institutions and the role and function of illusions, that is of power and ideology.\footnote{59} The non-scientific, non-reductivist side of Marx's thought can be drawn out and developed by incorporating a number of Freud's ideas into historical materialism. Freud himself shows the way through his own sociological speculations.

The central fact of defence against undesirable instinctual impulses points to a fundamental conflict between self-preservation, which must be secured under the constraint of external nature through collective social effect, and the transcending potential of libidinal and aggressive needs. The reality confronting the child and forcing denial is not immediately external nature but the institutional framework of society, whose demands on the emergent individual, mediated by parental figures, are perpetuated intrapsychically in the form of the superego. External authority and the superego have an economic foundation. At the same time the renunciation that society imposes is a historically variable factor, depending on the degree of technical control of natural forces as well as the organisation of their exploitation and the distribution of the goods produced. The more the pressure of reality is overcome by technical control, the weaker becomes the prohibition of instincts compelled by the system of self-preservation. The institutionalised repression of instincts can be replaced by their rational mastery. The realisation of this possibility depends not on technical progress alone, but also requires the overcoming of the particular system of social labour, the class-specific privations, that the institutional repression of instincts serves to sustain.\footnote{60}

Institutionalised power represents a social response to the pressure of reality comparable to the neurotic solution at the individual level. It is a collective neurotic compulsion that maintains the repression of unwanted desires and is in turn sustained by the effective forces of unconscious mechanisms. The institutional framework consists of compulsory norms, which not only sanction linguistically interpreted needs but also redirect, transform and suppress them.\footnote{61} Repressed motives for action, excluded from communication, are directed into channels of substitute gratification. A part of the substitute gratifications can then be refashioned into ideological legitimations for prevailing norms - 'Collective fantasies compensate for the renunciations imposed by civilisation. Since they are not private, but instead, on the level of public communication itself, lead a split-off
existence that is removed from criticism, they are elaborated into interpretations of
the world and taken into service as rationalisations of authority. (62) Freud speaks
here of the 'mental assets of civilisation', of 'illusions' that represent sublimated
gratifications and are deposited in cultural tradition. These symbolically redirected
desires are the forces that dominate consciousness by legitimating existing power
relations.

But illusions are not simply delusions, unrealisable human wishes. With the
development of technical power, the institutional framework, which maintains a
system of social labour and stabilises the power structure that enforces
renunciation, can be loosened. Increasingly, parts of cultural tradition that at first
only have 'projective significance' can be realised. Insofar as technical power
opens up the objective possibility of reducing socially necessary repressions, the
'utopian content' of illusion 'can be freed from its fusion with the delusory,
ideological components of culture that have been fashioned into legitimations of
authority and converted into a critique of power structures that have become
historically obsolete'. (63) And it is precisely the oppressed masses, whose
renunciations go beyond the general privations, who are the first to be incapable of
integration into the social order by legitimations that have become fragile. They
critically turn the utopian content of tradition against the established forms of
civilisation.

The development of the productive forces thus provides the indirect basis for the
transformation of the institutional framework, but this transformation also involves
emancipation from the internal compulsion of distorted and self-limiting
communication. The affective basis of obedience to civilisation will thereby be
replaced by an enlightened one, in which the precepts of civilisation have a rational
basis - 'in other words, an organisation of social relations according to the
principle that the validity of every norm of political consequence be made
dependent on a consensus arrived at in communication free from domination'. (64)
The interest in such enlightenment emerges with the deformation of
communication, for 'just as in the clinical situation, so in society, pathological
compulsion is itself accompanied by the interest in its abolition. Both the
pathology of social institutions and that of individual consciousness reside in the
medium of language and of communicative action, and assume the form of a
structural deformation of communication. That is why for the social system, too,
the interest inherent in the pressure of suffering is also immediately an interest in enlightenment; and reflection is the only possible dynamic through which it realises itself. (65)

5.7 Habermas, Humanism and History

The augmentation of Marx's picture with Freudian concepts, themselves conceptualised in terms of a hermeneutically informed notion of communicative action, allows Habermas to restore the Hegelian process of emancipatory self-reflection and the vision of total rational autonomy, in the face of the reductive emphasis on labour alone. Yet even if we leave aside the question of the quasi-transcendental framework that underpins Habermas's picture, at the expense of his historical awareness, the picture is still problematic. Habermas consistently proceeds in terms of the humanistic framework of subject and object. In Marxism this takes the form of the division between Hegelian Marxism, which looks to the overcoming of objectified forms of life and the attainment of conscious control over our existence, and Scientific Marxism, which reduces the subject to an epiphenomenon of objective structures.

Without denying that human life is historically and materially conditioned, Habermas also wants to avoid a purely objectivistic account of human existence, to save the themes of active subjectivity and emancipatory critique. This rescue is effected in terms of the interaction-work distinction, through which both sides of the Marxist tradition can be preserved. The realm of interaction is indirectly influenced by the development of the productive forces but remains irreducible to them. It preserves the active subject in a communicative form. However, this picture suffers from the problem of the 'abstractness of autonomy', in that freedom involves an abstract separation from concrete historical determinations, both through the distinction between interaction and work, and within interaction through their reduction to mere pathological distortions which can be wholly overcome.

Despite their differences, Habermas's picture bears interesting similarities to that of Sartre. Sartre rigorously distinguishes between the two realms of 'being-in-itself' and 'being-for-itself', in order to preserve subjectivity from any taint of objective
determination. Habermas employs the interaction-work distinction to protect the realm of subjectivity and consciousness from any scientistic reduction to material work processes. Although interaction is indirectly influenced by the level of mastery over nature, it obeys a different logic to that of the productive realm, and is essentially irreducible to it. Within the dimension of interaction it is possible in principle to achieve total lucidity and self-possession, at both the individual and social level. All human expressions and actions can be conscious, rational ones, and anything less than this is a pathological self-deception.

Habermas's picture, it seems to me, expresses the same rationalistic ideal of complete self-awareness that inspires Sartre. And it is ultimately just as empty. What could motivate or orient us in such a self-consciously rational state? In both cases, the answer seems to be that human beings determine their own motivation, in the one instance through unconditioned choice, and in the other through unconstrained rational discussion. As Heller points out, Habermas's human being has 'no body, no feelings...one gets the impression that the good life consists solely of rational communication and that needs can be argued for without being felt.'<sup>66</sup> The only thing that could properly be said to 'move' us in Habermas's enlightened dialogue would be the rather esoteric interest in the pursuit of unconstrained rational communication itself.

It is true that Habermas countenances the possibility of a 'dark side' of objective determinations, which influence subjects 'behind their backs'. In this, he goes beyond the naive immediacy of Sartrean self-awareness, but not in such a way as to threaten the primacy of the subject. In Hegelian fashion, we have only undergone a self-alienation and entered into a pathological state that can be reflectively overcome. And the Freud that Habermas enlists to give substance to his notion of emancipatory self-reflection is no threat because psychoanalysis is simultaneously absorbed into a linguistically conceived idealism. There is nothing of the 'wounding blow' that psychoanalysis was supposed to deliver to human narcissism, by revealing that the ego is not even master in its own house.

For Habermas, the wounded ego can be healed because he identifies the unconscious solely with the repressed, with alienated portions of the ego. Objective psychic structures are understood in an entirely derivative and negative way, as deformations of communication. The reflective undoing of repression and
the restoration of unconstrained communication amount to the overcoming of the unconscious as such. There is no dark realm of more or less permanently irrational structures, the 'seething cauldron' of the id. (67) Apart from the question of doing justice to Freud, for whom the id is not just repressed material, this picture is unable to provide a genuinely developmental account of the ego. Like Hegel, Habermas does not really comprehend subjecthood as emergent, but posits an absolute standpoint represented by pure communicative action, in terms of which anything less than total self-determination can be comprehended as a deviation. By subordinating its history to itself, autonomous subjectivity remains abstractly self-sufficient and unconditioned.

Certainly Habermas goes beyond both Sartre and Hegel, in that he escapes the limits of a self-enclosed realm of subjectivity, turning to intersubjectively shared linguistic practices. Hegelian reflection thereby becomes a concrete project of overcoming historical structures of distorted communication. At the same time however, as becomes apparent in his interpretation of Freud, Habermas reformulates a self-enclosed Hegelian subjectivism in linguistic terms. And as the realm of rational autonomy, language in turn appears as abstractly autonomous. Communication is not understood as bound up with wider social practices. Rather, Habermas tends to assimilate all social relations to relations of communication. Consequently, his social criticism begins and ends with language. It starts out with structures of distorted communication, and freedom is equivalent to a situation in which there is unconstrained dialogue. As Giddens puts it, the critique of domination comes to turn upon freedom of communication, or dialogue, rather than upon material transformations of power relations. (68) Relations of social power are themselves sublimated into structures of distorted communication and the practice that opposes power is effectively reduced to the reflective dissolution of ideological distortion.

The dimension of interaction is designed to counter orthodox Marxism's reductive stress on labour alone, to restore the themes of critique and human autonomy to social theory. But not only is the resulting picture of human freedom strangely abstract, lacking concrete historical determination. Because he proceeds in terms of the subject-object framework, Habermas is unable to do justice to his own historical awareness. In his 'radicalisation of critique', Habermas sets out with the intention of bringing into question the foundationalist claims of idealism, of
comprehending thought and subjectivity in a socio-historical context. In his
interrogation of Hegel, endorsing the thrust of Marx's critique, he questions the
subordination of history to an all-embracing, unconditioned absolute spirit. Yet
whilst criticising Hegelian subjectivism in terms of history, he does not want to
fall, like Marx, into an objectivistic materialism that dissolves the idea of reflective
critique. That is, critique in the sense of overcoming constraints on a
self-formative process, allowing us to attain autonomous selfhood. Rather,
emancipatory reflection is to be preserved in a historical and materialist context.
To this end, Habermas reformulates it in the context of communicative interaction,
replacing Hegel's self-enclosed philosophical reflection with a situated ideology
critique that confronts the historical reality of distorted communication. Reflection
is further conditioned, in an indirect way, by the level of development of the forces
of production. They provide the impetus for the critico-practical overcoming of
social power and the concrete realisation of rational autonomy.

This picture appears to locate thought and subjectivity in the midst of history,
whilst preserving critique as the overcoming of historical constraints to the
formation of autonomous forms of life. In fact, however, it embodies a turn away
from the project of historicisation, the historical critique of metaphysics. What
Habermas gives with one hand, he takes away with the other. He accepts the
Marxian thesis of the historical locatedness of thought in order to criticise
historical Hegelian foundationalism, and then draws back from Marx as a
reductive materialist who objectivistically destroys the notions of critique and
freedom and who needs to be supplemented by a Hegel subjectivism. Ironically,
Habermas himself tends to impose an objectivistic, scientistic reading on Marx.
With this, the project of a historical critique of metaphysics has been subordinated
to the workings of the subject-object framework. History, which opposes the
pretensions of metaphysics, also appears as the threat of uncritical objectivism
which has to be countered in order to preserve the possibility of subjective
autonomy. Hence Habermas's return to a Hegelian subjectivism despite his
historical awareness.

It is true that Habermas also goes beyond Hegel's vision of self-enclosed
consciousness, of reflection as the self-movement of absolute mind, locating the
reflecting subject in the context of historical forms of linguistic practice. In this he
takes up the historicising side of Hegel as a reflection on the historical emergence
of our forms of thought and subjectivity. But once again the turn to history is accompanied by a reversal. The overriding role of language is to insulate the realm of subjectivity from material determinations, from labour-processes, and to preserve the transcending ideal of autonomous subjectivity in a communicative form, as 'pure communicative action'. As we have seen, the Hegelian themes of integral subjectivity and the overcoming of pathological alienation are reformulated by Habermas in linguistic terms. But in thereby constraining historical locatedness as a distortion of the subject, an alienation to be overcome, Habermas proceeds at the expense of a genuinely developmental, historical account of subjectivity. The overall result is not merely an abstract picture of subjectivity and freedom, but also the restoration of a Hegelian-style subjectivism that flies in the face of Habermas's historical awareness.

Habermas thus reasserts in communicative terms the very Hegelian metaphysics that he initially brought into question. The historical comprehension of forms of thought is once again subordinated to an ahistorical standard. Autonomous subjectivity as the overriding telos of history becomes for Habermas the standard for ideology critique that is implicit in the very structure of communication. The human interest in autonomy and responsibility is not mere fancy, for it can be apprehended a priori. 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 unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus. The reappearance of an ahistorical standpoint is in direct conflict with Habermas's earlier questioning of the Hegelian notion of absolute truth. It cannot be reconciled with a consistent recognition of the socio-historical locatedness of thought. Because Habermas formulates his picture in humanistic terms, in which history appears as an objectivistic threat to critique and freedom, he is unable to carry through his intention of historically comprehending thought and subjectivity. There is a deep tension in his picture between the desire to do justice to history and the tendency to return to a transhistorical standpoint.

Habermas appears to have a decisive advantage over Horkheimer and Adorno in that he establishes a firm standpoint for critique, in the form of the normative ideal of autonomy implicit in communication, whereas they have great difficulty in grounding critique. But, as I have tried to show, their difficulties stem from a
genuine awareness of the historical, which however appears as a self-destructive tendency towards reductivism when they try to comprehend history in terms of the humanistic framework. Habermas does not see in this the inability of humanism to properly come to grips with history, an insight that points beyond humanism. Rather, he views their problem entirely in humanistic terms, purely as a case of reductivism. It can be resolved by making a clear distinction between subject and object, interaction and work. Yet, he also shares their desire to comprehend thought historically, and so his humanism works against him. He is unable to do justice to his own historical awareness. And not only does he return to a Hegelian subjectivism, in the context of the interaction-work distinction. He also returns to a Kantian standpoint, in order to establish the distinction in the first place. This brings us back to the problem of history as it relates to Habermas's quasi-transcendental framework.

Kant is the initial focus of Habermas's historically oriented critique of First Philosophy. He endorses the Hegelian critique of Kant's absolute self-contained subject, which has to be comprehended in its historical development, whilst taking issue with Hegel's development of this insight as a philosophy of absolute spirit. The attempt to historically and materialistically appropriate Hegel is designed to continue the project of historically questioning thought and subjectivity that embraces Kant as well. Yet, as we have seen, Habermas also returns to a Kantian style position, standing above history in general. Even if we were to accept the idea that he has appropriated Hegel historically and materially, the Kantian aspect of Habermas's thought cannot be incorporated into this picture. Universal reflection, disclosing the fundamental orientations of the species-subject underlying historical life, is distinct from the situated ideology critique through which a historically specific subject overcomes structures of distorted communication. Habermas avoids confronting his renewed Kantianism insofar as he does not adequately distinguish Kantian reflection from situated ideology critique. Nonetheless, the Kantian dimension of his thought remains above the movement of history, and the question of history remains unresolved.

The recognition that the apparent historical appropriation of Hegel is misleading sheds new light on this. The historicising impulse in Habermas's thought has already been confounded by the need to counter the threat of dissolution in objective determinations, represented by Marx, which leads him to reaffirm a
Hegelian subjectivism. The further return to Kant is required in order to underpin the work-interaction distinction, in terms of which the Hegelian subject is preserved from objectivism. It represents a second-order subjectivism, and it also refers us to a second-order objectivism. That is, it does not directly oppose a reductive materialism that has lost the dimension of interaction, consciousness and emancipatory reflection. Rather, it opposes an objectivism that suppresses the contribution of subjective activity to the objects of knowledge in general, on which the distinction between different dimensions of life and forms of knowledge is based. And it is under these circumstances, because of the need to avoid this general objectivism, that Habermas compounds his denial of history and returns to the Kantian-style foundationalism to which he was initially strongly opposed.

The idea that Habermas has turned philosophy in a historically engaged direction is thus doubly misleading. Habermas not only restores a Hegelian-style subjectivism in his notion of emancipatory critique, but also returns to an even more theoreticist Kantian-style standpoint. His notion of reflection can accordingly be viewed not so much as a conflation of the universal and the historically situated, but rather as a running together of two steps in the retreat from history. And there is an ambiguity not only in his notion of reflection but also in the notion of objectivism to which it is opposed. On the one hand, objectivism refers to the one-sided totalisation of productive knowledge and instrumental activity, which needs to be supplemented by interaction in order to restore the possibility of practico-critical knowledge. On the other hand, it refers to the general objectivism that precludes the philosophico-critical analysis of the conditions of knowledge. This latter objectivism is to be supplanted, rather than simply supplemented.

At the same time, despite Habermas’s return to Kant, he still seems to avoid the excesses of an outright Kantianism that posits the subject as an absolute origin standing apart from the world. Just as in his treatment of Hegel, Habermas attempts to locate the Kantian side of this picture in a concrete historical context whilst preserving a foundationalist standpoint. In this case, the transcendental subject is also the concrete, embodied species and knowledge that has its roots in the concrete interests of everyday life. The constitution of knowledge is conditioned by the requirements for the production and reproduction of humanity’s social and material life. These requirements emerge empirically in the course of human evolution.
Yet once again Habermas is constrained by the spell of humanism and the subject-object framework. The move away from foundationalism is tempered by the need to avoid a reductive materialism. Habermas attempts to find a middle way between idealism and materialism, between 'Kant and Darwin'. Hence the idea of a naturalistically conceived transcendentalism. It has been pointed out that the picture is reminiscent of the traditional metaphysical vision of a true order of the cosmos which provides the ultimate grounds for thought and action. But it is also a peculiarly modern, post-Kantian picture. For now it is the natural interests of the species that are to provide the transcendental grounds of human existence. This remains in conflict with Habermas's historical awareness insofar as human nature in its transcendental role stands above the movement of history. And it is also internally problematic insofar as Habermas attempts to comprehend the species as both a transcendental subject and an empirical object.

For Habermas, reason in general has its genesis in natural evolution, but at some point in the process it transcends its origin and achieves a degree of autonomy. Humanity is both the empirical species that emerges from natural history and a transcendental subject that plays a constitutive role. Yet how can we see nature both as giving rise to humanity and as constituted by humanity through the technical cognitive interest? The human being appears as both object and subject of knowledge, both product and source. It is not surprising that criticism of Habermas's quasi-transcendentalism has oscillated between viewing it either as a relapse into uncritical objectivism or unreflective empiricism, or as a baseless speculation and a transgression of the limits of empirical knowledge. The conflict between subject and object internal to humanistic thought has reappeared in all its force. It is true that Habermas resolves this conflict at one level, insofar as he conceives of history in terms of the distinct dimensions of interaction and work, and can thereby hold the antithetical claims of Hegelian subjectivism and materialist objectivism apart - although the tension is still present in the indirect form of the abstractness of autonomy. But the quasi-transcendental framework in terms of which history is organised into interaction and work cannot itself rely on this distinction, and at this level the outright conflict between subject and object returns.

In general, Habermas is constrained by the framework of subject and object in
terms of which he proceeds. He seeks to save the notions of rational autonomy and emancipatory critique in the face of the threat of reductive objectivism. At the same time, he attempts to locate reason in a historical context. The resulting picture exhibits the tensions internal to humanism between the claims of the subject and those of the object. More than this, however, the subject-object framework makes it impossible for Habermas to carry through his intention of comprehending thought historically, of decisively breaking with metaphysics. On humanistic premises, immersion in history objectivistically undermines the possibility of critique, freedom and enlightenment, which depend on preserving in some sense the foundational subject. The result is that thought is once again subordinated to a transhistorical standpoint. Beyond the opposition between autonomous rational subjectivity and reductive objectivism, the humanistic framework within which Habermas proceeds results in a deeper tension between his desire to take history seriously and the apparent necessity of assuming a transhistorical standpoint.
CHAPTER SIX
Transcendental Hermeneutics and the Question of History

6.1 The Later Habermas and the Shift towards Kant

The preceding discussion indicates that Habermas's reformulation of critical theory
has not surpassed the problem of history encountered by the earlier critical
theorists. The problem is that, to the extent that the critical theorists proceed in
terms of the humanistic subject-object framework, they are unable to do justice to
their own historical awareness. Like them, Habermas wants to open philosophy
out to history, to undermine the dogmatic, ahistorical pretensions of foundationalist
metaphysics and to comprehend thought socially and historically. And like them,
he cannot simply abandon foundationalism. Without a normative conception of
reason capable of directing practices, it seems, human beings become subordinate
to heteronomous, objective determinations. As McCarthy puts it, even if
philosophy for Habermas is no longer free to credit itself with power over the
absolute, the possibility of a critique of existing practices requires that reason 'be
granted some measure of its traditional comprehensive powers'. (1) A normative
concept of reason is necessary for the preservation of enlightened critique and
autonomous human existence.

Habermas, like the earlier critical theorists, responds to the situation by attempting
to both comprehend reason historically and to preserve the 'heritage of
metaphysics' within history. Yet he too is unable to ultimately avoid affirming a
transhistorical standpoint. The historicising side of his thought is constantly
betrayed by the need to preserve the subject and reason from objectivism, from the
threat of subordination to objective historical processes. In Knowledge and Human
Interests, Hegel's emancipatory reflection is criticized in historical terms for
presupposing an ahistorical standard, but Habermas also reaffirms a transhistorical
standard for critique. The ahistorical Kantian subject becomes the concrete,
evolving species, but Habermas preserves a transcendental role for the species. As
long as the notion of history is articulated in humanistic terms, where the
alternatives are transcendence of or resignation to history, Habermas cannot carry
through his historicist intentions, and is unable to decisively break with First
Habermas's later work continues to call into question the pretensions of metaphysical foundationalism, of First Philosophy, in the name of the historical locatedness of thought. At the start of his recent work *The Theory of Communicative Action*, he reaffirms that after Hegel and Marx, philosophy 'can no longer refer to the whole of the world, of nature, of history, of society, in the sense of a totalising knowledge...All attempts at discovering ultimate foundations, in which the intentions of First Philosophy live on, have broken down.'(2) Yet this move towards locatedness and participation in the historical world continues to be met by a counter-move towards transcendentalism, the search for transhistorical theoretical grounds, the reaffirmation of foundationalist themes. Habermas is driven by the need to avoid the subordination of thought and human existence to the prevailing historical world, articulating a transcending point of view so as to preserve the autonomy and disinterested purity of reason and the possibility of critique and rational freedom.

Under this continuing pressure, the still relatively historicist character of *Knowledge and Human Interests* is left behind. The Kantianism that is already present in the earlier work increasingly comes to the fore, in the form of a highly theoreticist picture that stands in opposition to any historical locatedness and is distant from practical engagement. As Hoy observes, the later Habermas 'risks total surrender to Kantianism, and there is thus a question whether his recent transcendental turn removes him from the list of those who take history seriously.'(3) Let us now examine the modifications in Habermas's project of reformulating critical theory, through which his increasingly anti-historicist later picture emerges.

6.2 Revisions in Habermas's Project

In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, it will be recalled, Habermas drew back from a historical and materialist critique of Hegelian subjectivism, a critique which he saw as raising the threat of reductive objectivism. There, Habermas's overriding concern was to counter the objectivism of Scientific Marxism, as well as that of the earlier critical theory, by making a clear distinction between interaction and work.
The dimension of production was to be supplemented with that of interaction, in which the critical-Hegelian side of Marxism could be preserved in a communicatively reformulated form. The distinction was in turn secured on a quasi-transcendental Kantian basis, although the specifically Kantian side of Habermas’s thought was imperfectly articulated insofar as he tended to confl ate the critique of knowledge in general with emancipatory critical reflection.

Subsequently, Habermas distinguishes Hegelian ideology-critique from the Kantian critique of the conditions of knowledge in general, and reformulates his picture explicitly on the basis of the latter. At the same time he maintains his strategy of presenting the themes of idealist philosophy of consciousness in linguistic terms. The Kantian side of his thought is articulated in terms of an expanded conception of language. Communication is no longer understood merely as a supplement to the dimension of production, but also as the pervasive context or infrastructure of all human activity. The interaction-work distinction, in terms of which the activity of emancipatory reflection is located and preserved, is itself located in relation to the broader realm of ‘discourse’. By reflecting on the conditions of possible discourse, Habermas aims to uncover the ultimate conditions of rational thought, and in the process to secure within language the theoretical standpoint for the critique of ideologically distorted communication.

**Discourse versus Action**

The immediate stimulus for the emergence of the notion of discourse lies in the theory of cognitive interests itself. In Knowledge and Human Interests the Kantian side of Habermas’s thought took the form of a species-subject that constituted the objects of knowledge from transcendental perspectives, which were also identified with anthropologically deep-seated interests. With this construction, he attempted to preserve Kantian transcendentalism in a qualified, relatively concrete form. The problem that Habermas now perceives with his quasi-transcendentalism is that in tying forms of knowledge to empirical interests, the very notion of truth is undermined. The theory of cognitive interests, he now feels, threatens to reduce ‘logico-methodological complexes’ to empirical ones, to compromise the autonomy and purity of reason. For Habermas, truth cannot really be a ‘thing of this world’ without being undermined as truth, reduced to a function of contingent empirical determinations and interests.
Habermas’s response is to loosen the links between knowledge and interest, and to separate the dimension of object-constitution from the context in which truth is established. He distinguishes between ‘action’ and ‘discourse’. In the former realm we remain bound to the imperatives of everyday practical life and the pressure of immediate experience. Reality is disclosed in accordance with the constitutive interests embedded in everyday life-praxis, and the information acquired through sensory experience is articulated and exchanged in ordinary language communication. Discourse, in contrast, designates a realm of communication that is abstracted from the contexts of everyday life and ordinary interaction. Here we assume a reflective, theoretically detached position, in order to engage in rational argument and reflection. By ‘virtualising’ the pressure of experience and the constraints of action, discourse renders inoperative all motives except a cooperative readiness to come to a rational understanding. At this level judgement is suspended as to the existence of certain states of affairs and the rightness of certain norms in order to argumentatively establish their truth. Only in discourse can the truth of opinions and norms be established as ‘redeemed’ and valid knowledge established. (6)

Cognitive endeavours remain linked, though more loosely, to the concrete contexts of experience and action in which the technical and practical interests are pursued. Interests predetermine the constitution of scientific object-domains, the raw material of discursive argumentation, and affect the mode of validation pursued when the different kinds of facts are taken up in discourse. Moreover, discursively established statements are relevant only to specific contexts of application. Statements about things can only be translated back into orientations for goal-directed action, and statements about persons or utterances can only be translated into orientations for communicative action. Discourse thus preserves an indirect link with the practical context. It functions to mediate and guide the general strategies pursued in the realm of experience and action. This does not however remove the difference between opinions about objects based on experience related to action, and statements about facts based on discourse that is free of experience and unencumbered by action. (7)

The introduction of the notion of discourse alters Habermas’s conception of the interaction-work distinction. He is now able to refer to two kinds of discourse or two forms of rationality, the theoretical and the practical, which seek to validate
propositions relating to the objective and the intersubjective world (scientific theorems and practical norms) respectively. Scientific rationality is only one form of reason insofar as communicative rationality is not confined to the validation of scientific norms in a theoretical discourse, but extends to the redemption of practical norms. The notion of practical discourse allows for the possibility of a rational ethics, in which moral and practical questions can be decided with reason. And it is the possibility of a rational justification of practical norms which allows us to criticise actual norms, to the extent that they deviate from what would be arrived at on the basis of rational discussion alone.

More sociologically, the two forms of rationality are linked to the two basic dimensions of social life-praxis. Social systems adapt to outer nature via the forces of production, which involve technically utilisable knowledge. The expansion of control over nature takes place through the medium of 'utterances that admit of truth'. Instrumental action is governed by technical rules which incorporate empirical assumptions that imply discursively redeemable truth-claims. Social structures also adapt inner nature to society with the help of normative structures in which needs are interpreted and actions licensed and enjoined. The integration of inner nature is accomplished through the medium of 'norms that have need of justification'. These also imply a validity claim that can only be redeemed discursively.

Rational Reconstruction versus Critical Self-Reflection

The second key development in Habermas's thought, which is made possible by the first, is the clear distinction between the theoretical critique of knowledge and historically situated, practically engaged ideology-critique. Once again the problem Habermas perceives in his earlier formulation is that, when linked too closely to the practical, concrete life-context, the possibility of the autonomous, disinterested exercise of reason in its purest form is undermined. In order to do justice to reason's claim to universality, to reflection as a disinterested theoretical endeavour, which cannot be reconciled with the particularity of interested critique oriented towards social emancipation, Habermas now explicitly distinguishes between 'rational reconstruction' and 'self-reflection'. The former is bound up with discourse and the latter with ordinary language interaction embedded in the system of action and experience.
Emancipatory critical self-reflection 'brings to consciousness those determinants of a self-formative process...which ideologically determine a contemporary praxis of action and the conception of the world'. It is distinct from rational reconstructions, which 'deal with anonymous rule systems, which any subjects whatsoever can comply with, insofar as they have acquired the corresponding competence with respect to these rules...' Critical self-reflection is the historically situated, context-bound reflection on the particular self-formative process of a determinate individual or group. It makes conscious what was previously unconscious 'in a manner rich in practical consequences: analytic insights intervene in life...'. Rational reconstructions are not context-bound in this way, articulating transcendental - in the sense of general and unavoidable - conditions on which thought and action depend. Whilst they raise an unconsciously functioning rule system to consciousness in a certain manner, rendering explicit an intuitive 'know-how', they do not involve any practical consequences, any change in practices of reasoning and speaking.

Rational reconstructions can be viewed as a discourse which reflects solely on itself. Whereas ordinary discourses seek to validate propositions relating to the objective and intersubjective world, rational reconstruction involves a reflective return to the premisses of discourses and of thought in general. It is the wholly disinterested acquisition of pure knowledge, specifying the conditions under which the assertions of any discourse would be legitimate. The Kantian project of securing the foundations of scientific knowledge through transcendental reflection thus reappears in a linguistic form. In the form of a 'universal pragmatics', reconstruction identifies and reconstructs the universal conditions of possible understanding, of the attainment of truth within discourse. On Habermas's analysis, the attainment of understanding and truth consists in the achievement of an unforced consensus, based on purely rational recollections. This presupposes above all that dialogue is conducted in an 'ideal speech situation', in which no constraints are operating on what is said and in which each participant has an equal opportunity to participate.

Critical self-reflection in contrast remains bound to the system of action and experience. As the struggle to overcome self-deception, it pursues a direct interest in liberation from the constraints of systematically distorted communication. At the same time the emancipatory interest has to be distinguished from the more deeply
rooted technical and practical interests of the action context. Whereas the latter interests are permanently present, bound up with invariant dimensions of practical life, the emancipatory interest only emerges in relation to an object domain of practical life that has come into existence as a result of the institutionalization of social power, the domain of systematically distorted communication.\(^{(16)}\)

Emancipatory self-reflection is guided by theoretical interpretations whose claim to truth is redeemed elsewhere, in the normal process of discursive argumentation. Its operation is exemplified by the psychoanalytic dialogue, which effects both less and more than a discourse. On the one hand the partners in therapy do not occupy the symmetrical positions presupposed by normal discourse. Therapy aims to bring about the situation of equality upon which discourse rests at the outset. On the other hand, because it is more closely linked to the practical context, it does not concern itself purely with questions of validity. Successful self-reflection leads to a situation which satisfies not only the standard for valid truth but also the condition of personal veracity. To accept the psychoanalytic interpretation is not only to attain knowledge but in the process to see through self-deception, to comprehend one's true needs and interests, to be able to speak 'authentically' of oneself.\(^{(17)}\)

Although rational reconstructions do not directly pursue the interest in emancipation, they nonetheless retain an indirect relation to it insofar as reconstructions provide the normative-theoretical basis for critical reflection. The notion of distorted communication presupposes that of undistorted dialogue. The critical sciences, psychoanalysis and critical social theory, depend on our being able to reconstruct the general rules of communicative competence. Only if we understand why linguistic communication is at all possible do we have the theoretical basis for explaining systematically distorted communication and deviant processes of self-formation.\(^{(18)}\) More substantively, the 'ideal speech situation', as the precondition for engaging in pure dialogue, functions as the ultimate normative basis for critical theory. It provides a model for the ideal form of life. The vision of a wholly rational, wholly enlightened dialogue provides the counterfactual standard against which to measure distortions and corruptions in actual communicative practice.

McCarthy points out that whilst the distinction between rational reconstruction and situated self-reflection overcomes the ambiguity in Habermas's earlier conception
of reflection, it also reintroduces the gap between theory and practice, detached philosophical reflection and engaged practical ideology-critique, that Knowledge and Human Interests attempted to close. Reconstruction looks like a return to the traditional notion of disinterested reason, of First Philosophy. I have argued that this turn away from historical involvement is already manifest in the notion of situated practical critique Habermas articulates in Knowledge and Human Interests. Insofar as the project of historically locating thought seemed to lead, in Marx, to a reductive objectivism that destroyed the possibility of critique, Habermas drew back in order to restore, in the context of interaction, the activity of emancipatory critique as the Hegelian-style overcoming of historical alienation. And although he questioned Hegel's subordination of reflection to an absolute subject, concretely situating reflection as the comprehension of our forms of communicative practice in their social and historical emergence, he also restored the idea of an absolute standard for emancipatory reflection, an ideal of rational autonomy implicit in the structure of linguistic interaction.

The idea of an absolute standard for critical reflection stands in direct opposition to Habermas's historicist effort to comprehend forms of thought historically and materialistically. But rather than questioning the idea that participation in history threatens the possibility of critique and freedom, Habermas continues to see history as the problem. If social critique is the overcoming of irrational historical distortions, how do we know that the rational standard put forward to justify critique is not itself the contingent product of historical distortion? Habermas accordingly moves to decisively secure the transhistorical standpoint for social critique. The separation of discourse from ordinary language interaction, and of Kantian from emancipatory critique, allows him to articulate this standpoint in an emphatic manner through the rational reconstruction of the conditions of possible discursive understanding. On the one hand, this certainly represents a retreat from the relatively historicist notion of critique as emancipatory self-transformation, a return to a static, theoreticist Kantian foundationalism. Engaged critique becomes a derivative application of transcendental principles. On the other hand, emancipatory critique understood as the overcoming of historical distortions already represents a retreat from history, and points towards a transhistorical standpoint against which to measure these distortions. In this respect, Habermas's Kantianism is not a departure from, but provides necessary support for, his notion of engaged ideology-critique.
This more emphatically transcendental and theoreticist grounding for critical reflection is paralleled and made possible by Habermas’s more theoreticist approach to knowledge in general. At this level too, as we have seen, Habermas has also drawn back from history, in that he has turned away from his earlier, more concrete quasi-Kantianism in order to unequivocally affirm the possibility of autonomous, foundational rationality. Discourse, as uncontaminated, purely rational dialogue, is distinguished from the practical, interest-ridden context of action and experience. Philosophy is restored as the exercise of a disinterested theoretical reflection which establishes the standards for the attainment of knowledge, in the form of the analysis of the conditions of possible dialogue. And once again, in the face of the threat of subordination to extra-rational factors, Habermas turns his back on history and the effort to comprehend reason concretely and historically.

Habermas is careful to stress that the theoretical, Kantian side of his picture retains an at least indirect connection with the practical life-context and the activity of historically engaged critique. But it remains the case that with the notion of discourse he has retreated to a realm of pure rationality, one which operates on the basis of principles inherent in the nature of reason alone. He has assumed an extramundane standpoint, beyond the movement of history. And he has done so because immersion in history appears to undermine the notions of reason and truth, reducing them to functions of extra-rational determinations, and to deprive social critique of its condition of possibility. It is for the sake of the autonomy of reason in general and the possibility of critique and rational freedom in particular that Habermas turns to a theoreticist, transhistorical standpoint.

Not only does Habermas thereby fly in the face of his own historical awareness. The retreat into a self-enclosed realm of discursive reason, whilst it may counter the perceived threat of a reduction to heteronomous determinations, is untenable in its abstract lack of a concrete context. Autonomous rationality is reasserted in the form of a pure dialogue that excludes all extra-rational, contingent 'interferences', in order to proceed wholly in terms of rational considerations. Yet this vision of wholly enlightened dialogue, which is also put forward as the model for an ideal form of life, is inherently implausible. It supposes that we can step outside of all beliefs and commitments that might orient us, and, motivated only by a cooperative readiness to come to an understanding, determine or justify our concerns and
attitudes through pure systematic argumentation. (22)

At the same time, Habermas wants to say that, even in its most theoretical aspect, his picture is not an outright return to the unworldly transcendentalism of Kant. After all, he is not dealing with an isolated transcendental ego, but a community of discoursing speakers. While the rules of discourse are general and unavoidable presuppositions of possible understanding, their reconstruction calls for enquiries undertaken with empirical speakers. Rational reconstruction seeks to disclose conditions of possibility in a Kantian manner, and remains distinguishable from a wholly empirical analysis of language. But it does not sharply separate the transcendental from the empirical, as Kant did. General presuppositions of communication are to be established with the help of empirical enquiries, the amassing of data, the construction of hypotheses and so on, with respect to actual communicative practice. The a priori to be established is a 'relativised a priori'. For this reason, Habermas does not want to characterise his position as a 'transcendental hermeneutics' (Apel) but prefers the terms 'rational reconstruction' or 'universal pragmatics'. (23) Yet this final attempt to maintain a reference to history remains frustrated by the subject-object framework, by the need to preserve a transcendental standpoint in the face of the threat of empirical determination. This will become clearer in due course.

**Critical Self-Reflection versus Concrete Political Struggle**

I have suggested that, quite apart from his Kantianism, Habermas's concept of engaged, situated emancipatory critique in *Knowledge and Human Interests* already involves a turn away from the historico-practical context. This appears to be borne out by the third major revision in Habermas's picture, the supplementation of the category of 'critical self-reflection' with that of 'concrete political struggle'. Whilst Habermas restores emancipatory critique in the face of a reductive Marxist objectivism, he also draws back from concrete involvement. His notion of emancipatory activity seems to be reduced to the abstract activity of reflectively overcoming structures of distorted communication. It is not at all clear how analytic insights 'intervene in life' in a politically useful manner.

It will be recalled also that Habermas used the psychoanalytic dialogue to clarify the idea of self-liberating critique and thereby to provide a model for critical social theory. But doesn't therapy involve a suspension of the interests, involvements
and demands of everyday life? How is this model relevant to engaged, partisan political struggle? And furthermore, might not its straightforward extension to politics contain political dangers of its own? Habermas notes two possible objections. Firstly, there is Gadamer's objection that the generalisation of the psychoanalytic model contains the danger of an uncontrolled exercise of power by self-appointed elites, who dogmatically claim privileged insight into the delusions of others and the truth of their own standpoint. Secondly, the misgiving arises that the same model leads to a rationalistic denial of the militant element in the confrontation between opposed groups, because the pacifist illusion arises that critical insight alone will destroy the 'dominating dogmatism' of existing institutions.

Habermas responds to both these criticisms by making a threefold distinction, which incorporates the distinction already made between discourse and therapeutic dialogue. He distinguishes between 1) the formation and extension of scientifically rigorous theorems in discourse; 2) the organization of processes of enlightenment in which the theorems are applied and tested by the initiation of emancipatory self-reflection within 'target groups'; and 3) the selection of appropriate strategies for the conduct of political struggle.

At the first level, the theoretical claims made by critical theory about the socio-historical world are developed and tested discursively. But these claims can only be confirmed, in the last analysis, through their self-application by those to whom they are directed. This takes place in the context of a therapeutic dialogue between the theorist and the target group. In the process of reflection, the addressees overcome their ideologically distorted consciousness, and become enlightened as to their position in an antagonistic social system, and their true interests therein. This is not yet concrete political action. Processes of enlightenment only create agents capable of full participation in discussions concerning possible courses of action. The political decisions to be made in concrete situations are a matter for consensus amongst those who, in the awareness of their circumstances, are the only ones who can know what they are willing to risk, and with what expectations.

As McCarthy notes, there remain a number of prima facie disanalogies between the situation of the analyst and the patient, and of the social critic and the oppressed
group. For example, the desire for relief from suffering is a precondition for the success of therapy, but is it the case that social groups who do not experience profound dissatisfaction are incapable of political enlightenment? Or again, this suffering needs to be prolonged by the therapist if treatment is to be successful, but it is not clear how critical theorists are to manage this in relation to social groups over which they have no institutionally sanctioned control. Such examples might be multiplied endlessly, but McCarthy suggests that instead of taking the psychoanalytic model too literally, it ought to be understood as a 'rather broad metaphor' for the organisation of political enlightenment. It serves to highlight the normative goals of enlightenment - self-emancipation through self-understanding, the overcoming of systematically distorted communication, the strengthening of the capacity for self-determination through rational dialogue. Yet this very need to suppress the details and ascend to generalities suggests that psychoanalysis, far from being a concrete instantiation of Habermas's notion of emancipatory self-reflection, to which he can refer for support, has had this reading imposed on it despite a great many features that make it unsuitable for such an interpretation.

What needs to be emphasised here is not so much the use of psychoanalysis as a model for critical theory but rather the notions that have been imposed on psychoanalysis, namely the idea of critical reflection as the overcoming of constraints to communication, and the underlying normative ideal of unconstrained dialogue. Conceived as they are to counter the threat of subordination to objective processes, critique and freedom are detached from concrete involvement in the world, and take on an abstractly self-contained form. Once again without questioning the initial move, Habermas attempts after the event to maintain an at least indirect reference to the historico-practical context, in this case to actual political struggle. But it remains the case that concrete action has to be added, almost as an afterthought, to Habermas's picture. It is derivative and peripheral, to be entered into only after discussion and consensus. And political practice is at best a means to the institutionalisation of enlightened dialogue in society as a whole. Freedom remains primarily a matter of overcoming constraints to communication. The peripheral status of political practice reflects not only the abstractly self-contained character of Habermas's conception of liberation, but also the extent to which Habermas has turned his back on the project of opening philosophy to the socio-historical world.
A further issue has arisen here as to whether the subordination of a political practice to the ideal of enlightened dialogue might itself contain political dangers. Habermas himself warns against the dangers of self-appointed elites, the self-proclaimed 'bearers of enlightenment' who claim privileged insight into truth. Critical theorems can only be confirmed through their self-application by those to whom they are addressed. Yet it is these critical theorems that provide the measure of their addressees' self-delusion, and they are established by those who, by definition, are already enlightened. Habermas's whole system assumes the status of the guardian of truth and enlightenment, establishing the 'general and unavoidable' criteria for the attainment of truth. From this standpoint, he is able to call to account all that deviates from the true. Could this involve a form of power that is all the more difficult to detect because it is so dissimilar to manifest power relations, or a new ideology for intellectuals who, in the name of freedom from power and authority, establish the new power of discussion and the written word?(27)

It is not however possible to pursue such a critical approach at this stage, because for Habermas autonomous reason and subjectivity underpin the activity of critique. They cannot themselves be made the object of a serious political analysis without destroying the very possibility of critique and human freedom. At this point let us examine in more detail the notion of reason, reason as unconstrained, purely rational dialogue, that underlies Habermas's conception of critical activity.

6.3 Universal Pragmatics

The task of Habermas's universal pragmatics is to 'identify and reconstruct the universal conditions of possible understanding', the achievement of understanding being viewed as the telos of communicative action.(28) Through this rational reconstruction, Habermas aims to establish both the foundations of knowledge in general and the normative-theoretical basis for critical theory. The goal of critical theory, a domination-free form of life in which human beings exercise fully their capacity for self-determination, is inherent in the idea of understanding and anticipated in every act of communication. In order to make good such a claim, Habermas embarks on a 'logical analysis' of speech acts. This project differs from the usual forms of theoretical linguistic analysis which restrict themselves to the syntactic and semantic features of language, leaving the pragmatic dimension to
empirical investigation. Habermas rejects this restriction as an 'abstractive fallacy'. He holds that not only language but speech can be rationally reconstructed in universal terms. As he puts it - 'Like the elementary units of language (sentences), the elementary units of speech (utterances) can be analysed in the methodological attitude of a reconstructive science'. Universal pragmatics aims to describe the rules, mastered by any competent speaker, for the happy employment of sentences in utterances.

The pragmatic rules that Habermas's analysis discloses are the conditions for situating grammatically well-formed sentences in relation to reality. In its utterance, a sentence is situated in relation to 1) external reality or nature, about which one can make true or false statements; 2) the internal reality of intentional experiences, which can be expressed truthfully or untruthfully; and 3) the normative reality of society, against the background of which an utterance can be right or wrong. In fulfilling these pragmatic functions, speakers in uttering sentences necessarily make various types of 'validity claims', which they suppose are able to be vindicated. Apart from the claim to grammatical correctness, or comprehensibility, there is also the claim that what is stated is true; that a manifest expression of intentions is truthful; and that the speech act itself is right or appropriate. To come to an understanding in communicative interaction is for speakers to come to an agreement based on the mutual recognition of these validity claims. Interaction can continue undisturbed as long as the participants suppose that the validity claims they reciprocally raise are justified. The key claim that Habermas wants to make is that successful communication has a rational foundation, dependent as it is on validity claims which are cognitively testable, challengeable, and redeemable.

This links up with the distinction between action and discourse. In ordinary interaction the background consensus formed by the mutual recognition of validity claims is assumed naively, but the situation can arise where one or more of the claims becomes problematic. Problematic claims to comprehensibility and personal veracity can be redeemed in the course of further interaction, by the clarification of what one is trying to say, and by the demonstration of one's 'good faith' or sincerity over the course of time. When claims to truth or rightness become problematic, they can only be redeemed by breaking with ordinary interaction and entering into discourse. In theoretical and practical discourse, problematic truth and rightness claims respectively are rendered hypothetical and subjected to the force of
arguments. Although discourse represents a break with ordinary interaction, Habermas holds that normal interaction does contain an implicit reference to it. Insofar as interaction involves treating the other as a subject, it involves supposing that they know what they are doing and why, i.e., that they intentionally hold the beliefs and follow the norms that they do, and are capable of justifying them should the occasion arise.\(^{(32)}\)

Theoretical and Practical Discourse

Inasmuch as communication inevitably involves the raising and recognition of validity claims which, if challenged, can be discursively redeemed, Habermas's analysis of communication now turns to the logic of discourse. In the case of theoretical discourse, it is an analysis of the form of communication in which hypothetical truth claims are argumentatively examined, rejected or accepted, i.e., an analysis of the logic of truth.

Habermas's consensus theory of truth is an immediate implication of his notion of theoretical discourse. The theory holds that the truth of statements about the world consists in what would eventually be agreed upon as a result of discursive argumentation. The idea of truth inherently involves that of a rational consensus. The truth of a proposition in discourse 'means that everybody can be persuaded by reasons to recognize the truth claim of the statement as being justified'.\(^{(33)}\) With this, Habermas rejects the idea that truth-claims can be grounded through appeal to experience. In ordinary interaction, statements are made about objective experience. These statements presuppose truth-claims, which are supported by experience. But the redemption of these truth-claims requires a break from the realm of experience and action such that what was presupposed is now tested in discourse. This process takes place within the sphere of language, in the context of critical discussion. The redemption of the claim depends on the cogency of argument. Only in the context of critical discussion is experience called upon to support a disputed truth-claim.\(^{(34)}\)

The question now arises as to how we distinguish a discursively realised, rational agreement from one which merely appears to be rational. What are the criteria for a true as opposed to a false consensus, one that is the outcome solely of the force of better argument and not of accidental or systematic (ideological) constraints on communication? If there are no such criteria, we are still left with the problem of
what counts as truth. If there are, and these criteria themselves require discursive justification, we are moving in a circle. If they do not require justification, then we have transcended the consensus framework in establishing it. The way out, for Habermas, is to hold that it is part of the very meaning of speech and, in particular, of the discursive examination of hypothetical truth-claims, that a genuine consensus can be achieved and that it can be distinguished from a false one. Without such a supposition, the notions of discourse and truth are in danger of losing their sense. For Habermas, a consensus will be true, solely the outcome of rational argumentation rather than of contingent, extraneous factors, if none of the constituent elements of the argumentation are exempted from critical examination. The freedom to reflect in this unconstrained way requires that the situation of discourse is such as to structurally exclude constraints on argumentative reason. The analysis of discourse thus shows it to imply the supposition of an ideal speech situation. [35]

With respect to the idea of unconstrained reflection, there must be freedom to move to more and more reflective levels of argument. Firstly, we must be free to enter into a critical discussion in which we establish that an assertion is warranted by the data on the basis of general laws backed by observation and experiment. We must also be able, if necessary, to call into question and modify an originally accepted conceptual framework ('meta-theoretical discourse'). The cogency of argument depends on the linguistic framework in which it is formulated, in which data are selected and described, warrants are put forward and backed. Any assertion warranted in one frame of reference may nonetheless prove unjustifiable because the framework itself is inadequate. It must be possible to reflectively weigh up competing frameworks, for otherwise any argument can be charged with being contingent on the linguistic framework in which it was formulated. Finally, at the most radical level of argumentation ('critique of knowledge'), we reflect on the nature of knowledge as such. This requires a consideration of the role of knowledge in life, of the basic interests knowledge can serve. The freedom to move between these various levels of argumentation ensures that the consensus arrived at is a wholly rational one. [36]

The possibility of such uninhibited reflection depends on the absence of external and internal constraints to discourse, and this condition is specified by Habermas as the ideal speech situation. Communication is free from constraint when for all
participants there is a symmetrical distribution of chances to select and employ speech acts, an effective equality of opportunity for the assumption of dialogue roles. The conditions for ideal discourse are in turn connected with conditions for an ideal form of life, one that is free from the constraints and distortions brought about by the institutionalisation of social power. Although the conditions of actual speech generally differ from the ideal case, the latter remains as an ideal which actual speech situations can more or less approximate, and at the same time as a standard for the critique of actual social arrangements. Thus the analysis of the presuppositions of communication, the conditions of possible understanding, reveal a normative standard that is necessarily supposed or 'anticipated' in the very structure of speech, and which can serve as the foundation for critical theory. (37)

This position is further elaborated in relation to practical discourse. Habermas consistently seeks to show, against the positivists, that practical questions can be decided rationally. Whilst rightness-claims cannot be reduced to truth-claims, moral and political questions can nonetheless be decided with reason, through the force of better argument. The outcome of practical discourse can be rationally motivated, a justified consensus. Practical questions thus admit of truth, in an expanded sense of the term. (38)

The account Habermas gives of practical discourse parallels that of theoretical discourse. What is at issue now is not the truth of a statement but the rightness of a command or evaluation. In ordinary interaction, rightness is justified by indicating the relevant features of the situation that make something appropriate to do or say, against a background not of general laws but of general norms. Discourse is called for when these norms become problematic. They are justified not in terms of observation and experiment, but on the basis of the consequences and side-effects that the application of a proposed norm can be expected to have in regard to the satisfaction or nonsatisfaction of generally accepted needs and wants. (39) Because norms regulate the satisfaction of needs, what has to be agreed upon in practical discourse is the justifiability of a recommended regulation of need-satisfaction. In theoretical discourse, general laws are justified inductively from the evidence. The corresponding function in practical discourse is filled by the 'principle of universalisability'. Those norms are permitted which can find general recognition in their domain of application, insofar as they incorporate common needs and interests. (40)
The aim of practical discourse is to come to a rationally motivated consensus about problematic norms. The rightness of a norm means that the pattern of legitimate chances for need-satisfaction it regulates is something that all those who are affected by it want. Once again, the absence of constraints that would render the outcome of argument contingent can be characterised in terms of a freedom to move from one level to another in discourse. Apart from the freedom to enter into practical discourse, it must also be possible to call into question and if necessary modify an originally accepted conceptual framework (‘meta-ethical discourse’). As in theoretical discourse, the adequacy of the language system in which phenomena are described, data selected and arguments formulated, is a condition for the rationality of the consensus. The needs and feelings summoned as evidence in practical discourse are interpreted needs and feelings. The question is whether the language system in which they are interpreted is adequate. Adequate language systems permit those interpretations of needs in which the participants in the discourse are able to make their inner natures transparent to themselves, to ‘know what they really want’. Finally, at the most radical level of practical discourse (corresponding to the critique of knowledge), it must be possible to reflect on the dependency of need-structures on the state of our knowledge and power. We agree on interpretations of our needs in the light of what can be made and achieved. Whereas the critique of knowledge reveals the interests that knowledge serves, the critique of practical consciousness brings our needs and desires into line with our knowledge.\(^{(41)}\)

**Practical Discourse and Critique**

As before, the possibility of such unconstrained reflection presupposes that the participants of discourse are in an ideal speech situation, in which there are no constraints to discussion and all participants have an equal say. Ideally, all those affected by a proposed norm have an equal chance to participate in the process of practical deliberation. Under these circumstances, a genuine consensus can emerge, one that expresses a ‘rational will’.\(^{(42)}\) This vision of autonomous, rational will-formation through constraint-free discussion is the essence of Habermas’s notion of the ‘political public sphere’. It can now be defined as the institutionalised form of practical discourse, in which the claims to validity involving practical questions and political decisions are continually questioned and tested.
Such an institutionalisation of discourse has appeared historically in the form of the bourgeois public sphere, which was connected with the rise of representative forms of government, i.e., of bourgeois democracy. Although in practice this discourse fell short of the ideal, and ideologically mystified continuing inequalities under the appearance of universality, Habermas sees the bourgeois values of free speech and equal participation as presupposed, even if counterfactually, in all communication. They need to be instantiated in a more adequate form, in a genuine practical discourse. The analysis of the presuppositions of communication thus establishes, as inherent in speech, the ideal of a rational society that critical theory seeks to help realise. It also provides the normative-theoretical standards for the critique of ideology and of ideological forms of life.

The possibility of a rational justification for norms allows us to distinguish between justifiable norms and those which merely stabilise relations of social force in an ideological fashion. Ideology represents a pseudo-consensus, one that is actually the outcome of systematically constrained communication brought about by power relations. Barriers to communication both sustain the fiction that ruling norms are the outcome of a rational consensus and prevent its being found out. The norms would not be accepted if they were subjected to unconstrained discussion on the basis of our true needs and interests. A social theory critical of ideology can in turn identify and confront the normative power built into the institutional system of society by starting from the model of the 'suppression of generalisable interests'. It can ask: how would the members of a social system, at a given stage in the development of productive forces, have collectively and bindingly interpreted their needs (and which norms would they have accepted as justified) if they could and would have decided on [an] organisation of social intercourse through discursive will-formation, with adequate knowledge of the limiting conditions and functional imperatives of their society? This counterfactual construction underpins the critique of the actually existing social order.

6.4 Humanism, History and Metaphysics in the Later Habermas

Habermas thus appears to have secured a transhistorical standpoint for social critique in the face of all historical distortions. Presupposed in every utterance,
even if counterfactually, is the ideal speech situation which makes possible genuine rational consensus and the mutual understanding that is the telos of communication. The values of free speech, equality and unconstrained rational determination are inherent in the structure of speech. These are the values of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions, and indeed of the Enlightenment itself as a movement of socio-political liberation. The Enlightenment project of an uncoerced, rational organisation of everyday life is assured, at least in theory.

Yet Habermas's picture is problematic, and this is primarily because he seeks to assume a position above history. Even on its own terms, the utopian vision of a wholly autonomous, purely rational discourse is problematic in its abstract lack of a historical context. Discourse means that we reflect upon what is naively presupposed in everyday life. It implies that we can thematise, subject to argumentative evaluation, and meaningfully affirm or modify all our beliefs and commitments. No contingent, extra-rational influences cloud the purity of our reflections. Yet what could move or orient us in such an exaggeratedly self-conscious state? Reflection would lack any 'informing content'.

This is particularly evident in the idea of 'meta-theoretical' or 'meta-ethical' reflection. Here, it is supposed that reflective evaluation can extend to the framework in which data and desires are described and arguments formulated. But on what basis could such frameworks be judged? What could permit us to choose one framework over another? The attainment of this wholly self-conscious, rational state would mean the end of meaningful thought and action. Habermas wants to say that the standards of reflective evaluation are inherent in the structure of discourse itself, above all in the form of the ideal speech situation. Yet the notion of the ideal speech situation is highly formalistic, wholly lacking in substantive content. It provides no guidance for the conduct of discursive reflection itself. The pure form of rationality cannot generate concrete norms. (46)

The Kantian-style attempt to assume a purely rational stance free of contingency thus founders because of its very purity. I do not mean to say, however, that Habermas's picture is simply identical with Kant's unworldly transcendentalism. It remains the case that Habermas goes beyond the isolated, self-contained Kantian subject, turning towards concrete historical involvement. As McCarthy points out in his comparison of Kantian and Habermasian ethics, Habermas shifts the frame
of reference from a solitary, reflecting moral consciousness to a community of
speaking subjects engaged in general reflection.\textsuperscript{(47)} The former represents an
abstraction from the moral relationships of communicating individuals, in which the
universality, i.e., rationality, of moral principles has to take the form of a
pre-established synchronisation of the reflections of all rational beings. For
Habermas, the universality of maxims, or ‘action orienting norms and standards’
cannot be decided monologically. Whether a norm is universalisable, capable of
rational consensus, can only be ascertained in shared dialogue. Rather than
ascribing to all others any maxim I can will to be a universal law, I must submit my
maxim to all others for the purpose of discursively testing its claim to universality.
The rational will is not secured privately but is bound to communication processes
through which the common will is determined.

The second basic difference is that, for Kant, the autonomy of the will requires the
exclusion of all ‘pathological’ interests and inclinations. Any maxim determined by
contingent factors is as such unsuitable for universal legislation. If a maxim is to
be valid for all rational beings, it must be independent of my particular desires and
inclinations. The combination of an individualistic frame of reference and the
demand for universality manifests itself in the will/inclination dichotomy. The
rational will is set in opposition to particular inclinations. In Habermas’s
intersubjective framework, this dichotomy can be overcome. The aim of discourse
is to come to a consensus as to which desires and interests are generalisable.
Individual wants and needs cannot be excluded since it is concerning them that
agreement is sought. Of course, here too an interest may prove to be merely
individual and thus unsuitable as a basis for universal legislation. But, as
McCarthy puts it, ‘this unsuitability does not attach to it qua interest, from the
outset, but only qua ungeneralisable’\textsuperscript{(48)} The overcoming of the will/inclination
dichotomy reflects the idea that ‘inner nature’ is integrated into the intersubjective
structure of communication. Desires and needs can accordingly be shared and can
form the basis of socially binding norms and standards.

Yet Habermas only goes beyond the limitations of Kant’s isolated, strangely empty
subject in order to reconstitute the ideal of rational autonomy in communicative
terms, and the problems associated with this ideal reemerge at the linguistic level.
The Kantian picture of the self-enclosed moral self reappears in the form of an
unconditioned, wholly rational discourse. Language is not seen as intrinsically
bound up with wider social practices. Rather, social practices are viewed primarily in terms of communication relations. Hence Habermas can pass readily from the conditions of rational discussion to the requirements for the proper forms of social and political organisation. If the Kantian self represents an abstraction from intersubjective relations, the Habermasian community of speaking subjects is remote from the concrete social interactions of embodied human beings. In reasserting the ideal of autonomous rationality in communicative terms, Habermas merely shifts from a self-enclosed subjectivity to a self-enclosed realm of discourse. Similarly, the will-inclination dichotomy is not abolished but has simply shifted. Although desires and interests can now enter into the realm of rational ethics, they are only relevant insofar as they are common to all. The picture has no room for particular desires and interests, or for the contingent details and unavoidable conflicts of individual circumstances. Whenever Habermas turns to concrete phenomena in order to 'flesh out' his highly theoretical picture, it is only to the extent that they can in turn be absorbed into its abstract theoreticism.

This is true of the universal-pragmatic analysis of language in general. In the process of reformulating autonomous rationality in communicative terms, Habermas concentrates on analysing what he takes to be the fundamental form of language, communication oriented towards reaching an understanding. All other forms of language are seen as derivative. By bringing to light the conditions for communicative understanding, Habermas reveals the aspiration towards unconstrained discourse and rational consensus to be inherent in the very structure of speech. But Habermas's starting point already sets things up in his favour. It is not clear that language is always, or primarily, oriented towards reaching an understanding, or even that the notion of understanding comes to the same thing in different contexts.

Language cannot be reduced to a single model with a single logical status. As Bubner notes - 'one must not forget the important side of Wittgenstein that the plurality of possible language games can be grouped together only in loose family likenesses'. Despite Habermas's references to language games, his approach to language is more reminiscent of the Tractatus with its thesis of one logically correct, ideal language which is the measuring stick for all forms of speech. As in Habermas's picture, the Tractatus attempts to grasp the universal structure or essence of language, in order to fix the boundary within which meaningful propositions are possible.
In Wittgenstein's later work, this essentialist, even Kantian, approach to language dissolves in favour of the piecemeal analysis of concrete language games, complexes of language and practice with diverse grammars. The transcendentalist project is radically displaced in favour of a conception of thought and language as inherently social and historical. As we have seen, Habermas similarly wants to open philosophy out to the historical. However, the dissolution of thought and language into an 'irreducible plurality of incommensurable language games' is something that Habermas wants to resist. For Habermas, without a strong notion of rationality there is always the threat of falling into an uncritical subordination to existing ways of life. Habermas's notion of rational reconstruction is designed to salvage Kant's claim that there are universal and unavoidable presuppositions in thought, in terms of which autonomous rational reflection can proceed and critique can be undertaken. Hence his tendency towards a theoreticist and essentialist picture of language.

Certainly, Habermas does not want to straightforwardly return to a Kantian position, to abandon history. Or rather, in terms of language, he does not want to engage in a logical analysis of the rules of sentence formation in abstraction from actual linguistic performances. He seeks to discern universal structures at the pragmatic level of language, where language is an act of communication. With this, language is moved to the point of intersection with concrete activity. Yet Habermas does not follow through the project of analysing concrete language games in actual speech situations. Rather, he concerns himself with communicative action only insofar as it reveals the possibility of pure discourse in an ideal speech situation. Though he moves towards concrete activity he also turns back to the vision of a static transcendental structure underlying all linguistic practices.

There is consequently an unresolved tension within Habermas's thinking between his pragmatic concern with the actual use of language in concrete situations, and his desire to also preserve a transcendentalist posture. He wants to go beyond a purely logico-philosophical analysis of the syntactic and semantic features of language, which relegates the pragmatic dimension of language to a purely empirical analysis along the lines of sociolinguistics. He seeks, with the help of empirical analyses, to establish the general presuppositions of communication. Universal pragmatics, as the name suggests, wants to be both empirical and conceptual, concrete as well as universalist. The result however is, as Roderick puts it, that Habermas 'does
not situate his enterprise adequately as either a contribution to the philosophy of language (to the extent that this is an a priori approach) or as a contribution to linguistics (to the extent that this is an empirical approach), or as some combination of the two'. (32)

Habermas arrives at this situation because he is attempting to articulate a concept of reason that is concretely historical, but also wants to avoid the subordination of reason to contingent empirical determinations, its reduction to a function of the historical situation. For Habermas, a transcendental, ideal standpoint is necessary in order to underpin the possibility of reason and critique. At the same time he wants to avoid the ahistorical excesses of a metaphysical First Philosophy. He thus tries to articulate a concept of reason that is both historical and capable of rising above the existing situation in order to criticise it. For Habermas, thought is made more concrete, located in the socio-historical reality of empirical linguistic practices, whilst the rational core of metaphysics is preserved in the form of the ideal speech situation that is presupposed and anticipated in every act of speech. Yet it is not really possible to enter into history and at the same time to preserve a transcendental standpoint. Habermas enters into history only insofar as he also denies it in favour of a transhistorical perspective. The ideal speech situation of purely rational discourse remains above the movement of history. As Roderick puts it: 'Once one has accepted the 'outside'/inside' dichotomy, it is impossible to go down the middle'. (33)

The dichotomy that Habermas accepts is, I want to suggest, the opposition between the claims of subject and object, transcendental and empirical, autonomy and determination, that is characteristic of humanist thought. As long as Habermas works within this framework, his desire to comprehend reason historically is frustrated by the threat of objectivism. We need to question the assumption that participation in history objectivistically undermines the possibility of reason, critique and freedom. After all, the corresponding notion of freedom as rational autonomy represents an impossible demand. To be free in this sense, we would have to break entirely with the presuppositions of everyday life, in order to subject all that orients us to examination, and, if necessary, modification. But to assume such a position would be to destroy the capacity to meaningfully judge and act, to denude rational reflection of all orienting content.
What we in fact need to break away from is the humanistic subject-object framework of thinking. Only then can we escape the need for a historically transcendental standpoint, and unambiguously pursue the activity of a historical interrogation of thought. Because Habermas proceeds in terms of this framework, his historical critique of metaphysical absolutism is subverted by the need for transcendental norms, which seem to be indispensable for critical activity. And his critical theory, which starts out with the attempt to turn philosophy in a practical, engaged direction, ends up being subordinated to an extensive, theoreticist and transhistorical underpinning. His journey begins and ends with Kantian foundationalism.

The idea of questioning the humanistic framework itself brings us to the work of Foucault. I do not intend to pursue Habermas's thought in its most recent phase, represented by the *Theory of Communicative Action*. Although he now recognises and attempts to mitigate the relatively strong foundationalism that is present in the idea of the ideal speech situation, he does not abandon the transcendental project. He still wants to find a normative foundation for critique which is nonetheless internal to history, to articulate a position that is both immanent and transcendent. In other words, his thought remains constrained by humanistic presuppositions. I would like however to say one or two more things about the way in which the need for a transcendental basis for critique works against Habermas's intention of historically locating thought and subjectivity. It will be useful to consider briefly the debate between Habermas and Gadamer, which predates the development of universal pragmatics.

### 6.5 The Habermas-Gadamer Debate

Hermeneutics enters Habermas's picture in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, where he enlists its support in order to counter the objectivism of Scientific Marxism, supplementing the emphasis on material work processes with the hermeneutically informed category of linguistic intersubjectivity. At the same time he takes up the hermeneutic critique of idealism, shifting attention from isolated transcendental consciousness to shared linguistic practices. Gadamer also presents the hermeneutic themes of anti-positivism and the critique of idealism.
The debate between them centres around Gadamer's 'rehabilitation of authority and tradition'. For Gadamer, the process of understanding inevitably presupposes a background of preconceptions, meanings and traditions. The investigator cannot assume the status of an absolute ego that takes its situation totally in charge, for without a taken-for-granted framework there can be no understanding. A universal self-reflection or absolute reason that would enable us to stand over against our heritage is out of the question. Human existence and understanding are always finite, concretely historical, situated in the midst of pre-existing traditions. With this, Gadamer deliberately sets out to criticise the notion of enlightenment for what he takes to be its illusory rationalism. Enlightenment sets itself against tradition, as a fetter on human freedom that is to be broken by reason. Yet in Gadamer's view we cannot proceed without 'prejudice'. This critique of the enlightenment also sets Gadamer against critical theory, to the extent that the latter is committed to the enlightenment ideal of autonomous critical reason and the power of reason to overcome all dogmatism. (55)

In Gadamer's picture, the process of interpretive understanding involves the translation, into our own context, of meanings constituted in another universe of discourse. This requires that we remain open to the otherness of the material, avoiding the imputation of unsuitable standards that are revealed to be unsuitable in the process of interpretation. The aim is not to rid ourselves of all preconceptions but to find a common language that preserves the foreignness of the material whilst bringing it into intelligible relation with our own world. This picture carries over into Gadamer's account of historical understanding. The interpretive appropriation of our past always proceeds out of a tradition that has itself developed in the course of previous interpretations of the same subject-matter. We are already produced by the past that we seek to understand. And our present act of interpretation brings about a further development in the tradition to which both we and our object belong, a new unity of text and interpreter. Acts of interpretation are moments in the movement of history in which tradition is preserved and transformed, and the horizon of the present constituted. By participating in this movement we both understand the world and transform ourselves. We are not neutral observers, with a monopoly on truth and rightness, but participate in a dialogue in which we remain open to other beliefs and values. By appropriating them in the context of our own situation, we also learn from them, and extend our own lives. (56)
Habermas finds this picture too reactionary and conservative. It overemphasizes our dependence on pre-existing traditions, and restricts interpretation to a continuation of those traditions. Consequently, it becomes unclear how the present can criticize the ideological prejudices of tradition. Whilst Habermas agrees that reflection is always situated in a contingent context, he argues that reflective understanding, by grasping the genesis of the tradition from which it proceeds, can also free us from the sway of a dogmatic form of life. Critical reflection brings to light the relations of social force that have been institutionalized in the normative context out of which we speak, and enables us to dissolve their grip. In Habermas’s view, Gadamer restricts social inquiry to the interpretation of meaning because he does not see that language and linguistically transmitted traditions are themselves conditioned. Caught in a linguistic idealism, he tends to sublimate social processes to the realm of language. But language is not just a medium of intersubjective understanding. When viewed in relation to the socio-political and economic conditions of life, it becomes apparent that language is also a medium of domination, serving to legitimate and mystify relations of social power. The critique of ideology is called for, and this requires that we be able to surpass existing normative frameworks in order to call them into question.

This is an interesting line, because Habermas’s reference to our embeddedness in socio-historical structures can also be used to call into question the existence of any transcending standpoint from which to identify symbolic structures and forms of life as ideologically distorted. It represents, potentially, an even stronger argument for human historicity than does Gadamer. Habermas avoids this threat because although he refers beyond language to a realm of extra-linguistic processes, he also uses language to separate the realm of social relations from that of material work-processes, and to sublimate social relations to an all-encompassing linguistics. Although he refers to social power, he also sublimates it into ideologically deformed communication. To the extent that we are under the influence of forces operating behind our backs, they are understood by Habermas as distortions of communication that can be wholly overcome. The ideal of total rational autonomy is reasserted in the form of undistorted communicative action, which provides the normative basis for critical reflection. It is thus not surprising that for Gadamer it is Habermas who is the idealist, imputing to reflection a power that it could only have on Hegelian premises. Gadamer, in contrast, stresses the finitude of human existence and the historical particularity of reflection.
Habermas is unable to follow through his own intention of comprehending thought and reflection as historically located because such locatedness undermines autonomy and seems to raise the spectre of uncritical subordination to existing ways of life. Hence his objections to Gadamer's picture, which appears as conservative and reactionary. Although he accepts Gadamer's point that reflection cannot simply overleap the traditions out of which it springs, he also tends to view the traditional context negatively, as nature-like constraint embodying power relations, and looks forward to a time when we can rationally and freely determine the standards of social organisation. Gadamer can reply that there is no point of view from which all orienting presuppositions can be thematised and weighed up. This is an empty ideal, for without a taken-for-granted background, meaningful reflection and action are not possible. Although the notion of critique is still present, because we become aware of prejudices that limit understanding in the process of interpretation, the role of tradition is primarily the positive one of informing thought and action.

Habermas continues to see Gadamer's picture as threatening us with uncritical subordination to the world. His confrontation with Gadamer is a confrontation with history understood as embodying the threat of subservience to existing ways of life. It provides another stimulus for the development of universal pragmatics, which seeks to mitigate the situational character of reflection and ensure the possibility of critique by establishing an invariant standpoint presupposed by all language. In short, despite Habermas's subsequent attempts to mitigate his theoreticism, universal pragmatics represents in the first instance the attempt to draw back from participation in history, into a transcendental hermeneutics.\(^{(58)}\)

### 6.6 Beyond Habermas and Humanism

The debate between Habermas and Gadamer oscillates between the two poles of determination and freedom, between a taken-for-granted background that makes thought possible but limits autonomy, and a reflective clarification of this context that frees us from its sway but leaves us without informing content. The two sides are complementary but also stand in opposition to each other.\(^{(59)}\) Clearly enough, the debate can be located in the context of humanist thought, as another
manifestation of the opposition between subject and object. The hermeneutically informed category of linguistic intersubjectivity does not take us beyond this problematic.

Certainly, language allows both Habermas and Gadamer to engage in a critique of idealism, to pass beyond the limits of the self-contained, meaning-giving subject of idealism, without thereby falling into an objectivism that would simply reduce the human being to the status of an inert object. But they both tend to replace the self-contained subject with a self-contained realm of language, which like the idealist subject is abstractly unconditioned. Habermas can rightly accuse Gadamer of a 'linguistic idealism' which ignores extra-linguistic material conditions, but his own notion of interaction also suffers from this problem. The Habermas-Gadamer debate also indicates that the opposition between subject and object, transcendence and resignation, reappears as a problem within the linguistic realm, in the form of the contestation between cultural tradition and reflective critique. And in this context Gadamer is on strong ground when he accuses Habermas of an idealistic, overly Hegelian notion of reflection that abstractly ignores cultural contextuality.

The aim of the present discussion has not however been simply to point to the problem of ahistorical abstractness in Habermas's picture, but more importantly to indicate the manner in which the humanistic framework of subject and object within which he proceeds works against Habermas's own desire to open philosophical reflection to history, and pushes him in an increasingly transcendental direction. The move towards history, to an engaged, practical critique that comprehends forms of thought and subjectivity in their historical development, is constantly subverted by the need to counter the threat of reduction or subordination to objective determinations. Despite Habermas's own historical awareness, a transcendental, theoresicist standpoint seems to be required in order to ground the possibility of critique and freedom. At the same time, under these circumstances, we are unable to engage in a serious historical and political reflection on reason and subjectivity, for this seems to undermine the very possibility of critique. The possibility that claiming to speak in the name of reason and true human existence might itself contain political dangers cannot be pursued.

This is not to simply dismiss Habermas's thought. It represents the most sophisticated expression of humanism to date, providing an integrated account of
the humanist sensibility drawn from the entire spectrum of modern thought. To paraphrase Wittgenstein, if humanism were possible, it would take this form. By the same token, insofar as Habermas's picture remains problematic, this raises serious questions about the humanistic form of thought as such. In particular, insofar as Habermas is unable to do justice to his own historical awareness, he decisively confirms the limitations of humanism in this regard. Foucault, I want to suggest, provides a way beyond humanism, beyond the limitations of the subject-object framework. He does not seek to articulate the modern sense of the historical in a humanistic context, a task which is frustrated by the understanding of historical participation as objectivistically undermining the possibility of autonomous critique and freedom. Instead, he seeks to free historico-critical reflection from humanistic constraints, in order to historically question the subject that seems indispensable for critique and freedom. In so doing he departs from, but also in a certain way continues, the work of Habermas and critical theory.
CHAPTER SEVEN
Foucault's Historical Critique of Humanism

7.1 Habermas and Foucault

The consideration of Critical Theory from Horkheimer to Habermas has been undertaken primarily in order to indicate the problem that the notion of historical awareness poses for the tradition, and how the problem derives from the humanistic presuppositions of critical theory. To recapitulate, the critical theorists see the possibility of social critique and freedom as bound up with the initiating, foundational subject. This subject is at the core of the modern aspiration to enlightenment, understood as the effort to organise social life autonomously, in accordance with human reason. Critical theory seeks to save the subject and the enlightenment project from their contemporary reduction to mere instruments of the prevailing social order. And this requires the preservation, at least in some degree, of the notion of a substantive, normative rationality, capable of grounding forms of thought and action. By wholly rejecting metaphysics, enlightened thought undermines its own aspiration to human autonomy and falls into a one-sided, uncritical objectivism.

At the same time critical theory also seeks to give expression to the modern sense of the historical, which questions metaphysical foundationalism, ahistorical justifications of the prevailing social order, and looks to the historical emergence of forms of thought and action. But it cannot follow through this historicising approach. A historicisation that rejects transcending perspectives seems to itself raise the threat of uncritical subordination to objective social processes that critical theory wants to oppose. Yet to the extent that critical theory affirms a normative conception of reason and a foundational subjectivity in order to counter the threat of objectivism, it also flies in the face of its own historico-critical awareness. As long as thought proceeds in terms of the subject-object framework, it is unable to do justice to its own historical awareness, and falls back into a renewed metaphysics.

The way beyond this impasse is to radicalise the historico-critical approach, to provide a historical account of subjectivity and reason free of the idea that the
alternative is an objectivist determinism. To the extent that the latter is the correlate, the 'dark side' of the foundational subject, it does not represent a fundamental break from it. The threat of a 'one-sided', uncritical objectivism always refers us back to a foundational subjectivity. When the historicization of the foundational subject is viewed as raising the threat of objectivism, reflection turns back to a metaphysical standpoint that it never really abandons. More broadly, an enlightened break from metaphysics need not entail the objectivistic destruction of critique and freedom. It seems so only to the extent that thought in general is viewed in terms of the subject-object framework, and traditional metaphysics is understood to obliquely embody the claims of the subject. If this framework is seen as in fact the outcome of the peculiarly modern attempt to preserve foundationalist metaphysics in a subjectivist form, the historicist critique of subjectivism can be seen as a continuation of enlightenment as a confrontation with metaphysics.

Foucault's work, I want to suggest, represents a historical interrogation of the subject that escapes not only subjectivism but also its correlative objectivism. It frees historical reflection from the subject-object framework in order to pursue a historical critique of the metaphysical subject of humanism, and in the process to continue the enlightened critique of metaphysics in general. By the same token, thought subordinated to a metaphysical humanism and the subject-object framework, and as such unable to do justice to history, is unable to adequately comprehend Foucault's historicism. From a humanistic point of view, Foucault's historicist questioning of the foundational subject seems to lead only to an affirmation of social determination and unfreedom, to the dissolution of liberating critique and the emancipatory aspirations of the Enlightenment.

The idea of a humanist critique of Foucault is exemplified by Habermas's criticisms. He sees Foucault as falling into much the same kind of trap as do Horkheimer and Adorno in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. On Habermas's account, whilst seeking to preserve the organisational role of the subject and human reason, and to criticize modernity as falling short of its own rational ideals, Horkheimer and Adorno find themselves in a situation in which reason has lost all autonomous validity and become purely an instrument of social power. In the face of this, critique turns on reason itself, revealing it to have been fatally complicit from the start with worldly relations of instrumental domination. For Habermas,
however, this radicalisation of critique falls into a ‘self-referential paradox’. The ‘total critique of modernity’ calls into question the very reason that is the foundation of critical activity. It cannot but succumb to a global pessimism that sees no basis in modernity for emancipation.\(^{(2)}\)

Foucault is also seen as criticising not merely the corruption of reason in practice, in the name of a reason that is essentially opposed to power, but reason itself as an expression of power, and as thereby undercutting the basis of his own critical activity. He has ‘replaced the model of repression and emancipation developed by Marx and Freud with a plurality of power/discourse formations. These formations intersect and succeed one another and can be differentiated according to their style and intensity. They cannot, however, be judged in terms of validity which was still possible in the case of the repression and emancipation of conscious as opposed to unconscious conflict resolutions.\(^{(3)}\)

For Habermas, the issue is whether we should try to hold on to the emancipatory intentions of the Enlightenment, however feeble they may be in the present context, or declare the entire project of modernity to be a lost cause.\(^{(4)}\) Horkheimer and Adorno paradoxically try to hold on to a positive sense of enlightenment, despite their radical indictment of reason. Foucault, on the other hand, is seen by Habermas as one of the ‘young conservatives’ who aspire to a complete break with the Enlightenment and its aspiration to rational, autonomous existence.\(^{(5)}\) Yet antihumanist thought has not come up with any plausible alternative. It has only eliminated any basis for emancipation through rational critique, any defence against the reductive instrumentalisation of reason and life. Indeed, it celebrates the very instrumental reduction of reason that is the problem in the present context.\(^{(6)}\) For his part, Habermas aims to avoid reductivism and to preserve the progressive aspects of modernity, grounding the ideals and aspirations of the Enlightenment in the irreducible dimension of linguistic intersubjectivity.

From a Habermasian perspective it is mysterious that Foucault’s work is charged with a politico-critical fervour, and has an evident normative thrust. And even more mysterious that Foucault should take himself to be working, ultimately, in a critical tradition that derives from Kant and the Enlightenment. Habermas wonders how this can square with the radical rejection of Kant’s humanistic epistemology in
The Order of Things, and the subsequent condemnation of the 'sciences of man' as avenues of an insidiously operating disciplinary power. In short - how can Foucault's self-understanding as a thinker in the tradition of the Enlightenment be compatible with his unmistakable criticism of this very form of knowledge of modernity? For Habermas, Foucault has in the end seen the need, instructively enough, to return to the Kant that he earlier denounced. Hitherto Foucault has pursued a critique of power that denounces the 'analysis of truth', the Kantian search for the universal conditions by which propositions can be true or false. But in so doing, the former becomes deprived of the normative yardsticks that it would have to borrow from the latter. Habermas suggests that in the last of his texts, the force of this contradiction caught up with Foucault, 'drawing him once again into the circle of the philosophical discourse of modernity that he thought he could explode.'

It seems to me, however, that Habermas's interpretation of Foucault in fact draws the latter into the humanist framework of thought internal to Habermas's own philosophy. It is in this context that any move to critically undermine the foundational subject destroys the very possibility of critique and enlightened freedom, and leaves us only with an uncritical, deterministic objectivism. This is what underpins Habermas's critique of modernity as a one-sided absolutisation of instrumental reason, subservient to social processes, and impels him to recover the Enlightenment tradition of practico-critical, emancipatory reason that promotes human sovereignty. And Foucault's work, interpreted in these terms, also progresses from a wholly objectivistic, 'instrumental' picture to final reaffirmation of the claims of the subject. Yet, as we have seen, the subject-object framework also prevents Habermas from doing justice to his own historical awareness, to modernity's break from dogmatic, foundational First Philosophy in order to comprehend forms of thought in their historical emergence. It is not possible to reflect on the foundational subject of humanism as a 'thing of this world', carrying within it a history of domination and violence, without, it seems, undermining the possibility of critique. As a result, the subject eludes any serious politico-critical or historical consideration, and can only be affirmed in its foundational role.

Habermas's insistence on the indispensability of the foundational subject, on the basis of which he calls Foucault to account, can be seen as ironically illuminating the constraints that Habermas's own picture places on critical reflection, which is
to say, the limits placed on historico-critical reflection in the context of humanist presuppositions. In turn, Foucault can be seen as freeing historico-critical reflection from humanistic constraints in order to continue the activity of a historico-critique of metaphysics. On this reading his reaffirmation of Kant and the Enlightenment, far from being a return to humanist presuppositions, is in fact the most radical expression of anti-humanism. It implies that the foundational subject can be brought into question without destroying the notions of critique, freedom and enlightenment, i.e., that humanism is not identical with enlightened modernity. What is being rejected is not critique, freedom or enlightenment per se but the specifically humanist version of these notions, which grounds them in foundational subjectivity.

This escape from humanism and the subject-object framework also allows Foucault to pass beyond the problem of the abstractness of autonomy that is internal to humanist thought. The notion of freedom that Foucault rejects is problematic on its own terms. As the overcoming of all heteronomous determinations in order to attain human sovereignty over the world, humanist freedom places impossible demands on human beings. It supposes that we can reflect on and determine everything, including all that might guide us in our determinations. By eluding all concrete determinations, the state of freedom lacks any substantive content, any informing historical context. As Habermas's picture itself demonstrates, the ideal of total rational autonomy is empty and formalistic. And to the extent that the activity of enlightenment is made to depend on this ideal, it too is in danger of becoming an empty notion. By breaking with the alternatives presented by the humanist framework, Foucault is able to articulate a conception of enlightened freedom that is not inhumanly abstract, but within the grasp of concrete, historically located human beings. Let us now consider this picture in more detail.

7.2 Foucault and the Reclamation of History

Foucault's work is characterised by a philosophical and critical deployment of history, a historical analysis designed to rediscover the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of force, strategies and so on which at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal and
necessary'. What seems to be stable, unified and eternal in thought and life is discovered to have been constituted, piecemeal, out of alien forms. Historical analysis thus introduces an unsettling note of contingency into our situation. It 'serves to show how that-which-is has not always been' but was formed in the course of a 'precarious and fragile history'. And by following the 'lines of fragility', the heterogeneous layers in the apparent unities of the present, it is possible to grasp why and how 'that-which-is might no longer be that-which-is' and thereby to 'open up the space of freedom understood as a space of concrete freedom, i.e., of possible transformation'. Historico-critical reflection thus strips historical practices of any essential unity and stability, reveals how they come to be set in place, and opens up the possibility of transforming them.

With this, Foucault stands in opposition to the 'continuous' or 'traditional' understanding of history which seeks to discern immobile forms beneath the historical world of accident and succession, to impose a metaphysical unity, order and purpose on historical practices. History here is the continuous unfolding of an underlying essence. It is above all the founding subject that confers this unity on history. Continuous history is the 'indispensable correlate' of the founding subject, of 'Man' as the originary maker of events. History carries with it the promise of a finality in which everything that has eluded the subject will be restored, and humanity will attain the sovereign form of historical self-consciousness. Critical reflection here measures the extent to which historical forms of life fall short of their ideal expression. In Habermas's picture the transhistorical telos takes the form of the ideal speech situation, the unchanging essence or standpoint inherent in language. This provides the norm against which to measure the degree of deformation in actual forms of life, the extent to which humanity's self-formative process has miscarried: as well as the everpresent promise of an ideal form of life in which all deformation is overcome and humanity will organise its historical life in terms of undistorted communication.

To unified history, Foucault opposes a form of analysis that is uncompromisingly historicist and anti-metaphysical. Genealogical analysis or 'effective' history forgoes the pursuit of foundations, of immutable forms and metaphysical finalities beyond or beneath history. There is no founding subject to confer unity on historical practices or to justify their critique. Instead, genealogy uses historical analysis to critically disperse all apparent unities and identities by examining their
'descent', the lowly, contingent multiplicity of unique events that stand behind them. It aims to identify the accidents, the minute deviations - or conversely, the complete reversals - the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that give birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents. In so doing 'it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself. At the same time genealogy traces the 'emergence' of historical forms. They are not the final term of a process of development in which an obscure purpose comes to realisation, but the momentary, transitory manifestation of an unending play of dominations and conflicts.

Foucault goes beyond the traditional picture of history precisely in order to be historical, to do justice to history. Genealogy gives expression to the 'historical sense' that traditional history in fact subverts. The latter imposes a metaphysical standpoint that absorbs the diversity and movement of history into a 'totality fully closed upon itself'. In particular, the humanist picture subordinates history to a supra-historical subject, viewing history as the objectification or alienation of this subject. Thought turns to history only insofar as history points back to the transcending subject as its completion. For Foucault, once the historical sense is 'mastered' by a supra-historical, absolutist perspective, metaphysics is able to bend it to its own purpose. Properly speaking, however, history opposes metaphysics. The historical sense 'can evade metaphysics and become a privileged instrument of genealogy if it refuses the certainty of absolutes'. Effective history is without ahistorical constants or fixed landmarks, placing within a process of development everything considered immortal in human existence. Genealogy works to dismantle everything that we use to confer unity and purpose on history. It thus reverses the subordination of history to metaphysical givens, a strategy of reversal that runs throughout Foucault's work. For example, instead of starting from an ahistorical conception of human sexuality, and writing a history of its repression and alienation, Foucault looks to the historical practices that give rise to this notion of sexuality in the first place.

It is through the reclamation of historical awareness that Foucault pursues the
philosophical activity of critical thought, of calling taken-for-granted presuppositions into question. The process of genealogical 'eventalisation' means 'making visible a singularity at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness which imposes itself uniformly on all'. What is given to us as essential, self-evident and universal in the conduct of thought and life is shown to be historically emergent and contingent, the product of arbitrary constraints, cultural and social determinants. By undermining the categories in terms of which we proceed, historical reflection frees us to imagine different practices, different forms of life. Genealogy is thus directly opposed to the metaphysical attempt to justify, ground or legitimate forms of life in terms of ahistorical categories, to interpret history as a whole in terms of them. When metaphysical absolutes are used as the starting point for comprehending historical practices, history is only grasped insofar as it appears to refer back to, imply or culminate in them, and so the presupposed starting point remains unquestioned. Thought moves in the circle of the 'closed totality'. Foucault's historicising strategy is a critical reversal of the metaphysical appropriation of history, no longer viewing history in terms of ahistorical forms, but historically interrogating what is given as absolute and necessary in order to promote the transgression of the forms under which we currently proceed.

Foucault's reversal, it should once more be stressed, is not a move within the subject-object framework of humanism. Humanism exemplifies the subordination of historical awareness to a suprahistorical perspective. It is unable to comprehend history except in terms of an objectivism, a denial or alienation of the subject that refers us back to the foundational subject. Foucault refuses to reduce the multiplicity and movement of history to a function of the subject, to a 'Hegelian skeleton'. Nor does he embrace a structuralism which inherits the subject-object framework in its attempt to displace the organising subject with objective structures. For Foucault, 'structuralism formed the most systematic attempt to evacuate the concept of the event, not only from ethnology but...in the extreme case from history'.

Foucault's historical awareness goes beyond the constraints of the subject-object framework, calling into question the humanist subject without falling into its correlative objectivism.

Consequently, his work is not as destructive as first appears. As Rajchman points out, by questioning the foundational subject, Foucault is not seeking to dismiss all
of modernity's norms, ideals, aspirations and values. He is questioning their hypostatisation in universal-transcendental terms, a move which protects them from any critical questioning or rethinking. Above all, he is not rejecting the modernist aspiration to critique and enlightenment. What he rejects is the tendency to subordinate critical reflection to a foundational standpoint, a final truth, a renewed dogmatism. In this he takes up an anti-metaphysical, historicising line of thought whose immediate inspiration is Nietzsche but which I have tried to suggest is also present in Hegel, Marx, Horkheimer and Habermas. (22)

7.3 History, Subjectivity and Freedom

There are two broad aspects of Foucault's historicising approach that I would like to bring out. Firstly, the idea that by no longer starting from the foundational subject, Foucault is able to bring historico-critical reflection to bear on areas that humanism systematically privileges and removes from historical comprehension. Above all, instead of viewing the subject as the indispensable basis for socio-historical comprehension, the actual or potential source of social practices, he seeks to investigate the ways in which human beings are 'really and materially' constituted as subjects. For Foucault: 'One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.' (23)

What Foucault proposes is strictly speaking inexpressible within the horizon of foundational humanism - that the subject has a history. This is not history as the subject's estrangement or objectified alienation from itself, which will be overcome when our integrity is restored; nor a one-sided objectivism that entirely dissolves the subject into objective determinations. History is not construed in negative terms, from the point of view of a privileged subject; rather, the subject is construed in positive terms, from the point of view of history. Foucault takes the notion of the subject seriously, as a reality rather than a fictitious epiphenomenon,
but suspends judgement as to the privileged role and status claimed for it in the humanist picture. He does not assert that there is an essential self underlying and unifying our practices, or seek to retrieve this true self from historical distortions. Instead he asks how we have historically come to take ourselves as subjects of what we think and do, as possessing an essential subjective identity. And instead of justifying or criticising current practices in terms of an essential self, he examines the concrete role that selfhood plays in social practices and institutions. Critical reflection now seeks to reveal the constraints, risks and dangers involved in being such a subject. Foucault sums up his position by saying - 'I have tried to get away from the philosophy of the subject, through a genealogy of the modern subject as a historical and cultural reality. That means as something that can eventually change, which is of course politically important'.

Foucault's historical interrogation of the humanist subject is also a historicisation of the notion of reason that accompanies this subject. That is, reason as providing the organisational norms for a 'true human existence', in which humanity organises its social life in accordance with its essential rationality. This is of course a central theme in critical theory. Foucault questions the traditional presupposition of a timeless, essential rationality, and history conceived as the progressive realisation of this rationality. Nor does he see reason as having at some point 'lost sight of itself', turning in the self-limiting direction of an instrumental rationality - which motivates us to remember and reclaim 'reason's true project'. Foucault aims to treat the question of reason absolutely historically, to provide a materialist, contingent history of the emergence of contemporary forms of rationality. The history of reason is that of a whole series of redirections, modifications and transformations, interwoven with shifting historical practices, which produces what counts as rational at any particular time. No one form of rationality is true reason, and Foucault does not judge historical practices as being more or less in accordance with an ideal rationality. He examines the practices in which rational norms actually figure, and the role of establishing 'the true' in specific historical practices. For Foucault truth is a historical and political phenomenon, a 'thing of this world'.

Foucault's treatment of reason is rather shocking from a humanistic point of view - 'I think one must restrict one's use of this word to an instrumental and relative meaning. The ceremony of public torture isn't in itself more irrational than
imprisonment in a cell; but it's more irrational in terms of a type of penal practice which involves new ways of calculating its utility, justifying it, graduating it, etc. One isn't assessing things in terms of an absolute against which they could be evaluated as constituting more or less perfect forms of rationality, but rather examining how forms of rationality inscribe themselves in practices or systems of practices and what role they play within them.\(^{28}\) This is not however to dismiss reason as merely an instrument of the prevailing order, as having lost its autonomy and descended into irrational subservience. Once again it is a form of understanding which is not really possible within humanism. That is, a historical account of reason without the element of negativity, the sense of corrupting reductivism or deformation, that refers back to a privileged metaphysical notion of normative rationality. Reason has been 'brought down to earth' not in order to dissolve it or dismiss it as irrational but to reflect on it in its historically concrete and contingent forms.

Foucault breaks free from the constraints of the humanistic framework, and the 'blackmail' engendered by its narrow alternatives - you either accept a transhistorical, absolutist conception of reason, or you fall prey to irrational subservience. This is also a broader rejection of the terms presupposed in Habermas's critique of Foucault, the 'simplistic and authoritarian alternative: you either accept the Enlightenment and remain within the tradition of its rationalism...or else you criticise the Enlightenment and then try to escape from its principles of rationality...And we do not break free from this blackmail by introducing "dialectical" nuances while seeking to determine what good and bad elements there may have been in the Enlightenment.\(^{29}\) For Foucault 'it is extremely dangerous to say that Reason is the enemy that should be eliminated' but 'it is just as dangerous to say that any critical questioning of this rationality risks sending us into irrationality'.\(^{30}\) In passing beyond these alternatives to a historical interrogation of reason, Foucault sees himself as continuing a form of reflection that is at the heart of enlightened thinking - 'I think that the central issue of philosophy and critical thought since the eighteenth century has always been, still is and will, I hope, remain the question: What is this reason we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits, and what are its dangers?\(^{31}\)

The second theme that I want to bring out, particularly in the final chapter, is the idea that by breaking with humanist presuppositions, Foucault is able to turn
thought in a decisively practical direction and to articulate a conception of freedom that is inseparable from concrete activity, from the activity of 'revolt'. Humanism understands freedom in terms of acting in conformity with an essential subjective nature. It proceeds from a privileged basis which is above reproach, which can be used to confer legitimacy on forms of political struggle insofar as they embody it or make it practical. We can envisage a situation in which freedom has been achieved, institutionalised, in which there is no further need for struggle. For Foucault there are no transhistorical, theoretically secured norms to sustain this sort of picture. There is no question of making practical a theoretical ideal, for theory is already practice, and norms already figure in concrete practices. There is thus no standpoint which is above question, and no form of life in which freedom is guaranteed. This does not entail a quietism, a pessimistic resignation to the existing order. On the contrary, Foucault's position is one of 'hyper-activism', as he puts it. It is not that everything is 'bad' or irretrievably corrupt, and that there is nothing to be done; rather, nothing is ahistorically, intrinsically good or beyond question, everything is 'dangerous', and there is always something to be done.

Foucault's freedom is not the realisation of an ideal, final state, a true human existence, but something that has to be constantly exercised through actively contesting what is presented as normal, rational or legitimate in our practices. Struggle does not proceed from a point beyond history but is the activity of revolt or non-compliance within the context of prevailing practices. What are primarily to be opposed are not practices which deny or distort our true subjective nature, but practices that classify and define us, imposing a true nature on us. The aim of political struggle is not to bring historical practices into accordance with this nature but to resist and change historical practices which constrain us precisely by imposing a seemingly essential identity upon us. At the heart of the struggle for different forms of life is the effort to break away from that which we take ourselves to be. A genealogical critique that reveals the historical emergence and contingency of what seems to be eternal and necessary in ourselves and our existence can thus join hands with a freedom understood as a refusal of what we are; and also as an experiment with the possibility of transgression, of going beyond the limits imposed on us, of rethinking our modes of thought and action. I will return to this second theme in the final chapter.
7.4 The Subject and Power

From Discourse to Power

Foucault’s history of the subject, as we saw in the second chapter, initially takes the archaeological form. Archaeology introduces the idea of a historical analysis that suspends the idea of the human being as a foundational subject, the basis of knowledge and action, the originary maker of events; and the correlative conception of historical locatedness as a denial, alienation or objectification of the subject, to be overcome in order to attain clarity and mastery concerning ourselves and the world. The human sciences comprehend human beings as objects of knowledge, historically determined beings, only insofar as they proceed to that which makes all knowledge and history possible - a transcendent standpoint that itself lacks any orienting background or historical context. Archaeological analysis in contrast uncovers the conditions of knowledge in a historically emergent, contingent and anonymous body of discourse. Or more exactly, in an ‘episteme’ or ‘archive’, a framework of rules that governs the truth and falsity of sentences that can be uttered in a particular discourse. It is not the subject that determines what can be said or known, but the historical order of discursive practices that permits human beings to be concretely and positively situated as speakers, and to assume various ‘speaking positions’. This detranscendentalising, historicising approach is not a one-sided, reductive objectivism that continues to presuppose the founding subject. It is a radical ‘decentring’ of the subject, placing it in the context of a historical reflection unencumbered by transcendental subjectivity.

Yet, as already noted in the second chapter, the archaeological approach does not entirely escape from a transcendent and totalising form of thought. Though it seeks to bring to light the historical emergence of forms of discourse, it also sees discourse as capable of constituting a historical epoch in its totality. Archaeology seeks to comprehend and clarify the discursive rules underlying an entire social reality. This works against Foucault’s historicising strategy, subordinating social reality not to a transcendental subject but to a totalising theoretical standpoint nonetheless. And the archaeological standpoint similarly suffers from a lack of orienting background or historical context. Habermas’s reflections culminated in an autonomous, self-contained realm of language whose conditions of possibility could be exhaustively articulated. For Foucault (like Wittgenstein), this sort of
Foucault as genealogist goes beyond the archaeological picture by decentring discourse, locating it in the larger context of non-discursive practices. The episteme gives way to the more heterogeneous ensemble of discursive and non-discursive practices, the 'dispositif'. The historical conditions for the emergence of the human sciences are now to be found in the non-discursive practices in which they figure, and in particular practices of power exercised over human beings. The questions of the subject and of knowledge become political ones, their historical interrogation a manoeuvre in a political situation. It is through the historical development of forms of power, interwoven with the emergence of forms of knowledge, that human beings are constituted as subjects; and can take their place, as agents and 'relay points' in a field of power-knowledge. Foucault thus leaves behind a humanist politics based on a privileged conception of subjectivity, in order to examine the historical emergence and role of the subject. As an investigation of unnoticed practices of power, the historical comprehension of the subject takes on a politico-critical force.

Foucault's understanding of social power reflects his anti-humanistic historicisation of subjectivity. Power does not presuppose a founding subject, which power denies or represses, distorts or objectifies. It is not conceived negatively, in relation to a true human existence. Nor is the political task a revolutionary overthrow of the oppressive order, in order to seize power and to reorganise society as a whole in accordance with our essential nature. By leaving behind a privileged notion of subjectivity, Foucault is able to comprehend power in its positive, productive role. Historical practices of power constitute forms of subjectivity. Through their operations 'certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, come to be identified and constituted as individuals'.(34) And the traditional view of knowledge as only existing when we escape from power, in which truth is the 'reward of free spirits', is also brought into question. Rather than ideologically corrupting knowledge and falsifying subjectivity, or needing to be subordinated to our true interests, the exercise of power is interwoven with the development of true knowledge about human beings.(35) By going beyond both the privileged subject and the correlative idea of power as negative and objectifying, Foucault breaks with the representation of power in liberalism, Marxism and neo-Marxist critical theory, as well as with traditional conceptions of
Foucault also wants to get away from the centuries-old representation of power in terms of 'sovereignty'. That is, power is understood as deriving from a central, sovereign figure, and is exercised in the form of legal prohibitions and interdictions. In the modern, post-monarchical period at least, the sovereignty-representation does not capture the operations of power. Humanistic thought has however appropriated and preserved this conception in the idea, present in liberal, Marxist and neo-Marxist pictures, that some version of 'the people', of true individual/social human nature, is constitutive of what is, or should be, sovereign. And the idea of power as legal prohibition is appropriated in an understanding of power as denying or distorting human nature.

Liberalism and Sovereignty
The liberal picture rearticulates the notion of sovereignty by grounding it in the multiplicity of individual subjects. The individual is a unitary atom, for which power is a right possessed like a commodity. Power can be ceded in order to constitute the centralised authority of the state, the representative regime. Legitimate political authority is that collectively constituted power that puts into operation the will of all. Power thus derives from a controlling subject, the sovereign will of the people, which enacts and enforces legal prohibitions; and it is exercised over individuals who accept the constraints insofar as they derive from their own collective sovereignty. We are free because we are the ultimate source of the laws that govern us. Oppressive power is that imposed on the people by regimes that are unrepresentative or 'partial', imposing constraints which frustrate the expression of the common will.

This humanistic-sovereignty representation of power masks its real operations in the modern context, its positive, productive and non-legal character. Foucault presents an account which does not presuppose a privileged subject, either as the source of power or as that which is denied by it, and which is not a legal relation of sovereignty and obedience established between subjects. He shifts the focus from subjects to the concrete relations or practices in which they figure. Power is not something possessed, transferred or deployed but something exercised, wholly consisting in its 'real and effective' practices. It only exists relationally, insofar as it is exercised in the interplay of nonegalitarian relations. So conceived, power is
no longer seen as centralised, in the hands of some sovereign group or regime, and imposed on those who do not have it and must submit to it. It is rather a dispersed multiplicity of practices, produced in every social relation from one point to the next, circulating in a net-like organisation that is coextensive with sociality. Foucault uses the image of a battle, a mobile, shifting series of conflicts between opposing forces, an interplay of tactics, strategies and manoeuvres. Through its operations power invests human beings, behaviours and discourses with a strategic utility, by virtue of which they also function as vehicles of power, elements in its articulation. Individuals are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. (38)

From this perspective the historical breakdown of the absolutist monarchy and the rise of the bourgeois democratic state can be reconceptualised. The latter cannot be adequately grasped as a democratisation of sovereignty, in which a multiplicity of subjects come together to determine the sovereignty that unites them. It is not a triumph of collective self-determination. There is indeed a shift at the juridico-political level of society towards a formally egalitarian juridical framework, but this is accompanied and underpinned by the spread throughout society of non-legal, non-sovereign forms of power, which ensure in practice the submission of 'forces and bodies'. Through a detailed investment of these forms of power in the body, human beings are individualised, made identifiable and manageable, constituted as individual subjects. The individual put forward as the ideal basis of democratic self-determination is in fact the product of practices of subjection. For Foucault, the free individual conceived by liberal theory as the self-sufficient basis of the social order is indeed an illusion: but it is also a concrete historical reality, fabricated by a specific technology of power. (39)

For a representation of the social that relies on the notion of the free subject, Foucault's positive conception of power appears as a radicalised heteronomy, an absolute triumph for oppression. The free subject, it seems, is intrinsically heteronomous, constituted by power. (40) Yet it remains the case that the subjectivistic perspective is unable to offer a serious historical and political analysis of the subject, precisely because to do so seems to undermine the possibility of social freedom. And because it lacks a historical context, the notion of freedom that rests upon the humanist subject is itself untenable in its abstractness. It places an impossible explanatory burden on individuals to see them as the actual or
potential basis for social organisation in its totality.

In Foucault's historicist picture, no one need be responsible for the 'intricate mosaic' of power, no overall project need preside over its development. This does not mean that power-relations represent a 'mindless' objective mechanism to which we must resign ourselves. Foucault holds simply that power relations are not the effect of another instance, a subjective plan or decision that precedes them. Instead of grounding power in an underlying, unifying intent, Foucault sees intentions and objectives as interwoven with, and inseparable from, the concrete multiplicity of practices. He describes power as 'anonymous' not because it lacks human agents but because no underlying, overall plan is being implemented. Embodied, piecemeal objectives play themselves out in the real, through a whole series of encounters, conflicts, transformations and redirections. Complex networks of power are thereby set in place, and make possible in turn the 'personages' that act as relay points in its operations - the insane, criminals, the sick, as well as doctors, psychiatrists, social workers. These subjects do not precede the historical system of power but represent the possible 'acting positions' that it makes available. (41)

By locating human subjects firmly in the context of concrete historical practices, Foucault is also able to investigate the way in which power is exercised directly and materially upon human bodies. It 'reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and invests itself into their actions, attitudes, learning processes and everyday lives.' (42) This is not to say that power reduces human beings to 'mindless bodies'. On the contrary, Foucault makes visible the dimension of the body in political analysis, a dimension that is obscured when the focus is on a privileged conception of subjectivity. If the body appears at all in that context, it is only when our status as autonomous subjects is being radically denied by an extreme form of objectifying domination that reduces us to 'pieces of flesh', mere unthinking objects. At the same time, the corresponding idea of a subject behind overt activities seems strangely disembodied, non-corporeal, and detached from material involvements. Once again, the privileged humanist subject suffers from the lack of a concrete context. Its body only appears in a negative light, when the subject is in eclipse. For Foucault, overt actions are not referred to an underlying subject, and power over the body is not exercised over an unthinking object, from which subjectivity has fled. Power is exercised over living, thinking, corporeal human beings, and through the material investment of power, these
beings are identified and constituted as individual subjects. In Foucault’s picture we have not so much lost the subject as gained a body.

**Marxism and Ideology**

Foucault’s conceptualisation of power departs not only from the liberal picture but also from its conventional radicalisation in Marxism. Marxism moves away from the liberal emphasis on the individual subject and on contractually established social relations, giving a significant role to the economic in accounting for social organisation. But it also presents, in its ‘humanist’ form at least, a reformulation of the humanistic-sovereignty picture, and aspires to a radicalised democratic sovereignty. The sovereign agent of power becomes the economically dominant class, from whose interests social power relations can be deduced. Power continues to be exercised from a central sovereign point, now in the form of the state that enacts and enforces legislation in the interests of the bourgeoisie. And Marxism preserves the idea of ‘the people’ as constitutive of what is, or should be, sovereign. In this case we are not referred to a multiplicity of individual subjects acting together but rather a collective, communal subject, which exists in a divided and distorted form under present arrangements.

Marxism, then, does not fundamentally depart from liberalism, but aims to radicalise bourgeois democracy. Its view of the latter is in the nature of a promise not yet realised. The liberal-democratic state is criticised only insofar as, despite its claims about itself, it is not representative of the people as a whole, only of the partial interests of the bourgeoisie. The liberal vision of political equality and collective participation masks continuing material inequality and the oppression of class rule. The workers, who represent the interests of humanity as a whole, continue to be oppressed, excluded, and denied by power. It is only when they become sovereign, seize state power, that the limitations of bourgeois democracy will be overcome, class domination abolished, and society collectively organised in accordance with universal human interests.

Foucault does not deny that in the course of the eighteenth century the bourgeoisie became the politically and economically dominant class, or that this development was masked by the establishment of a formally egalitarian juridico-political framework. But in keeping with his rejection of a humanistic-sovereignty representation of power, he rejects the ‘descending’ type of analysis that
presupposes the bourgeois 'class subject', and seeks to deduce everything from its dominance. Whilst the dominant class is not an abstraction, neither is it a pregiven entity that invents and imposes a unitary strategy on society in order to further its interests. As in the liberal picture, such an account places an excessive explanatory burden on the human subjects that it privileges. And the historical specificity and complexity of power relations is lost when we attempt to reduce them to manifestations of a unitary power or plan. In Foucault’s dispersed and ‘ascending’ historicist analysis, specific tactics of power are invented and organised from the starting point of local conditions and particular needs, taking shape in areas like incarceration, childrearing, education, workshops. They arise in a piecemeal way, prior to any class strategy designed to give them coherence. Local tactics come to reveal political usefulness and economic profitability, and can be taken up in more general mechanisms and strategies. The hegemony of the bourgeoisie derives 'from below', is made possible through a multiplicity of local and indefinite power relations.(45)

Foucault also questions the Marxist stress on ideology. That is, power understood as falsifying or distorting knowledge and consciousness, preventing us from recognising our true interests, and making the existing social ordering seem representative and legitimate to those it oppresses. The critical overcoming of ideological mystification is for Marxism a necessary prelude to the practical overthrow of bourgeois power and the reorganisation of society in accordance with true human interests. Social power here continues to be viewed negatively, in relation to a privileged notion of subjectivity that is not itself accounted for in historical and political terms. There is presupposed a human subject, endowed with consciousness, which power is then thought to seize upon and distort; as well as something that is supposed to count as true consciousness or scientific knowledge, which power is understood to corrupt.(46)

In a manner parallel to the liberal picture, the Marxist stress on consciousness and its ideological distortion also tends to occlude the question of the body. It would be more materialist, Foucault suggests, to focus not on the conscious subject but on the body and the effects of power upon it.(47) Human beings are embodied and concretely involved in practices of power. The exercise of power over human beings brings about their classification and constitution as subjects, a process that is bound up with the emergence of a true knowledge about human beings. The
political issue, consequently, is not error or ideological falsification but truth itself. The political regulation of concrete human beings is bound up with the emergence of sciences of the individual, which are not ideological constructs but apparatuses of knowledge that are produced by and facilitate the exercise of power. (48) Foucault's anti-humanist emphasis on the body is thus part of a historical and materialist account of the subject and knowledge that goes beyond the Marxist picture.

In general, Foucault's analysis of power seeks to get away from the philosophy of the subject in its political manifestations, in order to grasp the subject in its historical emergence and role in relation to a positive, productive concept of social power. It is important to distinguish this approach from a Scientific Marxism which breaks from the privileged subject and consciousness only to dissolve and dismiss them as illusory and false, in favour of a reductive, economistic objectivism. Whilst Scientific Marxism also displaces human beings as the actual or potential source of social relations, it does so in a way that excludes critical reflection and a notion of human freedom. It appears, indeed, as the triumph of oppression, in which the autonomous subject is not merely distorted or alienated but entirely denied in favour of heteronomous objective determinations. It is precisely this prospect that prevents Marxism from fully carrying through its historicist and materialist intentions. An objectivistic scientific Marxism invokes the need to restore the privileged subject, in order to maintain the possibility of critique and liberating social transformation.

In short, we have not yet escaped from the need for a founding subject. Foucault departs from a subjectivistic account of social relations, but he does not identify his materialism with a narrow, reductive economism. Although concrete power relations are enmeshed with economic relations, participating with them in a 'common circuit', they are irreducible to them. Indeed, capitalist economic relations are able to be established because forms of political power have emerged which increase both individual productivity and the manageability of those they regulate. (49) This non-economistic conception of power provides the basis for a historical and materialistic comprehension of knowledge and subjectivity which does not reduce them to mere epiphenomena of the economic. Going beyond the alternatives of foundational subjectivism and reductive objectivism, Foucault's historicist picture does not necessarily exclude the notions of critique and freedom.
per se, only the versions which are grounded in a privileged conception of subjectivity.

The Frankfurt School and Habermas

This stance also sets Foucault apart from the neo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School and Habermas. Broadly speaking, and ignoring all the complexities that have previously been discussed, they share Foucault's rejection of a narrow, objectivistic economism but proceed from there to a reaffirmation of the claims of the privileged subject. The reduction of human beings to mere functions of the economic becomes the radical negation of the subject, critical thought and freedom that has been effected by contemporary forms of oppression. The critical theorists see the reductive, Scientific form of Marxism as complicit with an oppressive process of objectification that is radically eclipsing the subjective aspect of existence in practice. Here even the 'partial' bourgeois sovereignty of liberal capitalism has given way before the process of 'instrumentalisation' that subordinates all human beings to the requirements of economic and technical efficiency. Thought and knowledge have been wholly harnessed to the functional requirements of the prevailing order. A radically mystifying 'technocratic ideology' blocks from consciousness any awareness of the human capacity to control social existence through 'will and reason', entirely falsifying our subjective essence. The progressive notion of the 'public sphere' of collective self-determination, present even if in a limited form in the liberal phase, disappears entirely from view. In its place is a 'scientific' politics, with the state as the overseer of a technical social administration that ensures economic stability and growth, but no longer makes any reference to human freedom.

In the face of this development, critical theory seeks to reestablish awareness of the subject and the possibility of freedom as autonomous self-determination. Marxism is reworked in order to avoid a purely reductive, objectivistic picture, to take into account the realm of socio-cultural relations, the dimension of subjectivity, that is conditioned by, but irreducible to, the economic. A corresponding distinction is made between the instrumental form of thought that maximises economic or technical efficiency, and a practico-critical reflection that seeks to overcome ideologically distorted consciousness, to enhance and promote human subjectivity and freedom.
The notion of ideology-critique is further developed through the integration of psychoanalytic insights. Here critical theory develops a non-economic account of power as the repression of sexual desires and interests within the socio-cultural dimension, linking the critique of ideology with the overcoming of repression. Power generates ideological compliance through the mystification of sexual needs. To bring sex out into the open is to stand against the prohibitions of social power, and the revolutionary transformation of the social order becomes linked to the liberation of pleasure. The recovery of the socio-cultural, subjective side of existence itself stands in opposition to the radical distortion of technocratic ideology, which does not merely represent a distortion within the socio-cultural realm but a repression of this dimension of existence as such, which does not deny particular needs and interests but the very aspiration to social emancipation through critical reflection.

Once again, however, this picture is unable to provide a historical and political account of the subject that it privileges. It is constrained by the need to save the subject and the possibility of freedom, in the face of the threat of subordination to objective processes. Particularly in Habermas's case, the subjectivity that is thereby affirmed is strangely lacking in a concrete historical context. It is removed from extra-linguistic material conditions and, in its communicative context, subject only to pathological determinations, constraints on open discourse which can be entirely overcome. And the stress on ideology and consciousness produces an ethereal, unreal picture of human existence as a realm of speaking subjects devoted to disinterested discussion and argument. The Habermasian person has no body, and there is no room for a notion of power that materially invests itself in concrete, embodied human beings. Social power continues to be conceived negatively in relation to the privileged subject, both as the oppressive process of instrumentalisation that entirely occludes the subjective realm, and in the form of a distorting repression within this realm.

For Foucault the notion of repression, whilst non-economic, preserves the humanistic-sovereignty representation of power as legal prohibition that denies the subject, and also illustrates the complicity of psychoanalysis in this negative representation. For Foucault departs from critical theory in that he rejects a narrow economism not in order to reaffirm the sovereign subject as the actual or potential source of social relations, but to develop a materialistic analysis capable of coming...
to grips with subjectivity in a non-reductive manner. He puts forward a conception of the 'instrumentalisation' of human life and of its politico-technical administration that does not objectify or falsify human beings but positively constitutes them as subjects. As will become apparent when the discussion turns to the history of sexuality, the effort to reflectively uncover our true desires, our true selves, plays a crucial role in this process. Far from being an exercise in liberation, it is central to a form of power that constrains human beings by tying them to a subjective identity. In this context, psychoanalysis functions as a key avenue of political regulation.

7.5 Disciplinary Power

Foucault begins to develop his account of power in *Discipline and Punish*. In the course of analysing the historical emergence of criminality and the criminal subject, he develops the notion of the 'disciplinary' practices or technologies of power which have become increasingly pervasive in Western society since the eighteenth century. These technologies permit a detailed political investment in the body, drawing it into a machinery of power that both increases the body's economic usefulness and assures its political docility. Their emergence as a potent political force marks the transition from a traditional, monarchical form of society, in which the representation of power as sovereignty has some purchase, to the modern situation.

The centralised monarchical power of the preceding period had a relatively low degree of 'resolution', dealing with its subjects as a single uniform mass. Discipline in contrast separates, analyses and differentiates those it regulates into individual entities, enabling the detailed ordering and calculated disposition of human multiplicities. The minute details of everyday life become accessible to regulation. Under the monarchical regime, the level of everyday life was only loosely and ineffectively regulated, political interventions taking the form of costly, spectacular and intermittent demonstrations of the king's power. Disciplinary power is characterised by low economic cost as well as political unobtrusiveness, for it is relatively invisible; and it is constant and regular in its operation, effecting an uninterrupted supervision of bodily activity. Whilst such techniques had long been in existence in monarchies, armies and workshops, it was only in the course
of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the disciplines became general formulae of domination. They are 'humble modalities, minor procedures, as compared with the majestic rituals of sovereignty or the great apparatuses of state', but in Foucault's picture these infinitesimal mechanisms have gradually infiltrated and internally transformed the major forms of power. (52)

The Elements of Discipline

The elements of disciplinary power are hierarchical observation, normalising judgement, and their combination in a procedure specific to it, the examination. Hierarchical observation signifies the connection between invisibility and power, in which surveillance induces effects of power, and those subject to power are rendered potentially visible. In the disciplinary mechanism (ideally represented in the architectural figure of Bentham's Panopticon) space is organised and arranged in order to facilitate continuous observation of those within, making it possible to know and alter them. The disciplinary gaze functions through relays, through a pyramidal hierarchy of continuous and functional surveillance. Everyone who watches and supervises is also the object of another's gaze. No one possesses the power here. Rather, there is a network of calculated gazes, a political field within which individuals are distributed. At the heart of the disciplinary system lies the normalising judgement, the extra- or infra-legal penalty that is exercised over behaviour. Detailed rules for correct conduct permit the differentiation, ranking and grading of the abilities, the levels of accomplishment, and the 'nature' of individuals. The effect of the system of judgement is not repression but a precise distribution, classification and hierarchisation of the individuals subject to it, their arrangement in accordance with degrees of normality. Disciplinary power thus generates the division between the normal and the abnormal, and characteristically aims to measure, supervise and 'normalise' the abnormal individual. (53)

The examination (the bedside hospital visit, the school examination, and so on) combines the two elements of observation and judgement, establishing over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates and judges them in accordance with norms. Power here is unlike the highly visible power of sovereignty, which is meant to be seen by those on whom it is exercised, but who themselves remain in the shade. Disciplinary power remains invisible whilst those subject to regulation are rendered visible. Further, the examination allows individuals to be differentially encoded in written reports and files, which are
organised into general registers. In so doing, it renders every individual a 'case'.
Once again, this contrasts with the regimes of monarchical power, in which only
the powerful few were talked about and 'individualised' in chronicles and fables.
Ordinary human existence remained below the threshold of description. The
disciplinary methods make human beings in their everyday life the object of
description, and here the purpose is not to enhance the powerful figure but to
facilitate subjection. The modern individual appears in this context, as the object
of a detailed political regulation that is interwoven with the accumulation of
knowledge, the individualising categorisation and clarification of human
beings.(54)

The Spread of Disciplinary Power
On Foucault's account, normalising disciplinary techniques multiply beyond their
 humble beginnings and spread throughout the whole of the social body. Discipline
becomes a general method or practice in prisons, schools, hospitals, and factories
where it functions both in the containment of problem populations and in the
fabrication of useful individuals, e.g., by improving work capacity. Disciplinary
methods also move beyond the institution into non-institutional spaces, as an
indirect, unofficial form of surveillance, e.g. in the use of children to watch
parents by the Christian School, and in unofficial centres of observation such as
charities. At the same time there emerges a state control over disciplinary
mechanisms. The organisation of the police apparatus in the eighteenth century
sanctions a generalisation of disciplinary practices, such that they become
coeextensive with the state itself. The police acquire the disciplinary function of
unceasing surveillance, reporting on and documenting individual behaviour
throughout the social body. This is not to say that the disciplinary functions were
absorbed once and for all into the state apparatus. Disciplinary power cannot be
identified with an institution or apparatus. It is a type of power, a modality for its
exercise, which infiltrates and reorganises institutions, up to and including the state
apparatus. The disciplinary modality does not replace all other forms of power, but
both infiltrates them and extends them into everyday life.(55)

The spread of this disciplinary power in connected with a number of broad
historical processes. Firstly, the demographic upsurge of the eighteenth century,
and the growth of the apparatus of production. The techniques of discipline are
appropriate both to the administration of larger, more densely populated units and
In this, Foucault distances himself from a narrowly economistic view of these historical changes. The development of the productive forces and economic relations characteristic of capitalism would have been impossible without the development of disciplinary techniques of political administration. Secondly, as already noted, there is the transformation of the juridico-political structures and the establishment of a representative democracy. For Foucault, this transformation is only possible because of the development of relations of power which operate beyond or beneath the formally constituted juridical limitations on power and secure the submission of ‘forces and bodies’. Concrete disciplinary regulation provides the real foundation upon which the formally egalitarian, juridico-political framework was erected. Finally, there is the emergence of the human sciences, as institutions are transformed by disciplinary mechanisms into apparatuses of normalising surveillance. The disciplinary technologies which bring about the subjection of the body are interwoven with the formation and accumulation of knowledge about individuals, and the two dimensions exist in a relation of mutual reinforcement.

The Disciplinary Fabrication of the Subject

The historical conditions for the emergence of the knowledge of the human sciences are thus to be found in the spreading disciplinary technologies, in the modern play of coercion over bodies, gestures and behaviour. They become possible when a new technology of power and a new political anatomy of the body are implemented. To write their history one should look into these procedures of writing and registration, one should look into the mechanisms of examination, into the formation of the mechanisms of discipline, and of a new type of power over bodies. And it is through the disciplinary techniques of punishment, supervision and constraint, interwoven with the new forms of knowledge about human beings, that the individual subject or modern ‘soul’ is constituted. The examination is ‘at the centre of the procedures that constitute the individual as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge’. Disciplinary regulation individualises, categorises and classifies human beings, particularly in institutions like prisons, asylums and hospitals, defining them in terms of the normal and the abnormal - mad and sane, sick and healthy, criminals, delinquents and ‘good boys’. It also makes human beings the principle of their own subjection. Those who are subjected to a field of visibility, and who know it, end by assuming responsibility for surveillance, exercising it over and against

...
The individual, then, is not a pre-existent given. The 'man of modern humanism' is born in the context of techniques of power and as an object of the knowledge bound up with them, when concrete, everyday human existence becomes accessible to techniques of power and knowledge. This is not to dismiss the individual as an illusion or an ideological effect. Foucault looks to the forms of punishment, suppression and constraint which constitute the individual subject as a historical reality. The soul 'exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished - and, in a more general way, on those one supervises, trains and corrects, over madmen, children at home and at school, the colonised, over those who are stuck at a machine and supervised for the rest of their lives'. The individuals that humanism makes the basis of its moral and political claims are already the effect of a subjection much more profound than themselves. By suspending the privileged role claimed for the individual subjects, Foucault is able to concretely grasp the modern soul as a factor in the mastery that disciplinary power exercises over the body - the soul as the 'prison of the body'.

7.6 Power, Sexuality and Subjectivity

We come now to the first volume of the History of Sexuality. Foucault's turn to the question of sexuality and the sexual subject, and their place in relation to power and knowledge, sees two major developments in his work. Firstly, the theme of the historical constitution of subjectivity gains in context and depth. Instead of seeing subjectivity primarily in terms of the regulatory practices which classify, define and individualise human beings from 'outside', Foucault now starts to focus on the role of self-reflective and self-interpretive activity in our subjection. The process by which we reflect upon, acknowledge and define ourselves in terms of a sexual self-identity is central to a form of political regulation which defines and constitutes normal and abnormal sexuality. To embrace this form of selfhood is to become subject to normative regulation. Foucault is thus able not only to develop further the notion of power as constituting human subjectivity, but also to show how traditional conceptions of liberating self-reflection, which seek to comprehend and free our sexual needs and desires, are themselves implicated in.
the operation of power.

Secondly, the notion of power is expanded into that of 'bio-power', of which the discipline, or the disciplinary anatomo-politics of the individual body, is but one pole. The other pole is the 'bio-political' regulation of the 'species body', the regulation of populations. The shift from traditional to modern society is now characterised more broadly in terms of the shift from a sovereign power bent on subduing and restricting the forces under it, its highest function being to exact a life, to a new form of non-legal, normalizing power, oriented in general towards the organised, regulated optimisation of life. Sexuality is politically important because it is 'at the pivot of the two axes along which developed the entire political technology of life'. (63)

Foucault continues to question the representation of modern power in terms of the sovereignty model. In relation to sexuality this representation takes the form of the 'repressive hypothesis', in which power is the law that denies, prohibits and silences human desire. The notion of repression can easily be linked to the standard picture of the development of capitalism since the seventeenth century. Sex has been repressed in Western society because it is incompatible with a general and intensive work imperative. Labour capacity cannot be allowed to dissipate itself in pleasurable pursuits, and the social order enforces their denial, particularly in the lower classes. As a corollary, to speak freely of sex is to upset established laws, to challenge the existing system of power. Liberation means a social order which will no longer deny sexuality, but will itself be organised as the basis of true desires and needs. (64)

Foucault aims to reverse this picture, in order to question both the repressive hypothesis and the form of historico-political critique that embodies it. He argues that the modern era has in fact been characterised not by a silencing but by an intensive discursive production concerning sexuality, a proliferation of discourses and power relations, in the context of which sexuality has been historically constituted as that within us which must be constantly watched and regulated. It is not a pre-existing given but a set of effects produced in bodies, pleasures, behaviours and social relations by a complex political technology. Far from being a stubborn drive that power has to subdue, sexuality is a dense transfer point for relations of power, able to support and facilitate the most numerous and varied
strategies of control over bodies and populations. By construing the relationship between sexuality and power as one in which power denies sex, which we must speak truly of if we are to be liberated, we remain caught up in this political technology of sex. Foucault's critical reversal is required if we are to comprehend and challenge this technology. (65)

The Spread of Confessional Technology

Modern society has put into operation an entire machinery for the production of true discourses about sex. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged a political, economic and technological incitement to talk about sex, not simply as something to be morally judged but to be administered. Sex became a 'police' matter in the sense given to the term at the time, a matter of the 'ordered maximisation of collective and individual forces'. (66) Governments came to perceive that they were not simply dealing with subjects or even a people, but a 'population', with its specific phenomena and variables - birth and death rates, life-expectancy, state of health, frequency of illness, patterns of diet and habitation. The notion of population entered into political and economic calculation, and at the heart of the problem of population was sex. It became necessary to analyse the birthrate, the age of marriage, legitimate and illegitimate births, frequency of social relations and so on. Society's 'future and fortune' were for the first time tied to the way in which each individual made use of their sex, and the sexual conduct of the population became a target for analysis and intervention. Sex thus became a public issue, and a whole range of discourses and special knowledges proliferated around it. As well as a demographic discourse about sex, other centres of discursive production arose in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: pedagogy, with respect to children's sex; medicine, in relation to 'nervous disorders' in women; and psychiatry, concerned with sexual perversion. (67)

At the heart of the machinery for producing true discourses about sex is the technique of the 'confession'. Far from being liberating, as the repressive hypothesis would have it, confession exemplifies the entwinement of power relations with the production of truth about human beings. Confession is a ritual of discourse that unfolds within a power relationship, 'for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and
appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console and reconcile. As with the disciplinary technologies, the technology of confession was not a sudden discovery of the eighteenth century, but pre-existed it.

There are two significant points in the history of confessional practices. First, the initiation of the 'traditional technology of the flesh', the tribunal of penance, with the development of procedures of direction and the examination of conscience. This occurs in the sixteenth century with the Reformation, Protestantism and Tridentine Catholicism. Whilst still entrenched in the practice of penance, more and more importance is given to the 'insinuation of the flesh' as the 'root of all evil'. The injunction emerged to put everything pertaining to desire into discourse. The second development, during the eighteenth century and at the start of the nineteenth century, was the advent of the 'medical technologies of sex'. Confession and sexuality were increasingly constituted in scientific terms. A 'scientia sexualis' or confessional science emerged, in which the procedures of the confession were adapted to the rules of a scientific discourse. In the process there was a clinical codification of the inducement to speak; the postulate of a general and diffuse sexual causality to be traced; the assumption of a hermeneutic role on the part of the listener to draw out a truth, a sexual causality partly hidden from the subject; and a recodification of confession as a therapeutic or normalising operation, with sexuality no longer accounted for in terms of error or sin, excess or transgression, but rather in terms of the 'normal' and the 'pathological'.

With these developments the confession gradually lost its ritualistic and exclusive character and location. It spread beyond the confines of the relationship between the penitent and the spiritual director, and began to be employed in a whole series of relationships: between children and parents, students and educators, patients and psychiatrists. Its forms became more various: interrogations, consultations, autobiographical narratives. And it became the central procedure of pedagogical, medical and psychiatric discourses, intent on seeking out, keeping watch over, and policing sexuality. Furthermore, the new scientific technology of sex made it not only a secular concern but a concern of the state as well - 'to be exact, sex became a matter that required the social body as a whole, and virtually all of its individuals, to place themselves under surveillance'. Expanding along the axes of pedagogy, medicine, psychiatry and demography, the technology of sex entered into the grand 'manoeuvres' employed by the state for the control of the birthrate,
for populationist incitements, for the medicalisation of sex and the psychiatrisation of perverse pleasures. It should once again be noted that this is not an 'ascending' analysis. The question is not - given a specific state structure, how and why is it that power needs to establish a knowledge of sex? It is rather a matter of looking at the historical appearance of 'local centres' of discourse and power (in relation to priests and penitents, around the child's body or women's sex, and so on) and tracing the way in which these local centres came to be taken up in and underpin large-scale strategies and forms of political administration.\(^{71}\)

**Sexuality and Subjectivity**

In general, then, sexuality has not been repressed but has come to be the focus of an intensive discursive production, of a regime of truth, and of normalising political regulation. It is not a pre-existing given which power tries to hold in check, or an obscure domain which knowledge tries to uncover in the face of political and economic prohibitions. What is involved is the 'very production of sexuality', its historical construction through a complex political technology. The 'sexualisation' of bodies and pleasures, and the endless effort to scrutinise and articulate our sex, are elements in the operation of a power oriented towards the administration and normative regulation of human life. Sexuality is both an effect and an instrument of strategies of control which proliferate, innovate, annex, create and penetrate bodies in an increasingly detailed way, and control populations in an increasingly comprehensive way.\(^{72}\) The theme of sexuality also allows Foucault to give further content to the idea of a historical constitution of subjectivity, insofar as sexuality has become central to the modern sense of self. The 'truthful confession' in which we avow or acknowledge ourselves as sexual beings is at the centre of the procedures through which power individualises and normatively regulates human beings.

For Foucault, there has been a shift in the character of 'self-identity' in the transition from traditional to modern society, reflected in the evolution of the notion of 'avowal'. For a long time the individual was vouched for or avowed by the 'reference of others and the demonstration of his ties to the commonweal (family, allegiance, protection); then he was authenticated by the discourse of truth he was able or obliged to pronounce concerning himself'.\(^{73}\) "What one is' is no longer a question of one's place in a legally defined order. As Dews puts it, the modern form of identity is increasingly dependent on the capacity of the individual
to reflect upon and articulate the domain of private experience. Foucault correlates this development with the shift from epic narrative to modern introspective literature, and with the rise of philosophies of consciousness in which self-examination yields, through a multitude of fleeting impressions, the basic certainties of consciousness. (74)

A confessional science of the subject has emerged, and this has increasingly gravitated around the question of sex. Our sexuality has become that in ourselves which we must decipher in its truth in order to comprehend our most essential selves - We tell it its truth by deciphering what it tells us about that truth; it tells us our own by delivering up that part of it that escaped us. From this interplay there has evolved, over several centuries, a knowledge of the subject; a knowledge not so much of his form, but of that which divides him, determines him perhaps, but above all causes him to be ignorant of himself. (75) We have made this truth-telling into an avenue of liberation, freeing our true self from a power that represses and dictates it. For Foucault, the obligation to confess and the true self that we seek to comprehend and embrace are themselves the effect of a power that constrains us not by denying what we are but by making us act in conformity with a subjective identity. (76)

The Political Deployment of Sexuality: Family, Class and Psychoanalysis

Foucault describes in some detail the large-scale strategies of power and knowledge that have developed in relation to sexuality, as well as the role of family and class in their spread and functioning. He pays particular attention to the function of psychoanalysis in this context. Psychoanalysis, of course, brings together the themes of sexuality, confession and subjectivity in a striking manner. For Foucault, it plays a crucial role in the political deployment of sexuality.

With the proliferation of scientific discourses about sex in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there emerged four great strategies comprising specific mechanisms of knowledge and power, bound up with the appearance of a number of sexual subjects. These strategies were: 1) a hystericisation of women's bodies, corresponding to which was a particular form of subjectivity, the 'hysterical woman', the concern of medical practices; 2) a pedagogisation of children's sex, centring around the 'masturbating child', the concern of pedagogy; 3) a socialisation of procreative behaviour, centred around the 'Malthusian couple', the
concern of demography; and 4) the psychiaatrisation of perverse pleasure, centring on the 'perverse adult', the focus of psychology. The four strategies have in their various ways invested and made use of the sex of women, children and men. They form the elements of a 'deployment of sexuality' that has come to take precedence over the 'deployment of alliance' characteristic of traditional society. In traditional society, sexual behaviour was governed and regulated by a system of juridical and quasi-juridical rules which determined the licit and the illicit. The main focus was on maintaining the matrimonial relation, on 'legitimate alliance', and with it the system of kinship ties and the transmission of names and possessions.

The modern phase has seen the infiltration of a non-juridical form of power into the traditional system of rules. With this there has been a shift in the attention from heterosexual monogamy in favour of a scrutinisation of the sexuality of children, madmen and women, criminals and homosexuals. Instead of being built around a system of rules defining permitted or forbidden relations, the modern deployment of sexuality operates according to mobile and polymorphous techniques of power, concerned with the sensations and pleasures of the body. The aim is not to reproduce relations and maintain their laws, but to continually extend forms of normalising control over bodies and populations. Its formative nucleus lies in the traditional confession, which was based on the alliance system and posed questions concerning the permitted and the forbidden. But the transformation of confession, the development and proliferation of confessional technology, and the intensification of concern with the body and its pleasures, has led to the transformation and revitalisation of the alliance system.

In particular, the family cell, 'the keystone of alliance', has become a privileged instrument in the deployment of sexuality. It has made it possible for the main elements of the deployment of sexuality (the feminine body, infantile precocity, the regulation of births, the specification of the perverted) to develop along the husband-wife and parent-child axes. The family in its contemporary form is not an alliance which excludes or restrains sexuality, but both supports the production of sexuality and conveys sexual technology into the heart of the alliance system. The political technology of sexuality, which first developed on the fringe of familial institutions, in for example the direction of conscience and pedagogy, gradually became focussed on the family. Parents and relatives became the chief agents of a
deployment of sexuality that drew its outside support from doctors, educators and later psychiatrists, and which came to 'psychiatrise' the familial relations of alliance. From the nineteenth century onwards, the family engaged in searching out the slightest traces of sexuality in its midst, opening itself unreservedly to endless examination by doctors, educators, psychiatrists and priests. Psychoanalysis entered the scene by seeking to strengthen the deployment of alliance and the familial system in the face of their 'saturation' by a proliferating sexuality. It attempted to use the concern with sexuality to revitalise the rules of alliance by rediscovering them at the heart of sexuality, and thereby to reinscribe sexuality in a system of law.(86)

Foucault also examines the place of class in the deployment of sexuality. According to the repression model, the control of sexuality would be more intense in relation to the poorer classes whose energy was to be wholly directed into compulsory labour. In fact, for Foucault, rigorous techniques were first formed and applied in the economically privileged and politically dominant classes. It was in the bourgeois family that children's and women's sexuality were first problematised and medicalised. And instead of self-denial, a 'bourgeois ascetism', there was an affirmation and intensification of the body central to the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a class. The bourgeoisie, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, occupied itself with creating its sexuality and forming a specific class body, central to its 'class consciousness'. The aristocracy had also asserted the special character of its body, but in the form of 'blood', of the antiquity of its ancestry and the value of its alliances. Here the deployment of alliance was still predominant. The bourgeoisie replaced blood with the sexual body, to be cared for and cultivated in order to ensure the vigour, longevity and future health of the class. The working classes managed for a long time to escape the deployment of sexuality. For a body and a sexuality to be granted to them, there had to be developments such as the use of heavy industry, with the need for a stable and competent labour force, and the need to regulate the population flow and apply demographic controls; and a technology of control had to be established to keep that body and sexuality under surveillance, such as schooling and the general medicalisation of the population. The development of an administrative and technical machinery made it possible to safely impart the deployment of sexuality into the exploited class over the course of the eighteenth century.(81)
A further perspective is thereby provided on the emergence of psychoanalysis. As we have seen, it sought to reaffirm, in the face of the spread of extra-legal technologies of sexuality, the privileges of the law. It also introduced a differentiating factor into the general technology of sex. With the generalisation of deployment of sexuality over the entire social body, the bourgeoisie sought to redefine the specific character of its sexuality relative to that of others. The theory of repression emerged to provide an analysis of the differential interplay of laws or taboos according to social class. Henceforth social differentiation could be affirmed not by the sexuality of the body but by the intensity of its repression. Psychoanalysis came into being at this juncture, as a means of alleviating the repression the bourgeoisie has the privilege of experiencing more than anyone else. And with this the requirement of truthful confession acquired the new meaning of a requirement to lift psychical repression, to challenge taboos. (82)

Foucault is now in a position to put the 'repressive hypothesis' into historical perspective, as a tactical move within the modern deployment of sexuality. Through the repressive hypothesis, the deployment of sexuality is reinterpreted in terms of a general prohibition or repression and tied to general mechanisms of domination and exploitation. The overcoming of social domination is also a release from sexual repression, a form of liberation. Yet psychoanalysis, by reviving the idea of power as law and conceiving of sexuality as a stubborn drive that is restrained by prohibitions, not only obscures the positive role of power in the constitution of what counts as sexuality, but also gives new impetus to the secular injunction to study sex and to transform it into discourse. As the definitive scientia sexualis it takes over the technology of confessional practice and the idea of sex as harbouring what is most true about ourselves. It thus plays a crucial role in the process of sexualisation, the implantation of the need to articulate one's sexual desire, and the incorporation of individuals and the family into the political system of sexual regulation. Consequently, the fight against repressive taboos, and the kind of historico-political critique that takes up this theme, remains caught in the deployment of sexuality, the prevailing network of power. (83)

7.7 Bio-Power and Humanist Liberation

The last section of *The History of Sexuality* provides an overview of the account
of power that Foucault wants to present. It also brings together some of the central themes running through this account - the historicity and political function of sexuality; its construction through a material investment of power in the body; the reversal that turns sexuality into the essential core of our selfhood, the deep truth about ourselves which power has denied; and the role that freedom conceived as the overcoming of repression plays in the perpetuation of power. In short, it provides a summation of the themes that emerge in the primarily political phase of Foucault's work.

Bio-Power in General

The deployment of sexuality is a central part of what Foucault refers to in general as 'bio-power', the distinctively modern form of power that aims to invest, optimise and regulate life. As already noted, this has developed in the two dimensions of discipline and bio-politics. Discipline centres on the body as machine, providing a parallel increase in its capabilities and its docility. Bio-politics seeks to enhance and regulate the species body, the body as the basis of biological processes such as propagation, birth and mortality, life expectancy and longevity. Bio-power in general is indispensable for the emergence of modern capitalist society. Capitalism depends on the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production, and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes. The techniques of bio-power are capable of enhancing and optimising forces, aptitudes and life in general, without at the same time making them more difficult to govern. They also act as instruments of segregation and social hierarchisation, guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony. Through them it is possible to adjust the accumulation of individuals to that of capital, to join the growth of human groups to the expansion of productive forces and the differential allocation of profit. (84)

Foucault thus departs from a narrowly economistic interpretation of this development. Indispensable to the emergence of capitalism is the entry of life into history and historical regulation, i.e., 'the entry of phenomena peculiar to the life of the human species into the order of knowledge and power'. (85) Certainly the biological has always exerted pressure on the historical, in the forms of epidemics and famines, but the development of productivity in the eighteenth century, and the demographic upsurge it encouraged, allow a degree of relief from the threat of arbitrary and widespread death. In the space thus opened, methods of power and
knowledge assume responsibility for life processes, and undertake to control and modify them. Two related transformations occur. Firstly, human beings emerge as concrete living beings, in specific relationships with other beings, for new forms of knowledge bound up with the proliferating political technologies. Knowledge and power have gained access to the body and its behaviours in their everyday, concrete immediacy. Secondly, the juridical system of power exercised over legal subjects tends to be infiltrated and transformed by techniques of normative regulation exercised over living beings. The law refers in the last resort to the death of those who transgress it, through a spectacular display of sovereign power, but a life-administering power needs continuous mechanisms of regulation. The judicial institution does not disappear, but is increasingly incorporated into the continuum of regulatory apparatuses constitutive of a 'normalising society'.

Sexuality is important as a political issue because of its pivotal role in the development of bio-power. The two poles of bio-power, control over bodies and over populations, remained distinct in the eighteenth century. They become linked together in the nineteenth century through the deployment of sexuality. On the one hand, sexuality is tied to the disciplining of the body, the harnessing and intensification of its forces. It gives rise to infinitesimal surveillances, indeterminate medical or psychological examination. It is tracked down in the smallest details of individual existence, becoming the stamp of individuality. But it also gives rise to the comprehensive measures, statistical assessments and large-scale interventions which are aimed at the populations. The four strategic unities along which the politics of sex has advanced combine bodily discipline and the regulation of populations in varying proportions. The sexualisation of children and the hystericalisation of women rely on the need for the regulation of the population and the enhancement of collective welfare to bring about disciplinary results at the individual level. In the case of birth controls and the psychiatrisation of perversions, the focus is on ensuring the collective vigour of the species, but it relies on the need for individual discipline and constraint.

History, the Body, and Subjectivity

As we have seen, sexuality is viewed by Foucault not as a pre-existing given but as a historical construct which emerges in the context of the political technologies that regulate bodies and populations. He now responds to the possible criticism that he has succumbed to a historicism which ignores 'sex' as a biologically
existing phenomenon, on the basis of which a historical 'sexuality' is able to develop, i.e., that his account of sexuality leaves him only with 'groundless effects', a historical phenomenon with no concrete basis. In fact, Foucault's historicism is designed to bring the dimension of corporeality to light. He replies that his analysis of sexuality does not necessarily imply an elision of the body, biological and physiological processes. On the contrary, his purpose is to 'show how the deployments of power are directly connected to the body - to bodies, functions, physiological processes, sensations and pleasures; far from the body having to be effaced, what is needed is to make it visible through an analysis in which the biological and the historical...are bound together in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with the development of the modern technologies of power that take life as their objective'. (88) That is, Foucault's historico-political analysis makes the body visible as the material surface upon which power is exercised. It seeks to come to grips with a form of power that has seized upon human beings in their corporeal materiality.

At the same time, this materiality is not that of 'sex'. There is no 'sex in itself', a pre-given reality upon which power is applied to produce a distorted appearance of 'sexuality'. Rather, sex is a complex idea formed inside the deployment of sexuality. It has a number of functions therein. It makes possible the grouping together, in an artificial unity, of anatomical elements, biological functions, conduits, sensations and pleasures, and enables one to use this fictitious entity as a causal principle, a secret to be discovered in all behaviour. Moreover, the idea of a latent, secret, causal force allows the representation of relations between power and sexuality to be reversed. Instead of being produced by power, sexuality is seen as rooted in an irreducible force which power seems to dominate and repress. The notion of sex enables power to be represented negatively, in terms of law or taboo, masking its positive role. Running through and sustaining these functions is the humanist conception of sex as the core of our selfhood, that which we have to comprehend in order to have access to the meaning of our actions and to who we most essentially are. Sex appears as the privileged locus of our intelligibility as subjects. (89)

By shifting attention from sex and subjectivity towards history, the body and the concrete operation of power over human beings, Foucault is able to relocate the notion of sex. Far from being our deepest truth, sex is 'the most speculative, most
ideal and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organised by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures. Instead of sex as the pre-existing reality which is deformed into a corrupted historical sexuality, it is our sexuality, as a 'very real historical formation' emerging through the material investment of power in human bodies, that gives rise to the ideal notion of sex. The latter is the normative principle or regulative idea that motivates us to scrutinise our desires, to articulate them in discourse and formulate them in their truth. And it makes us think that in doing so we are challenging a repressive power, engaging in a liberating act, whereas in fact we remain caught in the deployment of sexuality that subjects us to normative regulation in the name of a true sex. In the face of the transformation of a historically produced sexuality into an essential sex, and correspondingly of a productive power into a power that represses, Foucault aims to bring about a reversal in order to comprehend once again the historical practices of power that give rise to sexuality; and to show how the repressive hypothesis, along with the desire to liberate ourselves by affirming our sex, remain complicit in these forms of power.
8.1 The Ethical Dimension of Foucault's Historicism

In the preceding chapter I have characterised Foucault as pursuing a historicising strategy that goes beyond the philosophy of the subject in a radical way. That is, his approach no longer presupposes a foundational subject and neither does it accept the correlative notion of immersion in history as an alienation of the subject, an objectification to be overcome in order to restore the subject to itself. Nor does it represent a one-sided objectivism that continues to refer us back to the founding subject. Instead of viewing history in terms of the subject, Foucault uses history to account for the emergence of the subject in the first place. For this reason, Foucault eludes the criticisms brought to bear by Habermas, who sees him as falling into an uncritical, reductive objectivism and as lacking a conception of subjectivity capable of grounding critique and freedom. And he is able to pursue a historical and political interrogation of the subject which is impossible from the Habermasian perspective. He traces the way in which forms of political regulation, interwoven with forms of knowledge, have positively defined, classified and constituted human beings as subjects, i.e., as beings subject to moral, medical and psychological regulation. The picture is not however complete until we thematise the way in which human beings come to reflectively interiorise this historically fabricated selfhood, to attach themselves to it, and to acknowledge it as their true, essential being.

With this there appears the 'inward', decontextualised self of humanism, the 'positive' self that we regard as the underlying basis of our thought and action. This self provides in turn the standpoint for comprehending our historical situation in terms of objectification, alienation or self-dispersion, and the reflective appropriation of our selfhood then appears as a process of liberation. This liberation is the goal of medical, psychological and psychoanalytical therapies, and the telos of Hegelian-style, psychoanalytic or hermeneutical self-reflection, understood as the process of critically overcoming historical alienation, grasping the underlying sources of our behaviour, and achieving the freedom of self-appropriation. Foucault now characterises this self-reflection as an 'ethical'
task, a task of self-transformation. For humanist thought from Hegel to Habermas, the overriding ethical task is to 'become who we are', to overcome a state of self-deformation in order to discover and to live in accordance with our true selves. Foucault sees this aspiration as the 'deep root of what we could call the permanent anthropologies of the Western way of thinking'.

Yet this ethical programme for self-knowledge and self-appropriation is at the heart of our entanglement in modern forms of subjection. As one commentator puts it - 'To learn from the soft sciences who and what we are, and to recognise ourselves in their dicta, is to interiorise power in the form of knowledge'. What appears as a process of critical reflection and liberation, the struggle to know and become who we essentially are, is in fact the process by which we tie ourselves to, and subordinate our thought and action to, the self that is fabricated by power. And as long as we continue to identify with this self, and to make it the transcending basis of our practical and historical understanding, we are unable to grasp it as the product of a history of subjection and constraint. We remain subject to historical constraints that we are unable to recognise as such.

The ethical dimension thus serves to extend Foucault's analysis of the construction of subjectivity through power. But it also gives Foucault the opportunity to place his own historical work in an ethical light. His ultimate understanding of critique and freedom flows from this. Critique becomes the effort to break away from the positive self through a comprehension of the historical practices that have made us what we are, including those ethical practices through which we embrace this self as our own and lose sight of its history. At the same time, historic-critical awareness becomes the avenue for a different kind of ethical self-transformation, part of the struggle to 'detach ourselves from ourselves' in order to 'think differently'. Habermasian freedom requires us to subordinate ourselves to norms which can claim to be the product of our essential rationality as speakers. For Foucault, the real task is to contest those historically produced constraints which are legitimated as 'reflecting what we essentially are', and to open ourselves to different possibilities. To borrow from Rajchman, Foucault invents an ethic of 'free thought' which no longer seeks to anchor choices, projects or forms of life in an ahistorical true self, in a conception of truly human existence, but rather demands a constant questioning of the 'truth' of one's thought and existence, in order to transgress historically constituted limits and to open up the possibility of
8.2 Ethics and Politics

Foucault's final characterisation of his historicising method as an ethical exercise emerges out of the recognition of the importance of self-reflective and self-interpretative activity in our subjection. This recognition is already apparent in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, with the discussion of confession. The historical constitution of the subject is not simply a matter of the development of forms of power in which human beings become knowable and subject to normalising definition and regulation. It also involves our actively telling the truth about ourselves, turning our desires into discourse, and coming to avow ourselves as sexual subjects. Central to the operations of a power that individualises human beings is a specific kind of self-formative activity, a form of what Foucault now refers to as the ethical relation of ourselves to ourselves or the "practices of the self". The ethical relation characteristic of the modern subject is the focusing of attention on one's sexual desires in order to decipher, recognise and acknowledge one's 'true being' or 'essential selfhood' - a self that has been made available through the categories of psychological and psychoanalytical science, interwoven with forms of normative regulation.

A 'theoretical shift' is however required on Foucault's part in order to properly grasp the role of self-constitutive activity in the emergence of the modern subject. Foucault has always sought to escape from the grip of the philosophy of the subject through a historical analysis of the subject's emergence. But his work is also marked by a struggle to break away from forms of self-limitation, constraints in his own thought. As we saw, archaeological analysis, whilst it historicises the question of the subject in terms of discursive practices, remains constrained by its understanding of social reality as essentially discursive. In order to take power relations into account in the emergence of the subject, a theoretical shift is required to decentre discourse, locating it in a wider context of non-discursive practices. This makes possible the historico-political studies of *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*. Yet here also historical reflection eventually runs up against limitations. The first volume of the *History of Sexuality* continues to develop the theme of power over human beings, but it also begins to
recognise the role of self-reflection. However, as long as the question of the subject's constitution is envisaged primarily from the point of view of power and subjection, the role of active self-constitution in the process is not adequately differentiated and thematised.

A further theoretical shift recentres historical analysis on the theme of the subject. As Foucault puts it: ‘When I was studying asylums, prisons and so on, I perhaps insisted too much on techniques of domination. Having studied the field of power relations and taken that as a point of departure, I would like, in the years to come, to study power-relations starting from techniques of the self.’ This is in no sense a return to the underlying, pre-existing subject of humanism. On the contrary it is the most extreme departure from humanism, a reflection on the role of self-constitutive activity in the historical formation of the self. Historical considerations are introduced into what seems the most intimate, most immediate dimension of the modern experience of self. The subject is now understood as being constituted not only through forms of power but also through a specific form of relation we take up with ourselves, a hermeneutical self-relation which is crucial to the operations of power.

Foucault now speaks of three axes or dimensions through which human beings have come to be constituted as subjects. Firstly, the modes of enquiry through which human beings enter into the field of knowledge and are identified in accordance with scientific classifications; secondly, the practices of normative regulation that divide and sort human beings into manipulable individuals and groups; finally, the practices of the self through which human beings identify and recognise themselves as subjects. The subject is thereby constituted in relation to the true, to rules and to itself. It is with the insertion of human beings into the context of historical practices that certain ‘fundamental experiences’ are constituted which give content to the subject, particularly criminality and sexuality. The notion of experience, it should be noted, does not refer to a private, ‘subjective’ realm of immediate experiences. Experience is something ‘constituted from and around certain forms of behaviour’ as they become objects of concern, reflection or thought, i.e., are ‘problematised’ in connection with fields of enquiry, collections of rules and modes of self-relation. Consequently experience is a historical phenomenon that can be studied in its formation, development and transformation. Foucault's late work focusses on the emergence of the
experience of sexuality; or rather, on how we have come to recognise and identify ourselves as subjects of a sexuality that is accessible to diverse forms of knowledge and types of normative regulation.

The importance of the self-constituting dimension of the formation of the subject lies, as already noted, in the central role that practices of the self play in modern systems of knowledge and power. The self we acknowledge as our essential being has been constituted, since the eighteenth century, through historical practices of power-knowledge. Our willingness to identify ourselves with this constituted self is, however, the product of a much longer history, of more remote processes. (7) Foucault's late work traces the prehistory of the subject, the ancient origins of the contemporary form of ethical self-relation through which we participate in our own subjection. It proceeds in this direction via a further series of reflections on the development and character of modern political technologies, which are now characterised as forms of 'government'. This leads Foucault to a consideration of the 'pastoral' political technologies of early Christianity, the beginnings of individualising subjection, and the role of practices of the self therein. From there he proceeds to a consideration of the practices of the self in Antiquity, their incorporation into the pastoral forms of government in the Christian era, and their transformation into a central element of modern biopolitics. We thereby arrive at the present situation in which, through our current ethical practices, we embrace a self that has been constituted by power, simultaneously participating in and losing sight of our historical subjection. I want now to consider this trajectory in more detail, before coming to Foucault's own ethical stance.

8.3 Christianity, Pastoral Power and Modern Governance

Foucault's reflections on power continue to avoid privileging the state as the sovereign locus of power, a target to be attacked and a privileged position to be taken over. This is not to dispute that in European societies since the sixteenth century political power has evolved towards more centralised forms. In contemporary societies the state is not simply one of the forms or specific situations of the exercise of power. In a certain way all power relations must refer to it. However, 'this is not because they are derived from it; it is rather because
power relations have come more and more under state control'. It is more fruitful to investigate the power relations on the basis of which the state operates, the multiple techniques of 'biopower', which Foucault now characterises as a 'pastoral' or caring power. Rather than focussing on the state, as the political form of a centralised power, the legal framework of unity, Foucault aims to investigate 'the development of power techniques oriented towards individuals and intended to rule them in a continuous and permanent way. If the state is the political form of a centralised and centralising power, let us call pastorship the individualising power'.

Pastoral Power in Early Christianity
This individualising pastoral technology has its origins in ancient Hebrew society and was taken up by Christianity, through which it was introduced to the West. The modern Western state has taken over the pastoral power-technique and integrated it into a new political shape. In Hebrew society, the ruler is understood as a 'shepherd', wielding power over a 'flock' rather than over a territory. The goal of power is to provide subsistence for, constantly watch over and assure the safety and salvation of the flock. Pastoral power individualises by attributing as much value to a single lamb as to the entire flock. The idea of the leader as a shepherd followed by a flock was not really familiar to Greek and Roman society. There, those who held political power had the task not of fostering the life of a group of individuals but of forming and assuring the city's unity. The political problem was that of the relation between the one and the many in the framework of the city and its citizens.

Christianity took up the theme of pastorship, modifying it in the process. In ancient Christian literature on the subject, the shepherd not only assumes responsibility for the flock and for each sheep, but also for the details of their actions, all the good and evil they are liable to do. The notion of obedience also becomes more intense. In the Hebraic conception, the flock following the shepherd complies with the latter's will, with their law. For the Greeks also, one obeyed because it was the law, the will of the city. Christianity makes a paramount value of one's submission to the shepherd. The shepherd's will is done not because it is consistent with the law but because it is the shepherd's will. To ensure this obedience, the shepherd requires a particular kind of knowledge, an individualising knowledge of each sheep. Whilst this theme existed in the Hebraic
context, it is amplified in Christianity. The shepherd must now know not only each sheep's material needs and what each does, but also what goes on in the soul of each one. (12)

In this approach, Christianity appropriated and modified two elements at work in Greek thought - self-examination and the guidance of conscience. For the Greeks, self-examination meant a turning in on oneself, in order to achieve self-mastery and the domination of one's passions through a definitive victory of the will; and the guidance of conscience was something called for only in trying circumstances. For Christianity, the guidance of conscience has to be constant, the sheep has to let itself be led at every moment, and self-examination requires us to open up our soul to the spiritual director. Christianity imposes the permanent obligation to confess, to explore who one is and what is happening within oneself, the faults one may have committed and the temptations one has been exposed to, and to confess these things to other people. The aim of this self-relating activity is not the Greek one of definitive self-control, but a constant hermeneutic self-scrutiny, a struggle to decipher the thoughts that come to consciousness, in order to ascertain whether they are good or bad, pure or of satanic origin. It is no longer a matter of keeping control over what one does in a particular situation, but of defeating illusions within oneself, discovering the truth of one's thoughts, and purifying oneself. (13)

The final innovation of the Christian pastoral is that all these techniques of self-examination, confession, spiritual guidance and obedience have the aim of getting individuals to work at their own mortification, i.e., the renunciation of the world and oneself in order to ensure life in another world. In contrast to the Greek notion of a 'sacrifice for the city', Christian mortification is a kind of relation with oneself, a constitutive part of self-identity. And instead of the Greek idea of self-knowledge as a means to self-mastery, the Christian self-relation combines a hermeneutics of the self with a renunciation of that self. (14) To sum up, the Christian pastoral is a form of power concerned with the care and ultimate salvation not just of the community but of each individual; and links together obedience, self-knowledge and confession to others, and the issue of self-identity.

There are two lines to the present situation which can be followed up. Firstly, the way in which the pastoral power technique, which originated in Christian institutions, is integrated into the form of the modern state; and secondly, the way
in which the Christian hermeneutics of the self is eventually transformed into the modern self-relation which is no longer concerned with renunciation but with the establishment of oneself as a positive self. To understand these developments allows us to come to terms with a modern pastoral power that 'categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others have to recognise in him.'

The Problem of Government

The Christian pastoral power technique, as we saw, takes over and transforms the Hebraic 'shepherd-flock' game. It is quite foreign to the Greek conception of political power, the 'city-citizen' game, although it appropriates elements of Greek thought, such as self-examination and the guidance of conscience. Foucault sees the modern state as combining the 'shepherd-flock' game with the 'city-citizen' game, uniting individualising with totalising procedures of power. This is however to anticipate. To begin with, Christianity introduced the pastoral form of power to the West, institutionalising it in the office of the pastor. But the pastorate was not instituted as an effective, large-scale government of people in the Middle Ages. It was not compatible with the economic, cultural and socio-political structures of feudalism. Nonetheless, the yearning for a truly pastoral form of government was behind various reforms within the Church, and motivated a number of struggles in the population itself.

The turning point for Foucault is the emergence of the 'problem of government in general' from the sixteenth century onwards. The problem arises in connection with two processes - the breakdown of feudalism, out of which will emerge the territorial, administrative state of the absolute monarchy; and a crisis within the pastoral office itself, with the Reformation, Protestantism and the Counter-Reformation. With the double movement towards state centralisation and religious dispersion or dissidence, the question of how to govern posed itself insistently. From the mid-sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century, numerous treatises appeared on the 'art of government'. These are not theoretical treatises but sets of calculated reasoned prescriptions for practice, which reflectively thematise, and enter into the development of, an emerging political technology. The history of the development of modern political practices is also a history of the emergence of a specific form of political rationality.
What gradually emerged was a form of political rationality quite at odds with traditional political thought. It broke with a 'simultaneously Christian and judiciary tradition, a tradition which claimed that government was essentially just. It respected a whole system of laws: human laws; the law of nature; divine law. Politics in the traditional context was a form of practical reason, based on a larger metaphysical understanding of the ordered cosmos, and aimed to lead people to the just and good life. Horkheimer, Adorno and Habermas have all referred to this 'objective reason' or 'traditional political thinking', and to its breakdown in the modern period. As will become apparent, however, Foucault has a somewhat different understanding of the subsequent 'scientification' of politics.

He begins by noting two developments in political thought, the work of Machiavelli and the theory of 'reason of state'. Machiavellian political rationality broke with the earlier tradition in that there were no metaphysical considerations or any attention paid to goals beyond the prince's power. The question was simply that of how a territory acquired by a prince could be held, how the prince's power could be maintained and increased. The theory of 'reason of state' being elaborated in the treatises on the art of government is concerned with the state as an end in itself, the state freed not only from a larger normative framework but also from the question of the fate of particular princes. It is not an art of government according to divine, human or natural laws, respecting the 'general order of the world'. It set itself apart from the juridical discourse that sought to legitimate the sovereign's power in terms of justice, the good or natural law. But neither is it concerned with reinforcing the power of the prince. Its aim is to reinforce and increase the power of the state itself.

The developing reason of state sets itself apart from the juridical notion of sovereignty that is still in fact present in Machiavelli. For Machiavelli, the prince is posited as a singular sovereign power, occupying an external and transcendent position relative to the principality. Reason of state understands practices of government to be multiple, involving many people rather than the prince alone, and all these governments are taken to be internal to the state or society. If there is nonetheless one form of government applied to the state as a whole, what is stressed is the continuity between the various forms of government. The doctrine of the prince, like the juridical theory of sovereignty, constantly attempts to draw a
line between the power of the prince and any other form of power. Moreover, Machiavelli adopts the juridical principle that defines sovereignty as exercised above all upon a territory, and consequently upon the subjects that inhabit it. For reason of state, government does not bear primarily on a territory but on the 'complex unit constituted by men and things', i.e., on concrete human beings in their relationship with wealth, resources, the territory, and with contingencies like famine, epidemics and death. Finally, for sovereignty the end is its own self-preservation, through the subordination of the people to the law with which the sovereign is synonymous. Machiavelli similarly sees the primary aim of the prince as the retention of sovereignty. In contrast, the aim of the art of government is the perfection and multiplication of the forces it directs. And the instruments of government will not be laws but multiform techniques or tactics, through which things can be arranged in order to achieve a plurality of specific objectives.

The new art of government did not remain purely abstract in the sixteenth century. It was linked with the development of the large-scale territorial monarchies that replaced the feudal order. Not only did these monarchies develop great state apparatuses, such as the army and the police. Disciplinary techniques began to be used in armies, policing, manufactories, schools, etc., as detailed techniques for the enhancement and harnessing of human capacities. Secondly, it was linked with the rise of statistical forms of knowledge, knowledge of the state in all the different elements and dimensions of its power. Yet the development of the art of government remained constrained until the beginning of the eighteenth century. This was partly due to a long period of economic stagnation. The art of government could only be disseminated and multiply its dimensions in a period of expansion. Further, as long as the institutions of sovereignty remained fundamental and the exercise of power was seen primarily as an exercise of sovereignty, the art of government could not be developed in a specific and autonomous manner. Its development was also internally impeded by an overly narrow model of governance, that of the family. In the treatises on government, the government of the state is continually likened to that of the watchful control of the head of the family over household and goods. The 'oeconomy' or management of the family is used as the model for the proper running of the state.

Modern Pastoral Governance

The art of government came to evade these obstacles in the context of the
demographic and economic explosion of the eighteenth century. It was at this point that 'population' came to be perceived as the object of government, the political problem. The perspective of population made it possible to eliminate the model of the family and to transform the economy into the modern notion of economic management. Statistics, which had hitherto worked within the administrative framework of monarchical sovereignty, gradually revealed the population as having its own regularities, rates of death, cycles of wealth and scarcity, and so on, phenomena that were irreducible to those of the family. The family ceased to be a model of government and came to be seen as an element internal to the population. Or more precisely as a privileged instrument in the management of the population, in the field of intervention now referred to as the economy. Above all, it was through the perception of population as the object of government that the notion of governance came to break decisively from that of sovereignty. The aim of government is no longer the preservation of the ruler but the enhancement of the welfare of the population, improving its health and wealth, maximising its forces. Government is no longer a transcendent, singular power but makes use of techniques of governance that are multiple and immanent in the population to achieve its ends. And government no longer requires an understanding of divine or human law, but precise, detailed knowledge of its population, resources and environment. Statistics develops into the human sciences, interwoven with forms of political regulation.(24)

What is being fashioned here is a new, secularised version of Christianity's pastoral power. As an ecclesiastical institution it may have been in decline since the eighteenth century, but for Foucault its function has spread and multiplied throughout the modern state and its institutions, beginning in the sixteenth century.(25) In the process there have been a number of modifications. It is no longer a question of leading people to salvation in the next world but of ensuring it in this one. 'Salvation' has taken on new, worldly meanings - health, well-being, security. Moreover, the officials of pastoral power have increased. Sometimes it is exercised by state apparatuses such as the police, by private ventures like charities, or by institutions which are both such as the health system. Ancient institutions like the family were also mobilised to take on pastoral functions. And the form of power which cares not only for the whole flock but for each sheep coalesces in its modern form around the two poles of the population and the individual. The modern governmental concern with the population does not apply
only to the collective mass of phenomena but also implies the management of the population in its depth and individual details. The disciplines which developed under the administrative monarchies have been taken up as the individualising side of population management. And sexuality has emerged as a key object of governance insofar as it is both the theme of comprehensive measures and assessments, as the index of a society's strength and vigour, and the object of infinitesimal disciplinary surveillances and controls, the stamp of individuality.

The rise of this individualising pastoral power does not mean the disappearance of the state as a sovereign, centralised and totalising form of power. The process of state centralisation that gives rise to the administrative monarchies does not cease. What has happened is that since the eighteenth century the techniques of pastoral governance have infiltrated and transformed state institutions and apparatuses, while at the same time the various multiformal tactics of pastoral power have been elaborated, rationalised and centralised in the form of, or under the auspices of, state institutions. In short, the state has been 'governamentalised', both integrating and depending upon a pastoral power orientated towards the management and care of populations and individuals. The theme of state centralisation cannot be ignored, for all power relations refer to the state in contemporary society. Foucault's claim, however, is that they cannot be analysed as deriving from a unitary state-domination of society. Rather, the modern state needs to be comprehended in terms of the pastoral power that has transformed it and constituted it in its present form.

*Power, Ethics and Psychoanalysis*

For Foucault, then, there has indeed been a 'scientisation' or 'instrumentalisation' of politics in the modern period, a transformation of the phenomena of human life into strategic resources, useful for political tactics and interventions. As Smart puts it: 'Through the twin development of the human sciences and technologies of power exercised over life social and political problems (e.g. crime and delinquency) have been normalised, subjected to classification and control, and thereby transformed into technical problems which more detailed knowledge and better techniques of intervention have promised to resolve.' At the same time there are basic differences between this and the picture presented by the critical theory of Horkheimer and Habermas. Primarily, this instrumentalisation does not involve a corruption, denial or objectification of an essential human subjectivity or
rationality. On the contrary, it is the development of forms of knowledge about human beings, interwoven with historical forms of political regulation, which individualises human beings and imposes a subjective identity upon them. More broadly, the task before us is not to reformulate and realise a traditional, normative conception of practical reason that gave expression, albeit in a mystified form, to the claims of the subject, in the face of an oppressive process of instrumentalisation that has reduced human beings to mere objects or instruments of power. For Foucault, the modern humanistic attempt to turn the historical human being into the basis for a renewed metaphysics, as the underlying subject of thought and action, is itself part of the contemporary system of knowledge and power. In embracing, avowing or seeking to become this self, we become subject to the historical forms of normative regulation that have made this self available.

The modern conception of an underlying 'deep self' is exemplified by the Freudian picture. It is no accident that critical theory employs psychoanalytic categories in its effort to affirm the subjective dimension of existence; or that Freudian self-reflection becomes the model for the moral-practical and critical reflection that is understood as the pathway to individual and social liberation. By the same token, Foucault's critical history of the subject, his history of sexuality, can be viewed as an extended confrontation with Freudian thought. Foucault sees psychoanalysis as playing a crucial role in the modern technology of knowledge and power. It participates in the 'sexualisation' of bodies and desires, in the turning of desire into discourse and the associated normative regulation of human life. At the heart of psychoanalysis is the specifically modern form of the ethical self-relation. In this relation sexuality figures as the essence of our selfhood. To bring desires to awareness, to avow our sexual identity, is to grasp the truth of one's being. It is also to entangle us in the modern network of knowledge and power.

The second and third volumes of the History of Sexuality trace the emergence of the modern self-relation. The origins of the Freudian hermeneutics of desire lie in remote Antiquity. Very early on there emerged a moral concern with sexual behaviour, i.e., sexual conduct was 'problematised', becoming a source of concern, anxiety, and the object of various practices of the self. These techniques of the self would eventually be transformed and assimilated into the exercise of pastoral power in early Christianity, and later into educative, medical and
8.4 The Practices of the Self: Antiquity, Christianity and Modernity

Techniques or practices of the self are broadly characterised by Foucault as 'techniques that permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, their own souls, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and attain a certain state of perfection, happiness, purity, spiritual power'. We are not dealing simply with a self-awareness but with a self-forming activity through which individuals question their own conduct, watch over and give shape to it, and shape themselves as ethical subjects. The ethical work that one performs on oneself is one aspect of what Foucault refers to in general as a 'morality'. Morality involves, firstly, a moral code, a set of quasi-judicial rules for action embodying values; secondly, the real behaviour of individuals in relation to the rules and values recommended to them; and thirdly, the ethical self-relation in which one forms oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the code. The third part, the self-relationship, is further analysed under four aspects. In relating to oneself, the individual delimits their 'ethical substance', that part of oneself or one's behaviour that is concerned with moral conduct; defines their 'mode of subjection', their relation to the rule or precepts to be followed; embraces a telos or mode of being that serves as one's moral goal; and engages in 'forms of elaboration' or 'ascetic' activities, the practices of the self in which the individual acts on, monitors, improves and transforms themselves in order to achieve their moral goal.

Foucault notes that the substance of moral codes has not changed greatly in Pagan, Christian and modern moralities. They persistently concern themselves with the costs of sexual excess, the value of self-restraint and moderation, the desirability of heterosexual monogamy and the condemnation of homosexual relations. These are the themes around which the moral concern with sexual activity has been endlessly formulated. Different moralities differ as to the degree of emphasis they place on codifying behaviour in moral rules or on pursuing practices of the self. The most striking transformations over the centuries have occurred in the latter aspect, in the form of relation one has with oneself.
For the Greeks, the ethical substance takes the form of 'aphrodisia', which is something distinct from Christian 'flesh' and modern 'sexuality'. Concern is directed towards acts, with desire and pleasure as subsidiary. The key issue is whether or not one touches the desirable boy, not the character of the desire itself. The ethical substance is to be regulated in accordance with the aesthetic criteria of an 'art of existence', rather than in terms of a universal legislation determining permitted or forbidden acts. In classical ethics no one is obliged to be truthful to their wives, to not touch boys, and so on. But if one wants a 'beautiful existence' one has to accept these obligations. It is a question of a personal choice to stylise one’s existence, to create oneself as a work of art. The Greek arts of life have as their goal the perfect mastery of oneself, in order to be a good citizen and to effectively master others. To this end they prescribe various exercises or techniques for moderation, e.g., 'dietetic' techniques concerning the body, the rules of an 'economics' by which one defines one’s role as a husband, the 'erotic' ascetism towards oneself in loving boys. (34)

This morality was addressed to a small elite, the adult male citizens who made up the civic community of Greek life, and excluded women and slaves. It was elaborated around a sexual act defined in male terms of penetration, a non-reciprocal relation in which the pleasure of the boy, woman or slave was of no consequence. The centre of anxiety and disapproval was not sexual desire, but the threat of being a slave to one’s passions, immoderate in one’s sexual activity, and therefore unfit to be a free citizen capable of mastering others. The art of existence allowed a temperate, masterful self to be fashioned through the stylisation of one’s existence. This project is quite distinct from the Christian and modern effort to 'discover the self in its truth', but there are nonetheless precursors to the hermeneutics of desire in Greek ethics, particularly in its Platonic formulation. Earlier Greek ethics understood that the achievement of moderation required knowledge in two forms, a 'structural' form of knowledge which declared the supremacy of reason over desire, and an 'instrumental' form which gave practical directions for using pleasure. Plato introduces a third form, the need to know oneself in order to practice virtue and subdue the desires. This is an 'ontological' knowledge of the soul's mode of being, the recognition of one's true being in order to pursue it. It is not yet a hermeneutics of the self, a cognitive
self-examination that clarifies and purifies one's desires, but it does open up the idea of self-contemplation as self-discovery which will eventually undermine the Greek stylistics of existence. (35)

**Stoicism**
The transition to the Christian technology of the self is bridged by late Stoic ethics. For Stoic ethics, the ethical substance is still aphrodisia, but morality begins to focus upon and condemn desire. The mode of subjection starts to shift from the idea of an aesthetics of existence towards the idea that we do such and such things because we are rational beings. Morality is no longer a question of personal choice, for universal rational principles, articulated upon the order of the world, become increasingly important. Moreover, ethics is no longer addressed to an elite but involves universal principles of nature or reason to which all must submit in the same way, regardless of status. The aim is still self-mastery, but there is less emphasis on the mastery over others. You master yourself because you are a rational being, and are related to other people who are also masters of themselves. There are also changes in the kinds of techniques used to recognize and to form oneself as an ethical subject. In the ascetic exercises of abstinence and control, the place allotted to self-knowledge becomes more important. The question of the truth concerning what one is, what one does and what one is capable of becomes central to the formation of the ethical subject. (36)

**The Christian Hermeneutics of the Self**
With Christianity, sexual desire becomes the centre of concern, as the primordial sign of humanity's fallen nature. The ethical substance is no longer aphrodisia but desire, concupiscence, flesh. Acts have become something neutral, i.e., you act only to produce children, or fulfill your conjugal duty. There is no place for pleasure in sexual activity. The rules and precepts to be followed are no longer those of an art of existence but the universal legislation of divine law, justified through religion and imposed through pastoral institutions. One's obedience to divine law and the will of God requires the work of self-scrutiny. In Christianity all individuals are under the obligation to constantly examine themselves, for in one's self are lodged the corruptions of a fallen nature - worldly concupiscence and the lawless yearnings of the flesh. A permanent hermeneutics of the self is required in order to sort out good thoughts from evil ones, to clear up illusions, temptations and seductions which can occur in the mind, to reveal the true nature
of one's thoughts and desires. All individuals are required to tell the truth about themselves and to reveal it to others. The goal of this work upon oneself is no longer self-mastery but the renunciation of the self that has been revealed. The Christian self-relation links together the attainment of truth about the self with the sacrifice of the self for the sake of one's ultimate salvation.\(^{(37)}\)

Overall, the various austerity techniques developed by the ancients with regard to sexual activity have been borrowed, transformed and incorporated into Christianity. In the process they cease to be linked to an aesthetics of existence, to the fashioning of a beautiful self, and become linked to the necessity of discovering the truth about, and renouncing, the self. At the same time the techniques of the self lose some of their importance and autonomy, becoming assimilated into the exercise of priestly power. The concern with the self is now channelled through a pastoral institution which has the care of the individual self as its object. Through self-examination, telling the truth about oneself, individuals open themselves up to the care and direction of the pastor. Foucault suggests that the sixteenth century crisis of the pastoral office, of which the Reformation was the main expression, involved the attempt to develop new modes of self-relation in opposition to pastoral power. Religious groups claimed the right of the individual to take care of their own salvation independently of the ecclesiastical institution. There was a 'struggle for a new subjectivity'.\(^{(38)}\)

**Modern Ethics**

As we have seen, the decline of the pastoral institution, particularly since the eighteenth century, has been accompanied by the spread throughout society of the secularised form of pastoral power, and its integration into the framework of the modern state. In this context the hermeneutical practices of the self assume their present form. The ethical substance has become sexuality, centring on sexual desire not as the mark of a fallen nature but as the basis of the individual's vigour and vitality. Ethics, which since the Enlightenment has lost its religious basis, is now founded on a so-called scientific knowledge of what the self is, of our essential sexual being. Medical, psychological and psychoanalytical science determines what is good, healthy or normal in our sexual existence, and guides us in hermeneutically grasping our essential desires, in overcoming all that frustrates or alienates our sexuality, in liberating our true selves. The aim of this work upon ourselves is no longer renunciation of the self but becoming who we truly are,
attaining integral selfhood. Practices of the self are thereby deeply integrated into normalising practices of regulation. We embrace an essential self that is the product of disciplinary and administrative practices, interwoven with forms of scientific truth about the individual.

Foucault's reflections on the ethical self-relation thus extend his picture of how power is exercised over human beings, entering into their constitution as subjects. But they also enable him to develop his understanding of how this power is to be resisted. Given that the operation of contemporary pastoral power depends crucially upon our identification with a positive selfhood, the key political and critical task of the present is not to comprehend and realise but to refuse this positive self, and with it the scientific and administrative practices that determine who we are. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity, different ways of relating to ourselves, in order to combat individualising pastoral bio-power. The question of the ethical is thus at the heart of Foucault's politics, not only in regard to our subjection but also in relation to the work of freedom.

8.5 Ethics, Resistance and Freedom

The issue of struggle against power was first addressed by Foucault during the period when his focus was primarily on power. Before turning to the explicitly ethical phase of his thinking, I want first to examine Foucault's initial articulation of his notion of resistance to power.

Resistance

As we saw in the previous chapter, Foucault conceives of power not as bringing about the denial or repression of human subjectivity but as participating in our historical constitution as subjects. This does not entail our complete subordination to objective determinations, but represents a historico-political comprehension of subjectivity that is not really possible within the humanistic framework, which privileges the subject and views history in terms of an objectification to be overcome. It can also be said that Foucault's picture does not necessarily mean the abandonment of the possibility of freedom, only of freedom understood in terms of the foundational subject, as a revolutionary transformation of society, its global reorganisation in accordance with our essential selves or true interests. For
Foucault, what needs to be opposed are precisely those forms of power which define and classify 'who we really are'. Resistance itself does not derive from an essential humanity that pre-exists power, which power forces into submission but which remains rebellious. It is an action that is co-extensive or contemporary with power, the 'limit', 'underside' or 'counter-stroke' of the power relation. For its very operation, power depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. (40)

Accordingly, we can never be wholly ensnared by power, but can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy. There is always the possibility of revolt in which the instruments, techniques or resources of power, including the discourses interwoven with it, can be tactically realigned, made to function differently, turned into elements of a counter-strategy. If for example our awareness of ourselves as healthy or as sexual beings is an effect or instrument of the investment of power in the body, the issue of one's health or pleasures can be appropriated, taken up in a new form, and turned against medical power and moral norms. Not that power is thereby abolished or dissolved, for it can retreat, reorganise its forces, assert itself in different ways. Each offensive from one side serves as a leverage for a counter-offensive from the other, in an open-ended conflict of strategies and counter-strategies. Political opposition, then, is a matter of constant struggle within the political field, the subversive redirection and transformation of power relations through the invention of new strategies; not the expression of some fixed human essence that pre-exists power relations, whose liberation will bring an end to struggle. (41)

In rethinking the notion of power and political struggle, Foucault also rethinks the notion of the intellectual, and hence illuminates the status of his own work. He abandons the traditional conception of the political intellectual. That is, the intellectual as the vanguard of revolution, the voice of truth and reason, demystifying and articulating the true, universal interests of the people. From Voltaire and the philosophes to the Marxist intellectual and the critical theorists, the role of the intellectual has been to uphold truth in the face of power, to represent the universal, to be the 'consciousness/conscience' of humanity. (42) For Foucault, however, what has to be opposed is a regime of power in which true discourses about human beings are interwoven with forms of social regulation; and in which discourses that can claim truth or scientificity, and those who are able to articulate
them, occupy a politically and institutionally privileged position. The intellectual who speaks on behalf of others runs the risk of perpetuating a system of power which prevents them from speaking for themselves. Those on whose behalf the intellectual speaks become subordinated to the theoreticians, to the party, to the keepers of 'true consciousness'. Popular forces are unable to define the aims of practice, and must await guidance from above. The local knowledge of 'ordinary' people, as well as critical perspectives and forms of struggle that fall outside the parameters of 'official' opposition, tend to be excluded, marginalised, and proscribed.(43)

Foucault's intellectual work, in contrast, aims to comprehend what passes as true and universal in its historicity and contingency, to unmask and destabilise the social function of true discourses about human beings, and to facilitate local resistance to the regime of truth and power. His genealogical methodology represents the discipline required for a new kind of intellectual practice which forgoes claims to universality and the mantle of timeless truth in order to reflect on its immediate situation. This is the practice appropriate to what Foucault calls the 'specific' intellectual, a figure that has appeared particularly in the post-war period. Such personages possess a specific expertise and work 'not in the modality of the 'universal', the 'exemplary', the 'just-and-true-for-all' but within specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them'.(44)

They are no less implicated in the regime of power than the universal intellectual, but because of their very importance in its workings they have a leverage, a potential counter-power. As intellectuals their central concern remains truth but the key issue becomes the political role of truth concerning human beings. In Foucault's case, specific human sciences like psychiatry, criminology and psychoanalysis are put into question in terms of their role in political regulation. In so doing Foucault is able to contribute, as an intellectual, to the political struggles that have emerged in recent years concerning such issues as the treatment of the insane, imprisonment and sexual 'deviance'.(45)

In this regard, it is no longer a matter of telling people 'what to do', of subordinating practice to a theoretical ideal. Instead of justifying practices by reference to the true or to an essential subjective nature, Foucault wants to introduce uncertainty into the practices that are conducted under the sign of 'the true', to bring it about that people 'no longer know what to do'. What once
seemed unproblematic needs to be made 'difficult' and 'dangerous'. Foucault aims to 'give some assistance in wearing away certain self-evidences and commonplaces about madness, normality, illness, crime and punishment; to bring it about, together with many others, that certain phrases can no longer be spoken so lightly, certain acts no longer, or at least no longer so unhesitatingly performed, to contribute to changing certain things in people's ways of perceiving and doing things, to participate in this difficult displacement of forms of sensibility and thresholds of tolerance...'. The critical destabilisation of seemingly self-evident practices opens up the possibility of redirecting and transforming them. Theory is thereby subordinated to, made to serve, the practice of resistance. Rather than forming the basis for what needs to be done, critique is 'an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is'.

Foucault's reflection on the role of the intellectual thus allows his own work to be placed firmly in its political context. He engages in a politically self-conscious intellectual practice, one informed by his specific location in the existing historical order. It is incited by, and designed to assist in, the struggles that have broken out in relation to psychiatric internment, penal practices, sexual identity and the like. His refusal to offer prescriptions for practice based on a conception of true human nature is a principled one, reflecting his awareness that the power to be opposed regulates human beings through normalising conceptions of true selfhood. What is primarily presupposed as 'self-evident' in a whole range of practices and institutions is a conception of true, normal human selfhood. Foucault seeks to interrupt these practices by questioning this selfhood in its historical and political role, and this questioning of the true self extends to the notion of the intellectual as its representative. He has invented a new kind of political intellectual practice capable of facilitating resistance to the normalising, subjectifying form of power.

At this point, however, his reflection runs up against limits. Foucault refers to, and dedicates his critical work to, 'the subject who acts - the subject of action through which the real is transformed'. It is quite clear what this subject is not. It is not the humanist subject that is supposed to precede all practices, which has now become the focus of critical suspicion. But as long as Foucault makes power central to his analysis, the subject appears primarily in its negative light, in terms of its emergence and role in relation to power and subjection, and as something we have to get rid of. He is constrained in what he can say about the subject as
resistant, as able to sustain opposition and transform the real, as participating in the work of freedom.

**The Ethics of Resistance**

With the theoretical shift that brings the ethical into view, the subject is no longer exhaustively described in terms of power relations. Human beings also stand in a certain relationship to the self made historically available. While this extends Foucault's account of how the modern subject is constituted in terms of power, it also provides the language and space for him to talk about the subject as capable of resistance, the 'free subject'. Foucault reformulates the theme of resistance in terms of subjectivity conceived as a permanent capacity to break away from prescribed roles or spaces for action. Power is characterised as a relation between individuals (or groups) in which some people can more or less entirely determine the conduct of others, but never exhaustively or coercively. Power is not the absolute determination imposed on an unresisting being, but the subjection to government of persons who act and who are capable of conducting themselves differently. It presupposes, that is, a free subject or subjects 'who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realised'. Freedom must exist for power to be exerted as a narrowing of possible conduct; and at the heart of the power relationship, constantly provoking it, is the possibility of acting differently, of recalcitrance, refusal or revolt. The potential for revolt is part of the ongoing, open-ended movement of history. It is 'through revolt that subjectivity (not that of great men but that of whomever) introduces itself into history and gives it the breath of life'.

Modern pastoral power, as we have seen, limits the possibilities of human action by tying individuals to an identity, a true self defined by power which the individual is encouraged to recognise, avow or acknowledge as their own, and to act in accordance with. It involves an ethical self-relation in which we strive to be who we are, to truly be our true selves, and thereby interiorise power. Resistance to power is inseparable from a refusal of the individual identity that has been imposed on human beings. Struggles concerning individuality have been a key characteristic of the series of oppositions that have developed in recent years, opposition to the power of men over women, of psychiatry over the mentally ill, of medicine over the population, of administration over the way people live. These
struggles are not confined to any particular political or economic form of government; they are struggles against instances of power that affect people immediately, in their everyday lives; and they do not look to a global, revolutionary solution, set in the future, but have immediate, particular goals. More specifically, they are struggles against the 'government of individualisation'; they oppose effects of power linked not only to mystifying representations of people but also to knowledge, competence, qualification; and they revolve around the question of 'who we are', refusing not only a state violence which ignores who one is individually, but also a scientific or administrative inquisition that determines who one is. (52)

Our freedom lies in our capacity to conduct ourselves differently, not in discovering what we really are but in refusing what we are, in order to invent and promote 'new forms of subjectivity' that are not caught up in an individualising form of power. (53) Revolt against power is, at its core, an ethical transformation worked by the self upon itself, the relationship of self-refusal in which we struggle to break away from ourselves in order to reinvent ourselves, to think and act differently. With an eye to the Christian theme of self-renunciation, as well as to the Greek ethics of aesthetic self-stylisation, but with the present historical context firmly in mind, Foucault suggests that the imaginative creativity that is at present confined to art objects could become the centre of an ethical practice, an ethics of resistance, in which we 'create ourselves as a work of art.' (54) This is not an appeal to a vapid and self-enclosed aestheticism. It is inseparable from the practical engagement with and struggle against forms of regulation in which we are constrained through an interiorisation of the true self they make available. To break away from the tyranny of the truth about ourselves and the seemingly inward self is to return to the historical practices that have made us what we are, to appropriate the historical elements of our existence in different ways, to invent or imagine new modes of thought and action for ourselves. It is necessarily to be engaged in a creative and self-creative endeavour, i.e., precisely not in the realisation of a pre-existing essence or programme. Freedom is not a matter of coming to live in accordance with an essential nature that is outside of history, but of reinventing ourselves so as to think and act differently, in the context of historical struggle. (55)

Foucault also now speaks of the 'ethic of the intellectual'. The role of the
politically engaged intellectual in the struggle against power is not to lay down normative standards or laws, based on an understanding of the truth of human existence, in order to provide guidance for political action. It is to multiply the possibilities for different forms of practice, different kinds of selfhood. As Foucault puts it - "The role of the intellectual is not to tell others what to do. By what right could he do so? Remember all the prophecies, promises, injunctions and programmes that intellectuals have formulated in the course of the last two centuries, the effects of which we can now see. The intellectual's task is not to shape the political will of others: it is rather, by means of his analyses in his own fields, to reinterrogate the obvious and the assumed; to unsettle habits and ways of thinking and doing; to dissipate accepted familiarities, to re-evaluate rules and institutions, and, on the basis of this re-problematisation (in which he exercises his specific function as an intellectual), to participate in the formation of a political will (in which he has his role to play as a citizen)." (56)

At the heart of the specifically intellectual task of reinterrogating and unsettling the familiar and self-evident, and consequently of Foucault's own work, is the distinctive ethical ideal - 'to render oneself permanently capable of detaching oneself from oneself' (57) The raison d'être of the intellectual is to modify one's own thought, as well as that of others. And Foucault now speaks of this critical self-dispossession as the ethical work that thought brings to bear on itself, the exploration of what can be changed in one's thought in order to think differently, in which 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'. (58)

8.6 Freedom and Philosophy

The shift in attention to the ethical self-relation thus allows Foucault to characterise his own work not only as a political exercise but as an ethical one; or rather, to articulate the ethical dimension of his politico-critical historicist reflections. And with the characterisation of thought as an ethical exercise it becomes possible for him to see his reflections as an exercise in philosophy, to view them as an exercise of liberation through critical reflection; and also to locate his critical work as part of the broad modernist aspiration to enlightened freedom. When his focus is
primarily on power, the Enlightenment appears essentially in terms of the history of subjection. It is not a phase in human liberation but the key point in the emergence of modern technologies of power, the point at which disciplinary, individuating technologies start to take hold and ensure the submission of 'forces and bodies'. Philosophy celebrates 'man' as the transcendent measure of things, whereas this figure is revealed by Foucault as the product of these forms of disciplinary subjection. Yet this debunking of enlightenment and philosophy in its humanist form, whilst it reflects the critical task of unmasking previously unnoticed relations of power, also limits Foucault's capacity to characterise his own project. There is not yet a positive sense of enlightenment and of philosophy which will permit him to speak of his own work not just as a politically oriented historicist critique but as enlightening, as a philosophical exercise oriented towards freedom.

His final theoretical shift makes such a characterisation possible. On the one hand it extends his account of how power subjects human beings. It is not just that power produces rather than distorts or denies individual subjects, but that forms of self-reflection through which we seek to appropriate our true selves, far from being acts of liberating enlightenment, play a crucial part in the operations of power. They interiorise the processes of historical subjection that give rise to this true self. And philosophical reflection conceived as an exercise in hermeneutic self-appropriation, as articulated for example by Habermas, participates in the process through which we identify ourselves with a self that is the product of historical domination and violence, embracing it as the basis of our thought and action. On the other hand there is also room now for a different conception of philosophical self-reflection, one that is in fact diametrically opposed to the humanistic picture. It is a philosophical reflection in which one strives to 'get free of oneself', of what is 'true' in one's thought, that turns to the historical in order to reveal this self and its constraints as something that has been constructed, and in order to comprehend what can be changed in oneself. For Foucault, 'what is philosophy today - philosophical activity, I mean - if it is not the critical work that thought brings to bear on itself? In what does it consist, if not in the endeavour to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known'. Reflection turns to history in order 'to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently'.
With this understanding of his work as an ethico-philosophical exercise, Foucault also reassesses his relationship to the Enlightenment and the modernity it ushered in. It is certainly the case that the Enlightenment, through Kant in particular, sees the introduction of humanist thought centered on the founding subject. Philosophical thought thereby embodies and articulates the modern desire to establish the human being as a positive self, to become the subject that is the arbiter of thought and action. The Enlightenment project, conceived as the aspiration to an ethico-practical transformation of human life in accordance with humanity's essential rationality, expresses itself in programmes like Hegel's 'aesthetic education', the Marxist critique of alienation, the quasi-Freudian social therapy of Habermas. In each case human beings are called to overcome their historical alienation, to reorganise historical life in accordance with their true nature. And in each case thought is subordinated to a subject that sets limits to what can be legitimately thought and done. More broadly, humanism inherits and tries to preserve the religious, and subsequently rationalistic and metaphysical project of articulating normative grounds for the conduct of human life. In the face of the breakdown of traditional standards and legitimations for thought and action, human beings are transformed into the new transcendental basis for their forms of existence. And with this, thought continues to be subject to a dogmatic, unchanging metaphysical standpoint and to the limitations on reflection that this engenders.

What distinguishes the modern period, however, is that modernist thought also introduces a historical self-awareness. The enlightenment also represents a breaking away from the traditional metaphysical concern with the eternal, unchanging and true in order to bring thought to bear on its historical situation and on itself within it. Kant, in 'What is Enlightenment?', asks - what is going on right now, and what makes us who we are, as thinkers, at this historical moment? For Foucault, this opens up to philosophy a whole historico-critical dimension, in which thought begins to question itself as to its history and place, its immediate past and present actuality. He speaks of the emergence of an attitude, a 'philosophical ethos', a mode of reflectively relating to our historical situation and ourselves within it, that is characteristic of our modernity. It is an ethics of thought that requires us to constantly put what seems essential and eternal in our thought to the test of history.
Despite this historicist sensibility, however, modernist thought also reintroduces metaphysics. Its turn away from the Absolute to the historical order is reversed into the attempt to turn human beings into a new absolute, the transcendental self that underlies history. In this it reformulates the religious heritage of Christian self-reflection, transforming it from a process of self-renunciation in the face of God's will into one of establishing ourselves as a positive self, taking the place of God. At the same time, by embracing this self as absolute, thought ceases to comprehend itself in its historical situation, losing sight of the historical processes of subjection behind the self it embraces as foundational. Instead, it comprehends history from the standpoint of this absolutised subject, as that which denies our selfhood, and which we overcome in order to become who we essentially are and attain the freedom of self-appropriation. Yet although historical awareness is subordinated to a renewed metaphysics, it does not simply vanish. It continues, as an undercurrent in modernist thought, to provoke and contest this new metaphysics of the self, constantly raising historical questions as to the forms of subjectivity and reason we employ. This anti-metaphysical, anti-subjectivistic historical awareness represents the tradition of critical, enlightening reflection in modernist thought, the modernist philosophical ethos, that Foucault is able to see his own reflection as continuing.

Foucault now characterises his historico-critical reflection as a historical and critical 'ontology of ourselves'. He reverses Kant's humanistic critique which aims to define the limits within which reason can be legitimately used, to make possible a new metaphysics. For Foucault, criticism remains a question of analysing and reflecting on limits, but it is no longer a question of knowing what limits thought has to renounce transgressing. Instead the critical question of today has to be turned back into a positive one: in what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? Foundational humanism gives way to a critical historicisation, and the search for formal structures with universal values, the universal structures of our knowledge and moral action, gives way to a historical investigation of the events that have constituted us as subjects of what we think, say and do. Archaeological 'suspension of belief' and genealogical historicisation become the means to an ethico-critical self-transformation. By historicising the limits within which we presently operate, critique opens up the
possibility of transgressing these categories. It aims to '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'.

Historico-critical reflection, through which we detach ourselves from a fixed, metaphysical selfhood, is thus oriented towards mature freedom, in Foucault's sense of the exercise of our capacity for self-transgression and self-transformation. It is the 'work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings', giving new impetus to the 'undefined work of freedom'. Far from resting on a pre-existing, essential self, critical thought contests the constraints of a historically imposed identity and opens up the possibility of the concrete transformation of what we are, think or do. And freedom is no longer a theoretical ideal to be realised, but a practical experiment with the possibility of going beyond our historical limits. It requires that we put ourselves 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. In short, it is a transformation which takes place within the history that has made us what we are, whilst simultaneously escaping it in a certain manner.

With this, Foucault leaves behind the idea of freedom as a global, radical transformation, a revolution through which we are to escape from contemporary reality in order to produce another society and a new human being. There is no position beyond or at the end of history from which such a transformation can be effected; and the claim to represent such a standpoint has in practice proved to be profoundly dangerous, legitimating the worst political systems of this century. For Foucault, freedom is the practice of revolt against practices of power which does not proceed from an extrahistorical point but is undertaken at the limits of history, which does not seek to impose extrahistorical standards based on an essential human nature but to transgress the limits that have been historically imposed on human beings. It thus opposes those social and governmental practices of regulation that claim to give expression to a true human existence, an essential humanity that has in fact been fabricated in the course of the historical subjugation of human beings.

In abandoning any extrahistorical standpoint from which to comprehend or transform the whole, Foucault sees critique and revolt as taking the form of local,
historically specific enquiries and transgressions. Revolt is always a situated transgression. There is no question of a complete overturning of all existing practices and values, as Rajchman points out, because Foucault rejects any totalising standpoint. (65) It may be objected that if we limit ourselves to always partial and local enquiries or tests, we run the risk of letting ourselves be determined by more general structures of which we are unaware. For Foucault there is no point of view that could give us access to any complete or definitive knowledge of what constitutes our historical limits. Accordingly 'the theoretical and practical experience that we have of our limits and of the possibility of moving beyond them is always limited and determined; thus we are always in the position of beginning again.' (66) There is no decisive escape from historical practices of power insofar as we are historical beings; but this means that the transgression of our historical limits is a constant task, a revolt that is permanently incited, and the expression of a freedom that must be perpetually exercised.

* * * *

Conclusion

We arrive, then, at a conception of philosophical reflection, of critique, of enlightenment and freedom, articulated within an anti-humanist context. In terms of this conception it is possible to critically interrogate and work to escape from the humanist subject, as a historically imposed confinement of human thought and action. Foucault's questioning of the founding subject does not mean the destruction of the possibility of critique, freedom and enlightenment, but is rather a confrontation with their specifically humanistic forms. Let me conclude the thesis as a whole by way of a brief recapitulation of the argument that has led us to this point.

It began with misgivings about Hampshire's and Sartre's notion of an autonomous, meaning-giving subject, the underlying source of thought and action and the locus of freedom as autonomous self-determination. It does not seem possible for human beings to view themselves qua subjects as part of the world or history without dissolving the subject into objective determinations, and
consequently of losing our grip on the notion of freedom. By the same token, however, the subject, and the freedom based upon it, seem impossibly abstract, lacking in informing content or historical context. More broadly, the notions of enlightenment and of critical philosophical reflection, insofar as they presuppose this subject, become problematic. Yet this subject cannot itself be brought into question in historical and political terms without, it seems, destroying the possibility of critique and freedom, and falling into a renewed objectivism.

This situation, the narrow alternatives presented by the subject-object framework, can however be seen as the outcome of the modernist attempt to establish a metaphysics in which the human being is to serve as the transcendental basis of thought and action. It is from the standpoint of the founding subject that history and our historical locatedness appear negatively, as an objectification or alienation to be overcome in order to achieve active control over history. Apart from the internal problem of abstractness that this picture exhibits, it also represents the subversion of another aspect of enlightened, modernist thought, its historicising and anti-metaphysical aspect. With the breakdown of traditional metaphysics, thought leaves behind its concern with the eternal and timelessly true, in order to reflect on itself in its historical situation. Humanist metaphysics reverses this historical awareness, turning the historicisation of foundationalist thought into the effort to overcome our historical alienation or objectification, in order to affirm ourselves as the transcendent basis of our thought and action. Historical awareness remains, properly speaking, opposed to metaphysics, and persistently reemerges in modernist thought to contest humanist subjectivism. But as long as thought proceeds on the basis of the transcendental self and the subject-object framework, historical reflection on the self appears to raise the threat of our reduction to objective determinations. Thought is unable to do justice to its own historical awareness, turning to history only in order to overcome the objectification of the subject, and returning to a metaphysical standpoint that it never really leaves. This problematic was explored through a consideration of the Frankfurt School and Habermas.

Foucault breaks from the foundational subject and its correlative objectivism in order to retrieve and pursue the idea of an enlightened historical critique of metaphysics. He passes beyond the 'blackmail' generated by humanist metaphysics, the idea that we either accept the founding subject or fall into an
uncritical objectivism, in order to reflect upon the founding subject or positive self in its historical emergence and role. In his analysis he traces the development of the historical forms of power, interwoven with forms of knowledge, through which human beings are constituted as subjects; and most crucially, the forms of ethical self-relation through which human beings interiorise and embrace this historically fabricated self as the underlying transcendental basis of their thought and action. He thus lays bare the process of our imprisonment, an imprisonment which legitimates itself under the appearance of enlightened freedom. When we embrace the historical self as absolute, and history is comprehended in terms of the foundational subject, the reflective effort to 'become who we are' appears as the avenue for liberation from historical objectification or alienation.

The enlightened historico-critical reflection that Foucault restores in his work represents above all a different kind of ethics, an ethics not of self-appropriation but of self-dispossession. It confronts our confinement in the prison of positive selfhood, along with the conception of history that presupposes and supports this self. Foucault breaks from the positive self and turns back to history in order to reveal the worldly, contingent sources of what seems essential to ourselves and our existence. Historical analysis is deployed to challenge and disturb the 'truth' of our thought, the familiar grounds of our existence, bringing to light the arbitrary constraints and confinements behind what appears eternal and universal. The historical critique of metaphysics is directed towards the transgression of our existing limits, the opening up of new possibilities, and the possibility of self-transformation.

With Foucault's approach comes the recognition that, despite appearances, human beings qua subjects are not above or beyond history. Philosophical and historical reflection, freed from metaphysical subjectivism, is able to comprehend the founding subject in its concrete historical emergence. Freedom is not a matter of detaching ourselves in our essential subjectivity from all historical influences, or of transforming history in accordance with a timeless, theoretical ideal of true human existence. The humanistic conception of freedom is problematic even in its own terms, as a superhuman, ironically inhuman vision of total rational self-determination. For Foucault human beings are not gods who can rise above and control their history. He makes this very idea the object of historical and political analysis, turning to the worldly sources of the positive self in order to
comprehend the way in which human beings have come to be subordinated to this conception and to the practices in which it figures. Freedom is a matter of concrete human beings contesting the practices that define or constitute their seemingly ahistorical nature, of breaking away from what seems essential and indispensable in order to experiment with the possibility of different forms of thought and action, different kinds of historical existence.

From the humanist point of view, Foucault's critique of the founding subject destroys the possibility of freedom and political struggle, and of philosophy as an enlightening, liberating critique, and falls into an uncritical capitulation to the existing world. This is the judgement rendered by Habermas, the pre-eminent representative of humanism and of enlightenment understood as the triumph of foundational subjectivity. We have seen how Habermas's humanism underlies the shortcomings in his own position - his inhumanly abstract and theoreticist conception of freedom, his inability to do justice to his own historical awareness. Foucault has also illuminated the dangers inherent in subordinating our thought to a seemingly ahistorical conception of true human existence, and to those who claim to speak in the name of it. And in this, he continues the labour of critical thought, taking it beyond the constraints of humanism. My aim has been to show that Foucault does not abandon but reformulates, and gives new life to, the philosophical aspiration to enlightenment through critical reflection. By taking up the idea of philosophy as a historical critique of metaphysics, as a willingness to put what seems essential and eternal in our thought to the test of history, he renews philosophy's relevance as an instrument of liberation for human beings in their historical situation.
Chapter 1

2. See A. Giddens, Central Problems in Social Theory, esp. 'Introduction' and Ch. 2; A. Dawe, 'Theories of Social Action' in T.B. Bottomore and R. Nisbet, eds., A History of Sociological Analysis; and A. Gouldner, The Two Marxisms; pp. 36-37.
3. See A. Giddens, op. cit., p. 52.
4. See ibid., pp. 44-45.
5. See B. Smart, 'Foucault, Sociology and the Problem of Human Agency', Theory and Society, Vol. 11 No. 2 (Summer 1982), p. 139.
6. ibid., pp. 124-128.
7. See M. Foucault, The Order of Things, Ch. 9. I have also drawn on the account provided by H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics, pp. 26-43.
8. See B. Smart, op. cit., p.128. For now I want to concentrate on the 'cogito' and the 'unthought'.
9. A modern expression of this Hegelian project may be found in Ricoeur's hermeneutics. See in particular his discussion of 'immediacy' versus 'reflection' in P. Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation, pp. 42-47.
11. S. Hampshire, Thought and Action, p. 177; see also p. 178.
12. ibid., p. 181.
13. ibid., p. 255; see also pp. 132-133 and 178-180.
15. I. Murdoch, op. cit., p. 35.
17. I. Murdoch, op. cit., p. 53.
19. ibid., p. 47.
21. See T. Nagel, 'Moral Luck', Ch. 3 of *Moral Questions*.
22. ibid., p. 37.
28. ibid., p. 96.
29. ibid., p. 91.
30. J. Thompson, 'From Here to Autonomy', unpublished paper, p. 17. This view of autonomy is being questioned by Thompson, but see e.g. M. Midgely, *Being and Man*, pp. 196, 260.
31. I. Murdoch, *op. cit.*, p. 48; see also p. 9.
33. ibid., p. 441.
35. Consciousness is defined as the negation of being, and consequently as freedom, in J.-P. Sartre, *op. cit.*, Pt. 1, Ch. 1, Sect. 5; see also Pt. 2, Sect. 1, Ch. 1.
38. See ibid., pp. 90 and 566.
42. See ibid, p. 489. See also the section on the body - Pt. 3, Ch. 2, Sect. 1. Although I am embodied, I reveal the world, which indicates my embodiment to me, through my choices. Sartre focusses specifically on the notion of 'situation' in Pt. 4, Ch. 1, Sect. 2.
44. ibid., p. 488.
45. This 'restoration' process begins in Pt. 2, Ch. 2, with the account of the past. The discussion of motivation, reflective will, the passions and radical choice, takes place in Pt. 4, Ch. 2, Sect. 1.

46. J. Murdoch, *Sartre*, p. 77. A similar point is made by H. Blackman, *Six Existentialist Thinkers*, p. 146. Sartre will eventually speak of *Being and Nothingness* as a 'monument to rationality'; see J.-P. Sartre, *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, p. 42.

47. F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 32.

Chapter 2


5. On the distinction between 'foundationalist' and 'therapeutic' philosophising, see in particular the 'Introduction' in R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.

6. See Foucault's 'Foreword to the English Edition' in *The Order of Things*, esp. p. xi. The key statement of archaeological method is provided by Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. See also 'What is an Author?', in P. Rabinow (ed.), esp. pp. 117-120.
10. On the transition to genealogy, see H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, op. cit., pp. 102-103. Foucault's key methodological statement here is 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', and his major studies of power are *Discipline and Punish*, and *History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1: *An Introduction*.
11. I am following the interpretation of Foucault's genealogy as 'interpretive analytics' presented in H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, op. cit., pp. 104-125.
12. On Foucault's ethics, see his article, 'What is Enlightenment?' in P. Rabinow, (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, and the 'Introduction' to *History of Sexuality*, Vol. 2: *The Use of Pleasure*. The ethical intentions of Foucault's work are usefully discussed by J. Rajchman, op. cit.; see also J. Bernauer, 'Foucault's Ecstatic Thinking', in J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen (eds.).


26. On Hegel as historicist critic of Kantian foundationalism, see e.g. T. McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas*, pp. 53-54 and 105.


31. See M. Taylor, ibid.

32. On the tension in Hegel's thinking between historicism and anti-historicism,
Chapter 3

1. The 'first generation' of Western Marxists is represented by such figures as Lukacs, Gramsci and Korsch, the 'second generation' by the Frankfurt School. For accounts of the emergence of the Frankfurt School, see e.g. D. Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, pp. 15-26; M. Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, pp. 41-85; A. Arato, 'Political Sociology and Critique of Politics', in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, pp. 3-25.


5. ibid.
10. ibid., p. 245
17. ibid.
18. ibid., pp. 202-204.
19. ibid., p. 207.
20. On the integration of psychoanalysis into critical theory, see M. Jay, op. cit., Ch. 3; and D. Held, op. cit., Ch. 4.
22. For example, see G. Therborn, 'A Critique of the Frankfurt School', New Left Review No. 63 (Sept - Oct 1970).
24. ibid., p. 208.
27. Jay in particular has brought out this movement away from Hegelian Marxism in critical theory. See M. Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, pp. 46-47; also his 'The Frankfurt School Critique of Marxist Humanism', *Social Research* Vol. 39 No. 2 (Summer 1972); and *Marxism and Totality*, pp. 196-219.
30. M. Horkheimer, 'Materialism and Metaphysics', op. cit., p. 27.
31. ibid., p. 52; see also p. 28.
33. ibid., p. 415.
38. See L. Kolakowski, op. cit., p. 355; also McCarthy, op. cit., p. 107.
42. See D. Held, op. cit., p. 371; also W. Doniella, op. cit., pp. 89-90.
44. M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 3.
45. ibid., pp. xiii, xvi.
46. ibid., p. 4.
47. ibid., p. 83. See also M. Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason*, pp. 3-4.

49. See M. Horkheimer, The Eclipse of Reason, pp. 6-7; also W. Leiss, op. cit., pp. 150-151.


52. See ibid., p. 87.

53. ibid., pp. 83-84.

54. See ibid., p. 85.


57. See ibid., p. 33.

58. ibid., p. 13. See also M. Jay, Adorno, p. 62.


61. See ibid., p. 106.


64. ibid., p. 105.

65. ibid., p. xiv.


67. M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, op. cit., p. 35; see also p. 34; see also M. Jay, The Dialectical Imagination, p. 264.


70. See ibid., pp. 46, 102.

71. ibid., p. 103.

72. See ibid., p. 182, and also p. 178.

73. ibid., p. 115.

74. See J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 279, where the
reference to Freud's notion of 'illusion' is explicit.

76. ibid., p. 7. See also M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, op. cit., p. 92.
80. ibid., p. 21.
81. ibid., p. 133.
82. ibid., p. 138.
86. H. Marcuse, op. cit., p. 145.
88. ibid., p. 112.
89. ibid., p. 113.
90. ibid., p. 114. On critical theory as humanity's 'conscience' see ibid., p. 186.
91. ibid. See also T. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 23.
93. M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, op. cit., pp. 198, see also 202-203.
95. See M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, op. cit., pp. 171, 175.
99. ibid., p. 127.
100. ibid., p. 174.
101. ibid., p. 175-176.
102. ibid., p. 178.
103. ibid., p. 182.
104. ibid., p. 186.
Chapter 4


4. Apart from Habermas, the 'second-generation' critical theorists include A. Wellmer and C. Offe.


7. On the idea of a 'resurrection of nature' in Horkheimer and Adorno's work, see J. Habermas, 'Technology and Science as "Ideology"', in *Toward a Rational Society*, pp. 85-87.

8. A. Wellmer, op. cit., p. 245.

9. See ibid.

10. ibid., pp. 245-246.


12. ibid., p. 63.

13. ibid., p. 75.


15. See ibid., p. 75-79.


17. See ibid., pp. 46-50.

18. ibid., p. 43.

19. ibid., p. 49.

20. ibid., p. 43. See also p. 47.

22. ibid.
26. ibid., p. 134.
27. See J. Benjamin, op. cit., p. 49.
29. ibid., p. xvi.
30. See J. Benjamin, op. cit., p. 43.
32. On the father-oriented account of self-formation in Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, see e. g. J. Benjamin, op. cit., pp. 44-45 (footnote); and M. Iay, Adorno, pp. 92-93.
33. M. Horkheimer and T. Adorno, op. cit., 233; see also M. Horkheimer, The Eclipse of Reason, 177-178.
34. See H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, op. cit., pp. 132-133, 166.
37. Habermas discusses Foucault and the Frankfurt School in these terms in his article 'The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Re-Reading Dialectic of Enlightenment', in New German Critique No. 26 (Spring-Summer 1982).
38. D. Held notes this tendency in commentators like Connerton, in Introduction to Critical Theory, p. 379.
Chapter 5

2. See R. Keat, The Politics of Social Theory, p. 3; and J.B. Thompson, Critical Hermeneutics, p. 73.
4. J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 53
5. See J. Habermas, Technology and Science as "Ideology", op. cit., p. 93; and Knowledge and Human Interests, pp. 54-55.
6. J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 42.
7. For the Habermasian view of Marx in general, see Knowledge and Human Interests, pp. 43-63; see also A. Wellmer, op. cit., pp. 231-235.
10. See J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, pp. 301-302.
12. ibid., p. 254.
13. Habermas discusses Sartre in ibid., p. 266.
14. ibid., p. 267.
17. ibid.
18. In general, see J. Habermas, 'Technology and Science as "Ideology"', op. cit., pp. 64-96
19. See ibid., pp. 96-100.
20. ibid., p. 100.
22. ibid., p. 105.
23. ibid.
24. ibid., p. 112.
25. ibid., p. 113.
29. See J. Habermas, 'The Public Sphere' in New German Critique No. 3 (Fall 1974), p. 49-55. Also D. Held's summary of the notion in Introduction to Critical Theory, pp. 260-263.
31. See J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, pp. 3-5, 67-69.
33. See J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, pp. 314-315.
34. See ibid., pp. 7-9, 12-19.
36. See ibid., pp. 25-42.
37. ibid., p. 42. In general see pp. 43-65.
38. ibid., p. 63.
40. McCarthy discusses this conflation at length - op. cit., pp. 94-110.
41. J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 196. In general see pp. 191-197.
42. See J. Habermas, 'Introduction' to Theory and Practice, pp. 21-22; and Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 104.
43. J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 135; see also p. 312.
44. ibid., p. 212.
45. ibid., pp. 197-8; and ibid, p. 314.
46. ibid., pp. 210-211, 371; see also J. Habermas, Theory and Practice, pp. 9, 22; and H. Otman, 'Cognitive Interests and Self-Reflection' in J.B. Thompson and D. Held (eds.), Habermas: Critical Debates, p. 84.
47. J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 214.
48. See ibid., pp. 246-247.
49. See ibid., pp. 237, 244-245, 252.
50. See ibid., pp. 214-217.
51. ibid., p. 226.
52. See ibid., pp. 223-227.
53. ibid., p. 228.
54. ibid., pp. 232-233.
55. ibid., p. 229.
56. See ibid., pp. 234-235.
57. See ibid., pp. 239, 285.
58. See ibid., pp. 270-272.
59. ibid., pp. 281-282.
60. See ibid., pp. 274-276.
61. ibid., p. 279.
62. ibid.
63. ibid., p. 280.
64. ibid., p. 284.
65. ibid., p. 288.
69. J. Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 314.
70. This is suggested by M. Theunissen, whose position is noted in T. McCarthy, op. cit., p. 112.
71. The tension is examined by T. McCarthy, op. cit., pp. 110-125; J.
Chapter 6

4. Roderick speaks of Habermas in general as shifting from the 'paradigm of production' to that of communication. See esp. R. Roderick, op. cit., pp. 151-156.
6. The distinction between 'action' and 'discourse' is made in Habermas's 'Introduction' to *Theory and Practice*, pp. 18-19; see also 'Postscript' to *Knowledge and Human Interests*, pp. 360-371, in particular pp. 362-363.
7. See J. Habermas, 'Introduction' to *Theory and Practice*, pp. 19-20; also his 'Postscript' to *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 370.
8. See J. Habermas, 'Postscript' to *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 373.
10. The distinction between 'reconstruction' and 'self-reflection' is made in J. Habermas, 'Introduction' to *Theory and Practice*, p. 17; also J. Habermas, 'Postscript' to *Knowledge and Human Interests*, pp. 377-378; see also F. Dallmayr, op. cit., pp. 218-221; and T. McCarthy, op. cit., pp. 100-102.
11. J. Habermas, 'Introduction' to *Theory and Practice*, p. 22.
12. ibid., p. 23.
13. See ibid.
14. See ibid., p. 24; also F. Dallmayr, op. cit., p. 221.
15. See J. Habermas, Theory and Practice, pp. 17, 19.
16. On the distinction between the emancipatory interest and the other interests, see J. Habermas, 'Postscript' to Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 371.
18. See ibid., p. 24; and J. Habermas, 'Postscript' to Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 379.
21. ibid.
22. This is noted by D. Held, op. cit., pp. 396-397.
23. For Habermas' understanding of the status of 'reconstruction' see J. Habermas, 'What is Universal Pragmatics?' in Communication and the Evolution of Society, pp. 21-25.
24. See ibid., Introduction to Theory and Practice, p. 16.
25. See ibid., pp. 32-33.
27. These questions are raised by R. Bubner, 'Habermas' Concept of Critical Theory' in J.B Thompson and D. Held, (eds.), Habermas: Critical Debates, p. 51; and H. Ottman, 'Cognitive Interests and Self-Reflection', in the same volume, p. 96.
28. ibid., p. 6; on the 'abstractive fallacy' in general, see ibid, pp. 5-8.
30. ibid., p. 63.
32. ibid., p. 63.
33. ibid., p. 64.
34. On Habermas's theory of truth, see ibid., pp. 360-366.
35. This crucial stage in Habermas' argument is brought out by T. McCarthy in
36. See ibid., pp. 305-306.


38. On practical questions and their relation to truth for Habermas, see his Legitimation Crisis, pp. 102-110.


40. See J. Habermas, Legitimation Crisis, pp. 108-110; 'Postscript' to Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 371; and T. McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, p. 313.


42. See J. Habermas, Legitimation Crisis, p. 110.


44. See J. Habermas, Legitimation Crisis, p. 111; also D. Held, op. cit., p. 339.

45. J. Habermas, Legitimation Crisis, p. 113.


47. See T. McCarthy's discussion in The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, pp. 325-329.

48. ibid., p. 327.

49. R. Bubner, op. cit., p. 52.


51. See M. Poster, Foucault, Marxism and History, pp. 31-32.

52. R. Roderick, op. cit., p. 99; see also p. 81.

53. ibid., pp. 164-165.

54. The persistence of the transcendental-historical tension in Habermas's 'theory of communicative action' is noted by Roderick. See his exegesis in op. cit., pp. 106-136, and critical comments, pp. 161-166.

Chapter 7


3. ibid., p. 29.


5. ibid., p. 13. See also N. Fraser, 'Michel Foucault: A "Young Conservative"?', in Ethics Vol. 96 No. 1 (October 1985).

6. This is the Habermasian line taken by J. Whitebook in 'Saving the Subject: Modernity and the Autonomous Individual', Telos No. 50 (Winter 1981/82).

7. J. Habermas, 'Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present', op. cit., p. 106.

8. ibid., p. 108; see also p. 107.


10. M. Foucault, 'Structuralism and Post-Structuralism', Telos No. 55 (Spring...
14. ibid., p. 82.
15. See ibid., pp. 85-86.
21. ibid., p. 114.
22. J. Rajchman, op. cit., p. 93.
29. M. Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?', in P. Rabinow (ed.), p. 43; see also Structuralism and Post-Structuralism, op. cit., p. 201.
31. ibid.
32. This point is noted by J. Rajchman, op. cit., p. 79.
35. See M. Foucault, 'Two Lectures', op. cit., p. 102; and 'Truth and Power',
36. On the notion of sovereignty, see M. Foucault, 'Two Lectures', op. cit., pp. 103-104; also his *History of Sexuality* Vol. 1: *An Introduction*, pp. 85-89; and J. Rajchman, op. cit., p. 64.
40. A view held e.g. by P. Dews, 'Power and Subjectivity in Foucault', *New Left Review* No. 144 (March-April 1984), see esp. p. 87.
43. Relations between Foucault and Marxism are discussed at length by e.g. M. Poster, *Foucault, Marxism and History*; and B. Smart, *Foucault, Marxism and Critique*.
53. See ibid., pp. 170-184.
54. See ibid., pp. 184-194.
55. See ibid., pp. 195-217.
56. See ibid., pp. 220-221; also 'The Eye of Power', op. cit., p. 158.
57. See M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, pp. 224-228.
58. ibid., p. 191.
59. ibid., p. 192.
60. See ibid., pp. 202-3; also 'The Eye of Power', op. cit., p. 155.
61. See M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, p. 141.
62. ibid., p. 25.
64. See ibid., pp. 3-10.
65. See ibid., pp. 11-13; and also pp. 72-73, 103, 105-106, 127.
66. ibid., 24-25.
68. ibid., pp. 61-62.
69. See ibid., pp. 65-8; see also pp. 18-21, 115-116.
70. ibid., p.116; see also pp. 63-64.
71. See ibid., pp. 37-100.
73. ibid., p. 58.
74. P. Dews, op. cit., p. 86. See also M. Foucault, ibid., pp. 59-60.
75. See M. Foucault, ibid, pp. 69-70.
76. See ibid., pp. 60, 70.
77. See ibid., 104-105.
78. See ibid., p.106; see also pp. 37, 38.
79. See ibid., pp. 106-107; see also p. 144.
80. See ibid., pp. 107-113, 159.
81. See ibid., pp. 122-127.
82. See ibid., pp. 127-130.
83. On the entanglement of psychoanalytic liberation and its political derivatives in power, see ibid., pp. 130-131, 159. Also M. Foucault, Herculine Barbin., p. xi.
84. See M. Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1, pp. 139-141.
85. ibid., pp. 141-142.
86. ibid., pp. 143-144.
87. See ibid., pp. 145-147.
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8. ibid., p. 224.
12. See ibid. pp. 236-238.
13. See ibid, pp. 238-239; also 'Sexuality and Solitude', op. cit., pp. 10-11, 15-16.
14. See M. Foucault, 'Omnes et Singulatim', op. cit., p. 239; also 'Sexuality and Solitude', op. cit., p. 11.
18. M. Foucault, 'Omnes et Singulatim', op. cit., p. 243; see also p. 244.
27. See M. Foucault, 'Governmentality', op. cit., p. 18-21; and 'The Subject and Power', op. cit., pp. 222, 224.
28. B. Smart, Michel Foucault, pp. 105-106.
29. This is noted by I. Bernauer, op. cit., p. 55.


38. See ibid., pp. 368, 370; and 'The Subject and Power', op. cit., p. 213.


42. See 'Truth and Power', op. cit., pp. 126, 128.


44. 'Truth and Power', op. cit., p. 126.

45. See ibid., pp. 132-133; and P. Patton, op. cit., pp. 73-74.


47. Ibid, p. 13. See also 'Power and Strategies', op. cit., p. 143; Foucault's 'Preface' to G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, p. xiv; and 'Intelligence and Power' in D. Bouchard (ed.),
52. See M. Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', op. cit., pp. 211-212.
53. See ibid., p. 216.
55. See J. Bernauer, op. cit., pp. 70-71; also R. Schurmann, op. cit., p. 543-544, 545-547.
57. ibid.
61. ibid., p. 45.
62. ibid., p. 46.
63. ibid., p. 47.
64. ibid., p. 46; see also M. Foucault, 'Politics and Ethics', in P. Rabinow (ed.), p. 374.
65. See J. Rajchman, op. cit., p. 4. Foucault also describes his approach as a 'relative scepticism', one which can never be total. See 'La Retour de la Morale', op. cit., p. 41.

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